



June-July 2022

Join Us for “Hales Corners Speedway: 53 Years of Racing Thrills” July 27, 7 p.m., Hales Corners Village Hall / Meadows Room

AT LAST! ... After a two-year postponement caused by pandemic restrictions, our presentation on the history of the Hales Corners Speedway *will finally* take place on Wednesday, July 27th, at 7 p.m. **Please note the location: the Meadows Room at the Village Hall**, not the Ben Hunt Room at the Library.

The dirt track oval of the Hales Corners Speedway opened in 1950, and crowds thrilled to races by stock and sprint cars for more than a half-century. Speedway driver **Don “The Kid” Walter** and Speedway historian **Patrick Heaney** will share stories and photos about the glory days of this legendary track, including reminiscences about other well-known drivers and their cars.

Don Walter started racing around 1974 or 1975, when his brother Larry let him drive his car to see whether Don wanted to race. He did! So, Don’s brothers Larry, Bob, and Jim built a car for Don, which he would drive until 1981. They won a few races and received a special achievement award. Don raced for three years in the sportsman division, then switched to the late model division and became Rookie of the Year in 1979. From 1981 to 1984, he drove cars for others, and eventually drove for his brother Larry until the mid-1990s.

Don commented, “The Hales Corners Speedway was a legendary race track. If you could be competitive at Hales, you could race anywhere.”

Patrick Heaney became involved with the Speedway at a very early age. He loved getting close to the cars and the various smells they produced. By 1965, he was memorizing cars, numbers, paint schemes, and drivers. After the races, he would replicate the cars by drawing them on pieces of paper, and race them on a 3x4” piece of plywood painted to look like the Speedway. As a teenager, Patrick became hooked on building and maintaining race cars, and he occasion-

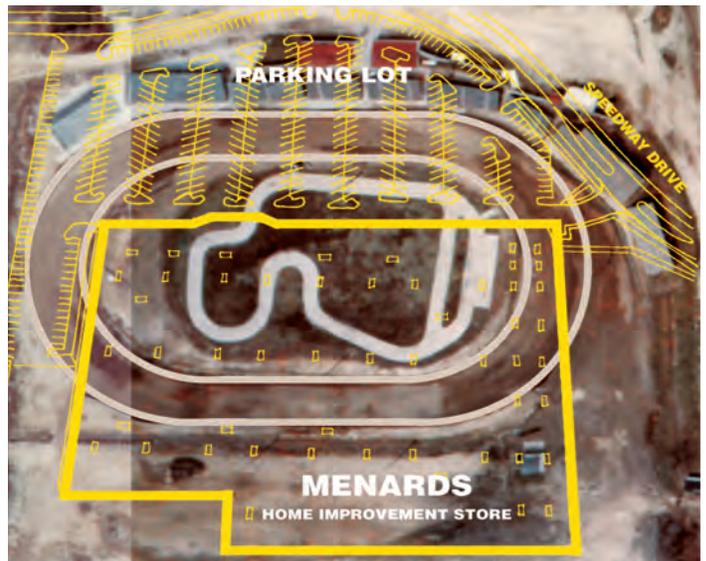
ally crewed a race team. That’s when he started taking photos at the Speedway, now a collection of more than 300,000 images of cars and drivers.

Patrick always dreamed of driving in those races, and that became a reality in 1981. It was the first of 38 years of “going in circles.”

He said, “I won the second event I entered and captured Rookie of the Year that year. I raced at Hales until they shut the place down on August 31, 2003, and continued afterward at many different tracks.”



Hales Corners Speedway in the 1960s



Outline of today’s Menards Home Improvement Store on Speedway Drive superimposed over an aerial photo of the Speedway in 1975

Doug Schmidt Regales Audience with Baseball Lore at May 11 Presentation

The history of professional baseball in Milwaukee was the focus of guest speaker **Doug Schmidt** as he took HCHS members and visitors on a detail-packed tour of “America’s national pas-time” at our May meeting. He also displayed a number of items from his collection of baseball memorabilia.

Doug is the author of *Six Outs to Go: A Baseball Anthology*. His love of baseball began as a young child in the 1950s. By the time he graduated from UW-Milwaukee in 1973, he was the managing editor of Community Newspapers Inc., overseeing 15 writers who covered suburban high school sports. In 1976, Doug began moonlighting, covering Milwaukee Brewers games at County Stadium for United Press International. He subsequently worked for Associated Press in the same role until 1994.

Doug’s presentation began with a look back at the origins of Milwaukee baseball in the 1870s and continued through the Braves’ glory years in the 1950s and the Brewers’ success in the early 1980s. Some highlights were:

- In 1878, Milwaukee was awarded a National League franchise, and the team was named the Brewers. After one forgettable season (15 wins and 45 losses), Milwaukee’s membership in the league ended. Professional baseball didn’t return until 1888 when the Brewers fielded a team in



Slide from Doug’s Six Outs To Go presentation

the Western League. In 1891, they joined the American Association, which was considered to be inferior to the National League.

- March 5, 1900 marked the birth of the American League at the Republican House hotel on 3rd Street and Kilbourn Avenue in Milwaukee. In 1901, the league began operations with eight franchises, including the Brewers. Unfortunately, the team finished last and moved to St. Louis in 1902, where they were renamed the Browns.
- The Brewers’ home in their early years was the 8,000-seat Athletic Park on 8th and Chambers

Continued on page 4



Doug Schmidt, guest speaker



Baseball memorabilia from Doug Schmidt’s personal collection

We Were Featured on CBS-58 Hometowns

On May 31st, a film crew from CBS-58 spent the day in Hales Corners to highlight things happening in the Village. Their series, entitled *Hometowns*, features reporter **Nicole Koglin** as she interviews residents and business owners in a particular town. The interviews are broadcast the same day during the station's news programs.

Nicole started the day by interviewing **Al Strekow**, HCHS President, at the Ben Hunt Cabin. After the interview, Al emailed her a dozen photos of Hales Corners from the late 1890s to early 1900s to provide background material on the Village's early days. Nicole's other stops during the day included Barb's Green House, Boerner Botanical Gardens, the Bosch Tavern, Charmbiance Wine Bar, the Hale House, Holz Motors, and Sherper's Discount Center.

Thanks go out to **Don Schwartz**, **Dan Besson**, and **Mike Fischer** for sending us photos and links to the *Hometowns* interviews. They will be added to our digital collection.



TV interview with Al Strekow in the Ben Hunt Cabin

Hales Corners DPW Helps to Enhance Our History

Ever since Wisconsin's spring weather finally kicked in, the Hales Corners DPW crew has been on the move to finish two projects that are important components of our Society and the entire Village:

As a result of a grant, the DPW was able to focus its attention on the Cobb Park area, and specifically the Seneca Hale Summer Kitchen. DPW crews cut down trees that were infringing on the building, tore out overgrown weed beds, and replaced a dying commemorative tree. They also removed rotting boards at the entry to the Kitchen and filled that area with red granite chips, which they also used to replace the gravel and dirt paths to and from the building. The crews widened those same paths for better ac-

cess and bordered them with fieldstones. They also cleaned up three memorial plaques and reset them on firmer bases. In addition, the DPW will permanently install a bench in front of our historical sign.

Another project the DPW just completed was reinstalling the HCHS sign at Hwy. 100 and Janesville Road. The sign was blown over during a winter

storm. The DPW replaced the broken posts, painted them, and reattached the sign. It is back where it belongs between the Rapid Transit tracks, which the DPW cleared of weeds and debris.

Our sincere thanks go to DPW Director **Mike Martin** and his crew: **Jim "Buck" Hughes**, **Joel Lehmann**, **Jacob "Jake" Beifuss**, and **Mike Engel**.



TALES OF THE CORNERS - JUNE

From the files of the *Tri-Town News* and *Hub*

90 YEARS AGO (1932)

- All Village residents are invited to the Hales Corners School annual picnic at Schuler's Park on Lake Denoon. More than 300 attend.
- The Greenfield Town Board agrees to post 25 mile per hour speed limit signs on all roads entering Hales Corners.
- Janesville Road is to be widened to a 30-foot highway from Hales Corners west to the Waukesha County line.
- At this week's meeting, members of the Hales Corners Advancement Association discuss the 10 cent phone charge for calls to Milwaukee.
- John Debratz opens a barber shop on the Triangle in the Schubring building.

80 YEARS AGO (1942)

- The Hales Corners American Legion, the Hales Corners Volunteer Fire Department, and the Lion's Club plan to erect a Roll of Honor at the Triangle. It will list the names of area servicemen.
- Service star cards are being distributed by the *Tri-Town News* in cooperation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
- Hales Corners oil and gasoline dealers are cooperating in the government's drive to collect scrap rubber. Persons donating rubber will be paid one cent per pound.
- Work on the sanitary sewers and disposal plant in Hales Corners is almost finished.

70 YEARS AGO (1952)

- The Rapid Transit tracks in Hales Corners are torn out.
- Because severe storms have damaged the power lines, the Hales Corners Village Board holds its meeting by candlelight.
- Plans are made for Hales Corners Progress Day to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Hales Corners Fire Department. There will be rides, games, church booths, pony rides, and free dances.

60 YEARS AGO (1962)

- A gala celebration is held at Holz Motors, Inc. for the grand opening of its new \$175,000 building. Free refreshments and a band are featured. (See photo on page 6.)
- The Whitnall School Board approves a \$1,403,817 budget.
- Hales Corners Police Chief Michael Wolke takes a leave of absence to run for County Sheriff.

50 YEARS AGO (1972)

- Agreement is reached on a new Whitnall teacher contract. The base salary is set at \$7,725.
- Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier is scheduled to install the new officers of the Hales Corners Chamber of Commerce. Sam Ruffalo is the organization's new president.
- The Whitnall School Board accepts a proposed \$4,043,912 budget.
- The Hales Corners Burger Chef advertises 5 cheeseburgers for \$1.00.
- Mrs. Robert Harr is installed as president of the Hales Corners Newcomers Club.

Research by Katy Galewski

SIX OUTS continued from page 2

Streets. Later renamed Borchert Field in honor of Otto Borchert, who owned the team during the 1920s, the park was affectionately called "Borchert Orchard" by many Milwaukeeans.

- Among the world-renowned players who once competed at Borchert Field were Olympic gold medalist Jim Thorpe, who played outfield for the Brewers during the 1916 season, and New York Yankees legend Babe Ruth, who played in a post-season exhibition game in October 1928, hitting a home run to win the game.

- Bill Veeck, who bought the Brewers franchise in 1941, was an enthusiastic and creative promoter; an example was his scheduling of special games at 10:30 a.m. to accommodate third shift workers who otherwise would not have been able to attend a game. In 1946, Veeck sold the Brewers to Chicago attorney Oscar Salinger; two years later, Salinger sold the club to Boston construction magnate Lou Perini, who already owned the National League's Boston Braves.

Continued on page 5



Milwaukee Braves button, 1962

- In 1950, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors approved a budget of \$7,750,000 to build County Stadium, even though the city did not yet have a major league team. Less than one month before the start of the 1953 season, Boston Braves owner Lou Perini received permission from the other National League team owners to move the Braves to Milwaukee. At the time, the team was already competing at spring training in Florida, and players thought they would be returning to Boston, only to learn that Milwaukee would be their new home. More than 60,000 people lined Wisconsin Avenue to welcome their new team, and a Milwaukee Braves game immediately became the place to “see and be seen.” During the 1954 season, more than 2.1 million fans attended Braves home games, establishing a new record for a National League team. The culmination of the Braves’ successes during the 1950s came in 1957, when they defeated the New York Yankees in the seventh game of the World Series.

- In 1962, the sale of the Braves to a syndicate of Chicago businessmen doomed

Continued on page 6



Milwaukee Braves pin

TALES OF THE CORNERS - JULY

From the files of the *Tri-Town News and Hub*

90 YEARS AGO (1932)

- A run on the State Bank Hales Corners results in a four-day bank holiday. Depositors agree to a waiver plan in order to reopen it.
- Hales Corners Postmaster James Godsell announces that postal rates are increasing from two cents to three cents.
- Paul Schubring tears down the hitching racks and posts around the Triangle Inn. He also takes over its soft drink parlor.
- A sewage system for Hales Corners is recommended as a number of properties are discharging sewage into a ditch west of the Village.
- The well at Whitnall Park is drilled to 725 feet so that enough water will be available to sprinkle the golf course and keep the artificial lake filled.

80 YEARS AGO (1942)

- Hales Corners School District electors approve \$4,000 to build a temporary barracks for additional classroom space.
- Local members of the Red Cross are knitting sweaters to send to Iceland.
- Old phonograph records are being collected by the American Legion, and are melted down to produce new records to send to army camps.
- Dr. Clifford R. Wolf, who has been located in Hales Corners since 1929, receives a captain’s commission and is awaiting military assignment.
- The quota for local Red Cross Unit Hales Corners is 1,100 of the 2x2 bandages and 450 of the 4x4 bandages.
- Civilian Defense volunteers from Hales Corners attend classes for the Driver’s Corps.

70 YEARS AGO (1952)

- A tax levy of \$22,265 is approved by 25 electors at Valley View School’s annual meeting.
- Bruce Publishing Co. announces it is publishing W. Ben Hunt’s new book, *Indian Silversmithing*. (See photo on page 6.)

60 YEARS AGO (1962)

- Work begins on extending 116th Street from New Berlin Road to Janesville Road.
- Pediatrician John Czajka moves his office to Hales Corners.
- Whitnall School District electors vote to build a \$35,000 administration center and a \$15,000 storage building.
- Rene Brugger, from Switzerland, is named Whitnall High School’s first foreign exchange student.
- The Hales Corners Pony League All Stars win the area playoff and advance to district level competition against a Rockford, IL team.
- The charter for Air Explorer Post 600 is presented to the post at a Hales Corners Lions Club meeting.

50 YEARS AGO (1972)

- After 16 years in Hales Corners, the National Tea Food Store closes.
- Tom Poberezny takes second place in the annual All-American Aerobic Championships.

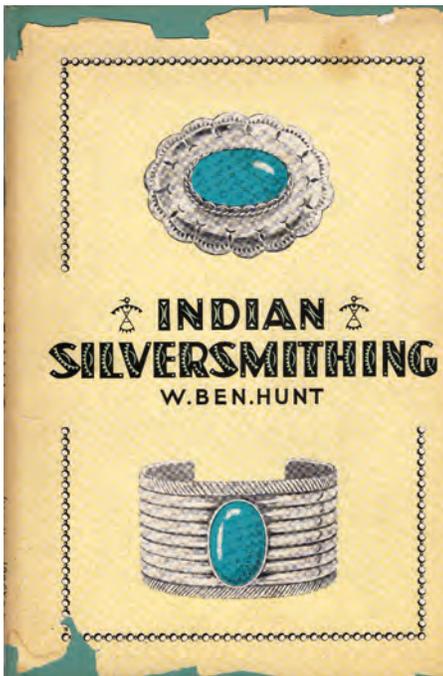
Research by Katy Galewski

From the HCHS Images Collection

By dipping into our growing collection of photos and artwork from the Village's past, we were able to find the images below that are referred to in the *Tales of the Corners*. (See June 1962 and July 1952.)



ABOVE: A photo from June 23, 1962. Holz Motors, Inc. opened a new Sales and Service Building, erected just 300 yards from its previous location. Sales were then averaging 100 to 150 cars each month.



AT LEFT: The book jacket of W. Ben Hunt's book, *Indian Silversmithing*, published in 1952. As usual, the 160-page book featured Ben's illustrations throughout. The book's jacket depicts a brooch and a bracelet crafted in silver and turquoise.

Ben Hunt's Cabin and Seneca Hale's Summer Kitchen will be open on July 4th from Noon - 3 p.m.

SIX OUTS continued from page 5

the team's future in Milwaukee. The team moved to Atlanta at the end of the 1965 "lame duck" season. Among the departing players were fan favorites such as Hank Aaron and Eddie Mathews.

- Milwaukee entrepreneur Bud Selig and a group of investors worked for several years to convince major league owners that Milwaukee deserved another team. After overcoming many obstacles, Selig finally succeeded in 1970, purchasing the bankrupt Seattle Pilots, an American League expansion team, for \$10.8 million, and renaming them the Milwaukee Brewers. The team struggled during the early 1970s, but a bright spot was the return of legend Hank Aaron, who finished his career in Milwaukee in 1975-76. In 1978, the team experienced a turnaround season and started seriously contending for the American League pennant. In 1982, "Harvey's Wallbangers" won the pennant and went on to the World Series, although they lost to the St. Louis Cardinals in seven games.



Braves Cigarette Lighter

HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

5885 South 116th Street, Hales Corners, WI 53130 • 414-529-6150, Ext. 24

info@HalesCornersHistory.com • www.HalesCornersHistory.com • www.facebook.com/HalesCornersHistory