

19 November 2000
LAWRENCE O. "HUGHIE" HUGHES
A Biography

By age 16 he was already digging in the old parts barrels behind the auto shops in Beatrice, Nebraska so he could build his rudimentary racer from the frame up. Even at this age he had already learned to use all the tools he needed to get the job done.

He then took the pieced together cars out into the open country so he could drive in circles, learn to shift properly, handle the clutch and practice steering and sliding in the dirt and mud.

He had graduated from the Benson, Nebraska School District on May, 31st 1916 and was mostly on his own as many youngsters were in that day. He worked around the Nebraska countryside at locations such as Virginia, Wahoo, Lincoln and eventually wound up in Beatrice. He gained experience in lube, brakes, steering and became an excellent mechanic. In the mid 1920's he opened his own garage called The Motor Inn in Beatrice. It entailed a garage, dance hall and restaurant all in the same building. The address was 114 N. 7th St.

He had been racing around the countryside and this provided the money for the Motor Inn. He built his own Ford from the ground up, painted it white and carried the number 101. He called it his "Indianapolis Type" and was a winning driver, records show many wins at the Ak-Sar-Ben track in the late 20's and early 30's. He also raced and won at the N.C.K. Track and the Stearns track as well as the super fast-banked track at Belleville, Kansas. Many of these wins were with his Model A Ford. But he also raced stock cars.

He won many races on these same tracks with his Chrysler 75 Roadster. In one race he finished one and one quarter laps ahead of the next car. He won the 100 mile race in 1 hour, 36 minutes and 32 seconds. His average speed was 62.2 miles per hour with one pit stop. He was hitting speeds of 81 miles per hour on the straightaways of a dirt track. He broke the stock car record from a rolling start in qualifying for the mile oval at :53.8.

In the 1930's Hughie finally moved to Belleville where he worked for the Kravemore garage and raced weekends. By this time he was drawing big crowds because he was a skilled outside passer. In other words he would go outside and high to catch the dirt lip on the track and bounce down in front of the leader. This was very dangerous and exciting for the crowd to watch. With the hundreds of races he ran, and he won many, he never had a serious injury and lived healthy in Oregon and expired at age 78.

He was recently featured in an article in the July Issue of "Secrets of Speed" magazine, a publication of the Secrets of Speed Society a 100% volunteer automobile society.