

Tuesday, Feb. 13, 1996



Dale E. Swanson, 77

Feb. 22, 1918 - Jan. 28, 1996

HARLAN - Dale Everett Swanson, son of Theodore and Neva (Cole) Swanson, was born Feb. 22, 1918 at Castana in Monona County. As a young boy, he moved with his family to a farm near Mondamin where he graduated from Mondamin High School in 1936. After graduation, he helped operate the family farm for a short time. The family then moved to a farm near Harlan where he farmed until moving into Harlan in 1942. He operated gas stations and car repair shops until establishing his own automotive business.

Aug. 20, 1941 he married Phyllis Kohles in Harlan. Four children were born to this union. Shortly after their marriage they moved to Harlan. Dale began racing with 1939 Ford Coupe at the Shelby County Fairgrounds. After meeting Johnny Beauchamp, a very successful racing career began with Johnny as the driver and Dale the car owner and mechanic for the racing team. Dale also built cars for "Tiny" Lund in his early years and helped him start his racing career. The team raced around the midwest until 1952, at which time they stopped due to fatigue. Three years later Dale began building Chevrolet race cars with their new V-8 engine, which they began racing after completion. They began racing in Minnesota and Wisconsin as well as in Iowa. Soon they signed a contract to race the GM in the International Motor Contest Association. From 1955 to 1957, GM shipped parts to wherever they raced. The duo won 72 out of 114 races in the stock car division in addition to earning a second place finish in Daytona. They placed 1st in

National Point Standings in IMCA in 1956 and 1957. In January of 1957, GM sent Dale to Atlanta, GA to be in charge of building 14 cars for Daytona. One of those cars, driven by Johnny Beauchamp, placed 2nd. After that job, GM sent him back to the Midwest to work for the company. In 1956, Dale became a dealer for Johnson Outboard Marine, which he continued until the time of his death. At the end of 1957, Johnny and Dale stopped racing under the GM contract, but the two did continue to race on their own. In 1961, Dale worked on the pit crew for Smoky Unich, whose car won the 1961 Daytona 500.

In 1964, Dale opened a new automotive business in Harlan, Swanson Automotive, and discontinued his racing career for a few years to build his business. In the 1970's and 1980's he began racing again in what he called "hobby racing". Dale and his wife, Phyllis, regularly attended the races in and around Harlan as well as many national races and the sport has now been passed down to his sons. Other important racing accomplishments include second place Daytona Beach race in 1957, 14th place finish, 1960 Daytona 500 with Bob Potter driving, 2nd place finish in the First World 600 at Charlotte, NC with Johnny Beauchamp driving, 9th place, Darlington 500 in 1960 and First place in the 1960 NASCAR Grand National Race at Nashville Motor Speedway, Nashville, TN. In 1960, he was 10th in Owner Point standings for NASCAR Grand National Racing. Dale died Jan. 28, 1996 at his home in Harlan at age 77 years, 11 months and six days. In addition to being a past member of the Harlan J.C.'s, Dale was a current member of The Old Timer's Racing Club of Archdale, NC and The Living Legends of Auto Racing, Inc. of Daytona Beach, FL.

He was preceded in death by his parents and an infant daughter, Janet Kay Swanson. Dale is survived by his wife, Phyllis Swanson of Harlan; his children, Dale Swanson, Jr. (Mary Jane) of Harlan; Richard Swanson (Joyce) of Windsor, CO and Kim Swanson (Barb) of Harlan; eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren and other relatives.

Funeral services were held Jan. 31, 1996 at Pauley Funeral Home with Msgr. Edward Kelly of St. Michael's Catholic Church officiating. Burial was in the Harlan Cemetery with Max Bacon, Frank L. "Rusty" Wirth, Leo Mores, Ernie Schnack, Orv Roecker, John Helling, Jay Peterson and Leroy Anastasi honorary casket bearers. Casket bearers were Shane Swanson, D. Kenneth Swanson, Fred Norgaard, David R. Swanson, Ron Stitz and Chlinger.