

CLASSIC DRIVER

Tribute to Phil Hill: 10 November 2011



The Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles will host a very special 'Tribute to Phil Hill' on Thursday 10 November, including a short film presentation about Phil, put together by Phil's son Derek.

The footage comes from a film that Derek Hill is in the process of producing. "I'm looking forward to finally sharing some of this documentary because I have been doing so much on it," he says. Among the other attractions is an exhibition entitled *Phil Hill: The Life of a Legend* (independently sponsored by The Auto Gallery), displaying Phil Hill-related cars – classic and racing – and personal memorabilia. Plus renowned drivers – Phil's friends – will be there to tell some of their best stories about Phil to the assembled guests.

Winning his first race in 1949 driving an MG TC, and his last in 1967 with a Chaparral, Phil Hill accumulated an incredible list of motorsport achievements in his life, including wins at the Le Mans 24 Hours and 12 Hours of Sebring three times each, conquering the cruel Nürburgring, and being the first American F1 World Champion, for Ferrari in 1961.



Oddly, however, Hill said his happiest years were in the late 1940s, as a mechanic working on oval track midgets. At age 70, he confessed, "Never before or since have I been as genuinely content. You know how some guys end up ski bums? I could have ended up a midget bum."

Throughout his life, Phil Hill kept people guessing as to his intricate persona, and the media were unable to

define him. He was said to be “totally frank and blunt on any subject”... “ruminative”... “gifted”... “a meticulous writer”... “always intrigued by the wider world”... “never one to brag about accomplishments”... “hates decisions”... “the worse case of pre-race jitters ever seen.” He was a teacher and mentor to his children, loved pet animals, and would “read the newspaper with a bunny rabbit”, as his wife Alma described him. She, for whom marriage to Phil never occasioned a boring moment, notes that her husband was curious about everything. “He all but took over from the doctors,” she said of the births of their children, Vanessa and Derek. Alma also has a daughter, Jennifer.



Derek Hill, now 36 and recently to be seen behind the wheel of a 289 Cobra at the Coppa InterEuropa Storica Monza, and a Tipo 151 Maserati at the Goodwood Revival (where Alma green-flagged the RAC TT warm-up lap), recalls of his father, “He probably drove racing mechanics absolutely nuts, also team managers and engineers, but they loved him in the end because he delivered, and the hard effort paid off.”

The ‘Tribute to Phil Hill’ is being presented by The Petersen Automotive Museum, the Phil Hill family and The Checkered Flag 200 Group, at The Petersen Museum in Los Angeles on Thursday, November 10 at 6:00 p.m. Early ticket purchase is strongly recommended (they are likely to sell out). Call the Petersen Automotive Museum office on 323-964-6325, or 323-964-6325, or see www.petersen.org - tickets are \$125 per person for Museum members, \$150 for non-members, and include a buffet dinner, the evening’s complete programme, and parking.



Text: [William Edgar / Classic Driver](#)

Photos: William Edgar; Ferret Fotografics; Jack Campbell and Lester Nehamkin (Edgar Motorsport Archive)

Gallery

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