

1939

IT WAS THE LAST 500 FOR TWO champions, Louis Meyer and Floyd Roberts.

Meyer, the first three-time winner, might have won a fourth time but crashed on lap 198. He lived to be 91.

Roberts, the 1938 victor, crashed on lap 107 and was fatally injured when his car flipped over the wall and burned.

Wilbur Shaw, driving a Maserati on a three-car team financed by Mike Boyle, won the second of his three 500 victories. Pole sitter Jimmy Snyder, who set another qualifications speed record at 130.138 mph, came in second. It was Snyder's best showing in five tries and would be his last. A month later, he was killed in a midget-car race in Illinois.

MIDDLE: Wilbur Shaw was the winner of the 1939 Indianapolis 500. Shaw also won the next year, becoming the first back-to-back winner of the race. *Star/News Archives*

RIGHT: Shaw received a warm greeting after winning the 1939 race. He also won in 1937 and 1940, and finished second in 1938. *The Indianapolis News*



ABOVE: The front row of the 33-car field for the 1939 Indianapolis 500 jumps past the pace car as the green flag drops to start the race. The front row consisted of Jimmy Snyder on the pole, Louis Meyer in the middle and Wilbur Shaw on the outside. Shaw won the race. *Star/News Archives*



LEFT: Safety workers battle flames from the crash on lap 107 in which 1938 500 winner Floyd Roberts was killed. Bob Swanson, driving in relief of Ralph Hepburn, had lost control entering the backstretch and Roberts swerved to the outside. Robert's car hit Swanson's, then went over a barrier and struck a wooden fence. *Star/News Archives*

BELOW LEFT: Chet Miller's car was also involved in the accident that killed Roberts. In an effort to avoid the car of Swanson, Miller crashed into the infield. Miller broke his shoulder and was hospitalized for several months. *Star/News Archives*



Death Brings End to Floyd Roberts's Reign as Speedway King for a Year

Just one year from the day in 1938 when speed was humbled by his mastery and the victor's crown in the 500-mile race was his, Floyd Roberts, stout-hearted race driver, yesterday gave his life in defense of the brilliant record he set then.

Roberts was injured fatally in a three-car accident on the southeast turn of the Speedway and died at 1:29 o'clock in the Methodist Hospital.

Mrs. Roberts, who was watching the race here for the first time, arrived at the hospital only a few minutes after death had written a tragic end to the racing career that extended over 23 years.

The couple's two children, Betty Louise, 10 years old, and Billy, 8 years old, had remained in Van Nuys, Cal., home of their parents, awaiting word of the victory they were certain their father would win... a victory he had promised them.

The stricken driver did not regain consciousness following the accident which involved his mount and those of Chet Miller and Bob Swanson.

Roberts's body was taken to the Kirby mortuary. Funeral arrangements have not been made.

Mrs. Roberts returned to the home of Mr. and Mrs. L. G. Epstein, 3518 Balsam avenue, where she has been a guest. Her husband had been staying at the band had been staying at the Riley Hotel, nearer the Speedway.

Plane Engineer.

Roberts was born in South Dakota 39 years ago but he lived nearly all his life in California, a state that breeds heavy-footed race drivers. He was an engineer in an airplane factory in Van Nuys.

Floyd Roberts began his career in automobile racing when he was 16 years old. Most of his racing was done in the West. He was second in the Pacific coast championship in 1934. In 1935 he came to Indianapolis, qualified for the 500-mile grind and finished fourth. In the following year he drove 183 of the 200 laps.

In 1937 the husky 6-foot, 200-pound driver was running in seventh place at the halfway mark, despite the fact that he was nursing a recently broken arm. And, at 490 miles, he was flagged while running in 13th place.

Set Blistering Pace.

The intrepid driver set a blistering pace last year and never lagged further than fifth place after the first 50 miles had been run. He was fourth at 100 miles, third at the 150-mile post, second after 250 miles and leading from the last 150 miles to the finish line. He was the only pole starter to win a race here.

Survivors of Roberts, besides his wife and the two children, are two brothers, Earl Roberts, who came to the Speedway with Floyd, and Harley Roberts, with whom the children are staying in Van Nuys and two sisters, Mrs. C. C. Bishop and Mrs. Eddie Malone. All are of Van Nuys. Only Earl and Mrs. Roberts were at the Speedway.