

# Won 1911 '500,' Claims Mulford

By WHITNEY MARTIN

New York (AP)—The record books say that Ray Harroun, driving a Marmon, won the first Indianapolis 500-mile speedway race in 1911, so we were a little surprised when the burly fellow remarked mildly:

"To tell the truth, I won that race. They missed a lap on me."

The burly fellow is Ralph Mulford, a half and hearty 70 now selling automobiles at Red Bank, N.J., and working on some revolutionary motor inventions on the side.

"It was pretty confused in those days," he explained, "and it was three days before they named a winner. Three cars broke steering knuckles in front of the grandstand. The other cars slowed down but I saw an opening and zig-zagged through. The timers and judges didn't see me, as they had scattered to keep from getting hurt.

"I WAS awarded second place, and I didn't kick too much as I got \$12,000. But everyone knew I won."

Mulford holds the remarkable record of driving in hundreds of big races over a 22-year span and never suffering an injury.

"I had only one bad accident," he says. "At Sheepshead Bay in 1919 I had won the first four races on the card and was leading coming into the home stretch of the 50-mile final race.

"Louis Chevrolet was trailing me, in my wake, and to shake him I turned sharply toward the bottom of the track. The steering tie rod pulled off, and at 120 miles an hour I crashed into the infield wall. The car shot up to the top wall, stood on end, then rolled down the track again. Neither my mechanic nor I was hurt, and five minutes later we were driving again in another car."

MULFORD drove all kinds of cars under all conditions during those early days of the roaring road. At Indianapolis he finished second, third, fifth, seventh, ninth and tenth, and that's about the only track on which he never won.

He won the first Elgin Road race, and won events in Omaha, Des Moines, Atlanta and other racing centers. He won 11 of 12 events at Galveston Beach in one day in 1914.

His first racing experience was in a Lozier, but he later drove Dusenbergs, Frontenacs, Peugeots, Hudsons, Mercedes and the Mulford car, among others. In fact, with two alternate drivers he set a cross-country record of five days, three hours and 31 minutes in a Hudson. That was in 1916 and his adventures on that trip, much of it over practically trackless waste, would fill a book.

"Old Leadfoot" and "The Gumdrop Kid" they used to call him in his racing days, the first for an obvious reason, and the second because he took a box of gumdrops with him in every race.

"THEY GAVE you energy," he explained. "At Indianapolis I'd have my mechanics toss a gumdrop to Joe Boyer as he drove alongside."

Tires were a big problem in the early days, and in a 24-hour race—they had a lot of them then—at Brighton Beach Mulford used 110 casings in traveling 1,600 miles. Incidentally, he says he invented the first balloon tire.

We wondered if he ever experienced fear before or during a race. A man can get hurt in that sport.

"Never," he said with a grin. "I'd just say a little prayer before I started. Racing was fun."