



## **SKIP BARBER, PRESIDENT OF LIME ROCK PARK**

Skip Barber has had an amazing career, as a driver, as the founder and developer of the largest, most respected racing and high performance driving school in the world, as the initiator of the first real "ladder system" to enable gifted young American drivers to ascend to the top echelons of racing, as the owner who made Lime Rock Park the beautiful circuit it is today, and as a recognized collector and connoisseur of vintage sports cars.

Skip's racing career began in 1959, during his senior year at Harvard on a full scholarship. He was one of those lucky few endowed with natural-born speed and feel for a race car; indeed, Skip won his first race.

However, Skip was the classic talented but unfunded driver at a period in racing when sponsorship, training, and equality of equipment were largely unavailable to up and coming drivers.

Despite these obstacles, in the mid-1960's Skip won three SCCA National Championships in a row in the most competitive SCCA classes. In both 1969 and 1970 he won the Formula Ford National Championship, a record only recently equaled.

In his first professional race, Skip led World Champion Jim Clark in an identical Lotus 23 for 190 miles; it was the car, not the driver, which couldn't manage the final ten miles. In Formula 1, he placed seventh in the first Grand Prix, but his other six starts the insufficiently funded car failed. Autoweek predicted that Skip would win the 1973 Formula 5000 Championship in the factory March, but the car turned out to be diabolical, and the plug was pulled after four races. During his amateur and professional career, Skip held 32 track records around the country.

In 1975, when a top ride fell through at the last minute, Skip founded the Skip Barber Racing School with two borrowed Lola Formula Fords, to test whether the craft of racing could be imparted to aspiring drivers, rather than hidden (and sometimes deliberately misled) as was then the common practice. Quickly realizing that racing was indeed eminently coachable, and that he enjoyed the challenges of designing, managing, and growing a new type of business, he put his driving aside and focused all his considerable energies on the school.

The next year Skip established the first “spec” series in the U.S., The Skip Barber Northeast Formula Ford Championship. This concept was also unique because the identical cars were all prepared by the same crew. A racer couldn’t take his car home. Everything came down to the drivers’ ability – and not to money, or engineering, or connections, or luck. Because one person was in control the usual high costs of sticky tires, engine and chassis development, and testing were eliminated. This all-about-the-driver concept and series rapidly expanded into four series across the country, which are still going strong more than 30 years later.

A Pro Series was also added –first Barber Saab, then Barber Dodge. Same concept, but the cars were faster; the races were run on major weekends; shown on ESPN, and there was significant prize money. A pro series is also still going strong today in a somewhat different format, the Skip Barber National.

Through his School’s novice and advanced on-track teaching programs, race series, reputation, and affiliations with various sponsors and sanctioning bodies, Skip created stepping stones and “scholarships” which enabled drivers with sufficient talent and desire to advance from novice to professional road racing. Within a decade, the Skip Barber Racing School became and remains probably larger than all the other racing schools in the world put together, and has produced champions in every major American series.

In 1999, Skip sold the School, which remains Lime Rock Park’s biggest user.

In 1983, when Lime Rock Park’s future was in doubt, Skip put together a group of five other Lime Rock racers as Lime Rock Associates, and acquired the track. Over the subsequent years, these investors have moved on to other interests and sold their shares to Skip, who is now the sole owner. As you look around beautiful Lime Rock Park today, almost every facility and landscaping you see was developed and paid for by Lime Rock Associates; it is no longer the traditional scruffy, oil and rags racing experience of yesteryear. Indeed, a new milestone is the establishment this year of the exclusive Club at Lime Rock Park.

Skip’s successes have enabled him to indulge in a related passion, his continually evolving and respected collection of recent and vintage sports and racing cars.