

The Fabulous Fifties

NEWS ALERT



Dusty Brandel 1934 - 2022

We are sad to report Dusty Brandel has passed away. Dusty was always an enthusiastic supporter of Fabulous Fifties' events and gatherings and will be greatly missed. There are no immediate plans for a memorial at this time. Condolences can be sent to Dusty's niece, Christie Benetiz, at 922 N. Pass Avenue, Burbank, CA 91505.

Norma Lee "Dusty" Brandel was born in Los Angeles on September 29, 1934. She began her motorsports journalism career in 1955 working for the Hollywood *Citizen News* covering various Southern California sports car races. A copy of the article where she covered the Grand Central Airport race in Glendale, California is included below.

1963 was Dusty's first year reporting from the Indianapolis 500, but women weren't allowed in the garages or press rooms at certain racetracks at that time, leaving women reporters at a significant disadvantage compared to the male correspondents. Unfortunately, that didn't change at Indianapolis until 1971 when Dusty was one of the first women allowed in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway press room. "On the west coast, I had no problem. I could go to the sportscar races, the drag races with no problem" Dusty said. However, USAC and NASCAR races proved difficult to cover without credentials. The *Citizen News* editor suggest she adopt the nickname "Dusty" as a distraction and the name stuck.

In 1972 Brandel received the first NASCAR press credential assigned to a female at Ontario Motor Speedway's *Miller High Life 500* NASCAR race in California where she reported live from the Speedway garages. When Fontana's California Speedway opened in 1997, Dusty was there to report on the action.

In 2001, Dusty received the American Auto Racing Writers & Broadcasters Association (AARWBA) Angelo Angelopolous Award. She eventually became the president and executive director of the 400-plus member organization.

In 2018 Brandel was honored at the NASCAR Hall of Fame induction ceremony in Charlotte, North Carolina as the recipient of the Squier-Hall Award (named after NASCAR broadcasters Ken Squier and Barney Hall). Brandel was also a board member of the West Coast Stock Car Hall of Fame.





Ginny Sims, Paula Murphy, Mary Magee, Dusty Brandel, and Mary Davis at *The Legends of Riverside* event in 2011 (photo: Steve Johnson)



Richard Petty speaks with Brandel and Jody Deery during Voting Day at the NASCAR Hall of Fame in Charlotte, North Carolina. (Photo by John Harrison/Getty Images for NASCAR)



Dusty at Hot Rod Magazine Press Party in 1965 (Photo by Pat Brollier/The Enthusiast Network via Getty Images)



Dusty Presents Titus Trophy to Dario Franchitti at 40th Anniversary Auto Racing All-America Team Banquet in 2010