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## RIP: LEGENDARY RACER AND JOURNALIST DENISE MCCLUGGAGE

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One of the true legends of motorsport and the Grande Dame of American women in racing has passed from our world to the next: Denise McCluggage. Her list of experiences is too long to display. Her experiences in motor-racing alone – traveling and hobnobbing with the greats of the 1950s, 60s, and so on – is mind-numbing and indescribable. Her writing abilities, which spanned topics as diverse as racing, road-cars, sailing, and skiing, won her numerous awards, including the Ken W. Purdy Award for Excellence in Automotive Journalism and the Dean Batchelor Lifetime Achievement Award.



Juan Manuel Fangio | Stirling Moss | Denise McCluggage | Pedro Rodriguez | Innes Ireland | Ronnie Bucknum

regatta. Soon after, she bought her first sports car – a MG TC – and moved to New York to write for the New York Herald Tribune. Now in the center of east coast action, she began her racing career at a professional level. She traveled, raced, and socialized with the greats of the day, including Stirling Moss, Juan Manuel Fangio, Wolfgang von Tripps and many others. A quick internet search of her name will bring up countless images of her in action. Never, a “shrinking violet,” she’s often shown in racing gear or leaning over an engine and intently discussing the issues of the day.

Though she’s widely known for racing her Jaguar, various OSCAs and Maseratis, or a Ferrari 250 GT, much of her racing career was in her own Porsche 550, which she raced from late 1956 through 1958 with much distinction at Nassau, Lime Rock, Road America, Watkins Glen, and many others.

More than being a racer, McCluggage became a voice and an ambassador. Her writing opened the dangerous and glamorous world of motor-racing, making it seem accessible and fun. Dare say, with her quiet yet deliberate demeanor and acute skill for driving, she played a large role in the popularization of sports cars in America. She made it seem...easy. She took that graceful style to her professional career as a journalist.

As expert as she was in all fields automotive, her stories never sounded like those of a “car-guy.” Adventurous, seasoned, and experienced, she was even more articulate in a manner that erased the greasy rag vernacular from discussions of cars, bringing them to the level of an artistic, intellectual pursuit, yet still accessible. She made discussions of cars effortlessly sensible. From that, she built a life writing about the fun, the joy, but also the utility of all things automotive. When asked why she never wrote an autobiography, she said “I don’t do fiction.”

That was Denise McCluggage.

For more, see: <http://denisemccluggage.com> or <http://autoweek.com/article/car-life/denise-mccluggage-1927-2015>

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