



Squire SS-100 Registry Newsletter

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Spring 2009

What's up:

Squire Rally set for October 9-11, 2009 in Marshall, North Carolina

Here is what we have planned so far:

Friday evening we can have a cookout on my back deck. You can see for 50 miles in each direction.

Saturday we can have breakfast in the metropolis of Marshall NC (county seat of Madison County, population 842). Then we will drive through the mountains the mountain to have lunch at Kanati Lodge near Max Patch at 4000 feet elevation. Then back down the mountain for dessert at the Spring Creek Café. Then a one hour drive back to Marshall by the scenic route.

Dinner is still open – we could have dinner at the Blue Mountain Pizza in Weaverville or have a catered dinner at one of the local hangouts.

We are checking out the B&Bs and some local hotels/motels. Hope to have a list to you in the next month or so.

Sunday morning we drive to The Preserve at Little Pine, an upscale development in Marshall where the DIY TV Blog House is being built. The lodge and the view at top of the mountain at 4200 feet are both spectacular.

Contact Chuck Blethen ASAP when you have decided if you can make it.

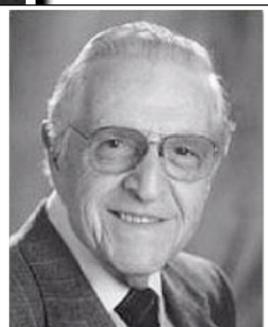
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A Tribute to Ed Felbin

Salley Downey, staff writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer wrote this about Ed Felbin:

Local radio pioneer Frank Ford - who over the decades worked for just about every station in town - died March 3, 2009 from complications of a stroke at Vitas Hospice at St. Agnes Hospital in Philadelphia. A longtime Center City resident, Mr. Ford was the husband of Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham. He was 92.

Although Mr. Ford was also a musical-theater impresario, he was best known as one of Philadelphia's first talk-radio celebrities. His last gig was hosting a daily show with WWDB-FM before it switched to an all-music format in 2000.



"Frank was my mentor," said radio personality Sid Mark. When Mark, who hosted music shows, had to do a talk show in the 1970s, Mr. Ford gave him good advice. He told him, "When you get stuck, there are three topics that will always light up the phones -Will Social Security be there when I get old?; Nobody can tell me where I can walk my dog; and Why can't two parents take care of all the children and all of the children can't take care of the two parents?"

Mr. Ford grew up in Logan as Eddie Felbin and graduated from Simon Gratz High School in 1934. As a student at the University of Pennsylvania in 1937, he worked at WHAT-AM as an announcer for \$15 a week and car fare.

After graduating from Penn in 1939, Mr. Ford ran a modeling agency called "Eddie First." Later, when he had a radio gossip show called "Hollywood According to Hoyle," he took the moniker "Eddie Hoyle."

How he got the name Frank Ford is another story. In 1946, he had a job selling radio time for a radio station, and one of his clients was Frankford Unity Grocery Store. The store wanted a music program, and Mr. Ford figured that he could pick up extra cash by hosting the show.

To sweeten the deal, he took the moniker "Frank Ford." The program lasted 10 years, and the name stuck. "I wonder what my name would be if the sponsor was the Piggly Wiggly stores," he told the Daily News in 1995. In the 1950s Mr. Ford was an announcer on WPEN-AM when the station asked him to take over for a late-night talk-show host who had moved to New York. He took the job, and eventually became one of the first radio personalities to implement technology that permitted dialogue between callers and the on-air host. (Previously the host had to repeat what was said, because listeners could not hear callers.)

Known for his liberal views, in 1959 Mr. Ford won an award from the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission for informing the public "on many issues of inter-group relations." While hosting a talk show on WPEN-AM in the early 1970s, he did several interviews with Ira Einhorn, the local hippie guru who killed girlfriend Holly Maddux in 1977, and was later convicted of her murder. In 2002, Mr. Ford told The Inquirer that Einhorn "stank even then," as though he never washed.

In 1985, Mr. Ford became one of the bosses, bought WDVT-AM, and held the station until it closed after three years. During his tenure at WDVT, the station became the first in Philadelphia to broadcast a gay-oriented program. It was hosted by Mark Segal, publisher of the Philadelphia Gay News.

After retiring from radio in 2000, Mr. Ford ran an advertising agency, Reinhart Productions, that made and placed radio and TV ads, for several years before retiring for good. Mr. Ford first met the future Philadelphia district Attorney when she was growing up.

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As a young girl, Abraham - who is 24 years younger than Mr. Ford - helped take care his ill father. Whenever Mr. Ford's mother wanted to go shopping, Abraham was called to sit with her husband. And when she was a teenager, Mr. Ford got Abraham a job at the Valley Forge Music Fair, which he had founded in 1955 with partners Shelley Gross and Lee Gruber. The first show, "The King and I," opened in a tent in the summer of 1956. The partners eventually erected a theater on the site.

And as a college student Abraham babysat Deirdre, Mr. Ford's daughter from a previous marriage. In the 2002 Inquirer interview, Mr. Ford said Abraham was considering going to medical school, but he talked her out of it. He told her: "You ought to be a lawyer. You're forthright. You've got a big mouth. You talk well. You're smart."

They married in June 1977. By then she was a Municipal Court judge and he was hosting talk shows on WFLN-AM and WWDB-AM. "I'm interested in her work," he told The Inquirer a few months after the wedding. "I'll wander over and just walk into her courtroom and sit and watch. Professionally, she's very direct, considerate."

Abraham was a Common Pleas Court judge when she ran for District Attorney in 1990. "I told her not to run because she'd be giving up tenure - she was a judge - and taking a large pay cut," Ford told the Daily News in 1998. Although Abraham called Mr. Ford the smartest man she knew, she didn't take his advice. After she was elected, he was supportive. He bragged about her cooking and claimed she made chicken soup just like his mother, but it was Mr. Ford who got up at dawn to make breakfast when Abraham became district attorney and had to be in the office at 7 a.m.

"No wife could have a better cheerleader and supporter than Eddie," Lynne Abraham said in an interview today. "He wanted everything good for me and was selfless even when I was working 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and on holidays. He didn't want anything to impede my doing the best job that I could." Abraham said her husband regularly attended her press conferences until becoming ill in October. Mr. Ford and Abraham traveled all over the world, she said, including to China, Japan, Africa, Australia and New Zealand. He was a foodie and enjoyed art, architecture, dance and opera, she said.

"Frank did everything with such zeal," his wife said. His accomplishments, she said, included producing concerts for entertainers as varied as Benny Goodman and Renata Tebaldi; making a TV pilot with Dr. C. Everett Koop called "Seniority;" and manufacturing cars. Mr. Ford briefly owned a business reproducing classic Jaguars. **(We now know them as Squire SS-100s.)** "He was remarkable," Abraham said.

In addition to his wife and daughter, Deirdre Wild, Mr. Ford is survived by two grandchildren a great-grandson, and his former wife, Dorothy Smallwood.

His funeral was held at 11 a.m. Friday, March 6, 2009 at Joseph Levine and Sons Memorial Chapel, 7112 N. Broad St., Philadelphia. Ed Felbin was buried in Haym Solomon Cemetery, Frazer.

The history of the Squire SS-100 from our website, www.SquireSS-100.net (thanks to Ed Spielman):

Ed Felbin had owned Jaguars and other foreign sports vehicles. There were many reliability problems with them. Felbin saw NBC personality Dave Garroway's white Jaguar SS-100 and thought it one of the most beautiful cars in the world. Having owned that succession of troublesome Jaguars, and others, Felbin thought a new car of classic design with elegant foreign coachwork and modern American power was a good and saleable idea. In this, before the days of 'kit cars', Felbin was ahead of his time.

Felbin WAS ahead of his time. Ed Felbin was one of several principals in the creation of five music fairs, among them Valley Forge Music Fair (established 1955), Cherry Hill and Long Island's Westbury Music Fair. Felbin had sufficient capital in the late 60's and early 70's to take on such an expensive project as this dream car. But Felbin, who was not very technically oriented, worked with Mike Wolf, an auto dealer in Philadelphia who sold Saabs and Fiats. Wolf was to get a profit percentage in the enterprise, though Felbin was to fund it. (Mike Wolf is since deceased.) It was Wolf who had suggested the particular Ford power components and he was the principal technical designer of the Squire SS-100. (Spielman met Mike Wolf at the New York coliseum Auto Show in April, 1971, at the Squire Mezzanine display.)

Felbin and Mike Wolf knew a man by the name of Jim Carson, a car dealer and fancier, who had an old original Jaguar SS-100 in his barn. Ed and Wolf went there and laboriously drew detailed plans and sketches of every angle of the car. Felbin went to Detroit to Ford Motor Company with Ray Heppenstall, a race driver and builder, as consultant. In Dearborn they were made to sign a release to the effect that whatever idea they presented, Ford had already thought of. At Ford, Felbin and Heppenstall met with an executive named McDonald who assisted them. A deal was made for the Ford power and components on the projected new automobile.

The 'Squire' name had no connection whatever to a British sports car briefly made in England decades before by Adrian Squire. Felbin's car needed an identity, a prefix before 'SS-100' to set it apart and give it an aristocratic sound. Felbin was playing golf at a 'Squire's Country Club,' which proved suitable inspiration. Felbin simply removed the 's' and somewhere before the eighteenth green, the name 'Squire SS-100' was born.

Felbin decided to build the car in Italy. The Italian Trade Commission in Philadelphia gave him names of potential builders, among which was Giancarlo Ramponi. Felbin and Wolf went to Milan to see Ramponi (whose secretary was Gina Woerth). Felbin struck a deal with Ramponi, an Italian industrialist who made agricultural power-plants with imported Volvo marine engines. Thus, the notion was founded (as indicated in early Squire SS-100 brochures and literature) that the cars were to be crafted by Carozzeria Ramponi. Ramponi assigned the work to an engineer, Roberto Vito. Ramponi/Vito built the Squire SS-100 prototype in the town of Triuggio, Italy (near Milan), but never completed it.

After months, Felbin was concerned about the lack of activity. He visited Italy unannounced and found, to his disappointment, that no further work had been done and that the prototype had not been completed. Rather than see the project go wrong, he went to Italian authorities to find another builder to carry on with the project. They recommended Frank Reisner, American creator of the small coach building company, Intermeccanica. Reisner at that time was constructing the Indra automobile at his small coach works.

A deal was struck for Reisner/Intermeccanica to construct 100 Squire SS-100 automobiles for Felbin's Auto Sport Inc. of Philadelphia. Felbin shipped 100 Ford 250 cubic inch, 6 cylinder engines with transmissions and rear ends to Reisner's shop in the town of Trofarello near Turin (across the street from the Fiat railroad yard). Ford engines and complete power units were shipped to Italy under bond. No duty would be imposed if they left the country in completed cars. Therefore, though Italian made, no Squire automobiles were sold in Italy (or a tax would have to have been paid).

According to Felbin there were one hundred power units at Reisner's shop and security was lax. Fifty of the units disappeared from the plant. The order of cars to be constructed was then cut to fifty.

Problems arose; Felbin paid for trips for himself and Mike Wolf to Italy to try to solve them. As per the original brochure, the prototype sported Borrani wire wheels, which were to have been used, but Borrani wouldn't guarantee that the chrome wouldn't crack due to natural flex of the wire wheels. Felbin contacted Dunlop who would guarantee the chrome on their wheels. Felbin bought 250 wheels (five wheels for fifty cars). They were shipped by air from England.

The U.S. government prohibited use of 'knockoff' spinners in wheels therefore octagonal hubs were made. They used expensive units that appear on no other automobile. These knockoff hubs were custom made by Reisner/Intermeccanica. According to Felbin, Reisner's Intermeccanica completed fifty cars that were shipped to the U.S. The first shipment of six cars went to Heppenstall for preparation before sale. Upon arrival much additional work was necessary to prepare all of the Squires for sale. Felbin had the finished prototype returned to America anticipating arrival of the other cars. Felbin took the completed prototype to the Department of Transportation. He had to make a trailer to haul the car to Michigan to Ethyl Corporation for exhaust emissions tests, which it passed. The cars had pre-approved stock Ford parts.

All the Squire SS-100's came to Felbin at either Baltimore or Newark. Ed Felbin recalled that a D.B. Kaufmann in Louisiana had bought one of the cars, liked it and became a Squire dealer in Kenner, Louisiana.

There was a press luncheon at Tavern On The Green in New York City when the car was first announced. Felbin showed his new Squire SS-100 in Boston and in April 1971 at the New York Auto Show. He then flew the car to the Los Angeles Auto Show and to Pasadena. The International Auto Show at the Place Bonaventure in Montreal, Canada made the Squire SS-100 their 'star car' and put it on the cover of their souvenir book. Pictures of the Squire SS-100 appeared in Playboy magazine about February 1972.

Felbin had the car shown at Miami's Doral Country Club in May of 1972. Felbin expected production cars to arrive at his Auto Sport, Inc. by July of 1972.

Listed as having been manufactured between 1972-73, fifty Squire SS-100's were actually made and shipped to America. Ed Felbin began the project in 1969-70. The entire enterprise, both in America and Italy, took four to five years.

The following information came from a conversation between Paula Reisner and Ed Spielman in July 1991:

Frank and Paula Reisner were principals in the company of Intermeccanica that made the fifty Squire SS-100 automobiles. According to Paula Reisner in Vancouver, the original body mold was made for Ramponi. Intermeccanica used that mold to make the bodies one at a time. Though Paula verifies that Mike Wolf was the original technical designer of the Squire SS-100 automobile, Frank Reisner re-designed the chassis. Paula recalled Intermeccanica's fabrication of certain parts. The expensive brass knockoff hubs were cast in Turin then machined there. The knockoff hubs were made for the Squire SS-100 only.

Each of the fifty Squire grill shells was hand-made in the old coach-built manner, panels beaten over a wooden buck. The Squire chrome headlights were made in Turin specifically for Intermeccanica and this car. The windshields and glass were custom fabricated by Saint Gobain-Vis.

Paula Reisner recalled that the torsion bars were originally Alfa Romeo but were modified by having the ends machined to a square fitting. Torsion bar bushings were machined from Teflon.

According to Paula Reisner, after so many years, all of the original molds have been lost and no spare parts are available.