

SAE member wins prestigious motorsports award co-sponsored by SAE Indiana Section

Presented by engineers to engineers, the annual Louis Schwitzer Award memorializes the innovative spirit of Louis Schwitzer, an automotive engineer and pioneer who won the first automobile race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1909. Each year, the award is presented to an innovative engineer or engineers who have developed cutting-edge concepts that improve competitive potential and focus on advancements that increase the safety, performance, or efficiency of Indianapolis 500 racecars. Award recipients receive \$10,000 and their names added to the Louis Schwitzer Award trophy.

The Indianapolis Section of SAE International plays a big role in the award, co-sponsoring it with automotive supplier BorgWarner and organizing a unique banquet to celebrate the award winner and the memory of the deceased man after whom the award is named. Louis Schwitzer at one time chaired the SAE Indiana Section.

And so it is a very special occasion when the award winner(s) is an SAE Member, as is the case this year.

Nineteen-year SAE Member Terry Trammell, M.D., is the 2021 winner (54th overall). He was feted at the Indiana Section's award banquet on May 22 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where the award trophy resides. Along with his medical degree, Trammell has a bachelor's



Dr. Trammell spoke at a banquet held by the SAE Indiana Section for the Louis Schwitzer Award trophy presentation.

degree in chemical engineering. In his acceptance remarks for the award, he noted that “I’m a member of the SAE and depend on them. I use their library a lot... One of the first things you do when you work on project is go to the library, find out who has already done it. I depend on that often. I’m appreciative of the SAE for being the SAE.”

The Louis Schwitzer Award selection committee wrote the following of Dr. Trammell: [He] analyzed data and studied



Trammell and Schwitzer descendants pose after the banquet at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

impacts and car construction to catalog a very detailed history. His combined medical and engineering skills and experience has developed into a career for driver safety. His diverse background and skills in his current role as a consultant to INDYCAR has led to an innovative approach to safety. Dr. Trammell consulted with car builders to establish early safety foot box protection. He then worked with engineers to increase protection of the back and reduce the potential of head and neck injuries. The current Head Surround reduces head g forces and the injury from the g forces back and forth, side to side. High-density

foam development and the efficient use of the Thor dummy with crash testing cataloged crash and injury data. This allowed correlating the data with sled crash testing, resulting in design safety standards and continuous improvement.”

According to the committee, this native of Richmond, Ind., “has performed surgery on many motorsport competitors including members of the Unser family, A. J. Foyt, Mario Andretti, Shirley Muldowney, Rusty Wallace, Dale Earnhardt, Tony Kanaan, Nelson Piquet, Mark Dismore, Jim Crawford, and Dario Franchitti. He is possibly most recognized for surgery and reconstruction

of the feet of Rick Mears after a most severe injury at Sanair Super Speedway on September 7, 1984 (all bones in one foot were broken).”

SAE Indiana Section Chair Tim Alfermann told *Update*: “After the year we all have been through having to restrict social interactions due to COVID-19 protocols, it was great to be able to have this event once again. It’s an honor to be able to help carry on this tradition of recognizing engineering excellence in our peers and shining a light on the importance of constant innovation. The support we receive from our section members and corporate sponsors to be able to do this every year is phenomenal.”

Added Myron Rickard, past Indiana Section Chair who now serves as Louis Schwitzer Award Banquet coordinator, added: “It is truly an honor to be a part of an annual engineering award recognizing



SAE Indiana Section Chair Tim Alfermann offered remarks at the May 22 award banquet.

excellence and innovation during the month of May at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for the Indianapolis 500, the Louis Schwitzer Award.”

“Above and beyond that,” Rickard continued, “this is an award 55 years in the making that celebrates the award’s namesake Louis Schwitzer. Louis has a long and successful history with the motorsports world at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, from racer, engineer, components development through his businesses, and his passion to his craft via service as Chair of the SAE Indiana Section. To embrace that history as an SAE Indiana Section—along with the great sponsorship from BorgWarner, Valvoline, and Cummins—it doesn’t get much better where engineers recognize engineers for their great work and accomplishments at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.”

Valvoline and Cummins covered many of the costs associated with the banquet, Rickard noted. ■

By Patrick Ponticel, *Update* editor



Borgwarner

In a separate ceremony held by BorgWarner, Trammell was given the cash prize of \$10,000 that comes with the award. Also shown are Steve Holman (right), chair of the award selection committee, and John Norton (middle), both of BorgWarner.