



# **Ray Crawford - Speed Merchant: A California Grocer's Love Affair with Risk, From P-38 Lightnings to the Indianapolis 500**

*Andrew Layton*

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Ray Crawford was one of the most versatile racing drivers of the 1950s - maybe ever. Aside from his upset victory in the 1954 *Carrera Panamericana's* stock car division, widely considered to be the world's most dangerous and grueling race, he competed passionately in sports cars, championship dirt cars, midgets and unlimited hydroplanes. On three occasions, he qualified for racing's greatest spectacle, the Indianapolis 500. But for most of his driving career, Crawford was labeled a dabbling amateur by auto racing's rough-and-tumble "in" crowd. The reason: his family's supermarket empire through which his dreams of speed were financed. Controversial, yet charming and affable on the racetrack, few of Crawford's competitors ever knew that his unbelievable daring was motivated by an equally audacious career as a decorated P-38 combat ace and test pilot that had turned sour. Drawing on family recollections, interviews with friends and colleagues, as well as Crawford's own, un-published wartime letters, *Ray Crawford - Speed Merchant* tells the story of one of the most amazing personal journeys you've never heard of. Includes over 250 images from aviation and auto racing history, presented by legendary racing filmmaker/photographer Dick Wallen, and a personal foreword by Alice Hanks, wife of 1957 Indy 500 winner Sam Hanks.

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