

## **GILL HAUGAN**

Gil Haugan had one of the shortest yet most successful careers in driving race cars. Haugan started on May 22, 1955 at the old Soo Speedway just east of Sioux Falls in a 1938 Plymouth coupe built by he and brother Vern. "I was upside down four or five times that first year, but we finally figured it out," Haugan said. The brothers built a new Plymouth coupe for the 1956 season, and Haugan won his first of many features on May 22. He won four more features and the season track championship in only his second year of competition. He defended the championship title again in 1957 by the widest point margin ever recorded with nearly 350 points over second place. In 1958, the Haugan No. 4 Plymouth was again the point leader at Soo Speedway when the track closed in July. The Haugans towed the red and white car to Jackson, Minnesota for the remainder of the '58 season and won that track championship. Gil raced only part time in 1959 and recorded one feature win at Huset's and two at Jackson. In 1960 Gil and Vern again ran at different tracks in South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa and did not concentrate on one track. But in 1961 they arrived at the Huset's opener with hammers cocked with a new Plymouth coupe, winning the season championship title. They also won at the Clay County Fair in Spencer and decided to elevate their racing endeavors to the next level. That winter they drove to Level Cross, North Carolina and purchased a 1961 Plymouth NASCAR stock car from Lee and Richard Petty. Following some Haugan reworking of the late model, they campaigned the car on the IMCA late model circuit for two years. Haugan retired from racing at the end of the 1963 season to concentrate on his business of Gil Haugan Construction Company. Today that company is the largest volume general contractor in the state of South Dakota. His competitive nature wasn't confined to racing automobiles. With his 'I like to win' attitude, Haugan was a five time South Dakota State Tennis Champion. He is a veteran of the Korean War with the Marines and received the Silver Star for heroism under fire.