



Le Mans, 25th February 2008

HOMAGE TO PAUL FRERE A LE MANS LEGEND

The Automobile Club de l'Ouest was very sad to learn of the death of Paul Frère at the age of 91, and would like to present its most sincere condolences to Suzanne his wife as well as to all his family and friends.

Paul was an expert on motor racing and the motorcar in general (his analyses as an engineer were always much appreciated by manufacturers and entrants alike), as well as a journalist and writer who worked for several newspapers/magazines and whose books became reference works. In addition, he was a highly-skilled driver who raced in the Le Mans 24 Hours 8 times winning the event in 1960 in a Ferrari shared with his fellow-countryman, Olivier Gendebien. He drove in 11 F1 grand prix between 1952 and 1956, and he was one of those alchemists who turned everything he touched into gold.

He reported regularly on the 24 Hours, in particular in the official annual of the greatest endurance race in the world, and transmitted his passion with a humility and openness, which never left him up to the very end of his life. He amazed everybody in 2003 at the age of 86 when he climbed into the cockpit of an Audi R8 before the Le Mans 24 Hours, and got down to the 4-minute barrier after only 2 laps of the track!

For Paul driving, racing and testing were as natural as breathing, walking and talking and that joy, which seemed to infuse his being when he got behind the wheel, never left him. Until that fatal day in September 2006 when aged 90 he had a huge accident on the Nürburgring. He unfortunately suffered serious injuries in it that undermined his excellent health, which, in the 40s, had enabled him to win the Belgian rowing championship 5 times!

A legendary figure has left us and who, we wonder, will open the 2008 Le Mans 24 Hours Press Conference? Paul always asked the first question and all his fellow-journalists respected this unspoken tradition.

His elegant silhouette will no longer be seen in the 24-Hours pressroom but his name will never be forgotten in the Le Mans Hall of Fame and in the world of the motorcar in general. Paul Frère's Spirit of Le Mans award in 2001 was, and will remain, a fitting homage to the great man that he was.

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