



Meet the Leader, Dan DeRusha, Executive Director, International Motor Racing Research Center (IMRRC)

Describe Your Organization

I was very pleased to have the opportunity to join the International Motor Racing Research Center as Executive Director in June of 2019. Our mission is to collect, preserve, and share the history of global motorsports. We are technically an archival research library and were established formally as an independent non-profit entity just over 20

years ago. The Center's collection includes nearly 5,000 volumes, hundreds of DVD and VHS recordings, periodicals dating back to the 1930s, thousands of slides, photographs, negatives and films, race programs from around the world, trophies, artwork, models, race results, and much more. A rotating display of an historically significant racecar serves as a centerpiece. While scholars, journalists, authors, documentary filmmakers, drivers and racecar owners from around the world use its archival collections, the Center welcomes serious researchers and casual fans alike to share the stories of races, drivers, and cars captured on the shelves and walls of the Center and brought to life through public lectures and special events.

Tell us your story:

I was first exposed to organized racing working communications as a Ham Radio operator with my dad for the Susquehannock Trail Pro Rallies in Wellsboro in the mid-80's. I maintained a casual interest in racing over the years but it was my return to the region and regular access to events at WGI and especially the Vintage Grand Prix Festival that has particularly fueled my passion, especially for vintage racing. I have also developed a strong interest in the history of the automobile industry in Upstate New York over the years in conjunction with my ownership of a 1928 Franklin, built in Syracuse, New York. In favorable weather we regularly drive the Franklin as well as a 1977 MGB inherited from my dad that will also be my son's first car.

The first half of my professional career was focused on transportation and logistics (supply chain management) in the for-profit world, including a long stint with Coca-Cola and then several years as a project manager leading supply chain software optimization projects domestically and internationally. I grew up in the Rochester area, specifically Honeoye Falls and Chili, and graduated from Barker High School in Niagara County. Upon joining Coca-Cola following my undergraduate work at Syracuse University I lived in several locations on the east coast including New England and Atlanta. I returned to the Finger Lakes Region in the early 2000's in order to pursue new career opportunities and to be closer to family. It was following that move that I transitioned into the not-for-profit world first working for the Aurora Inn. Most recently I spent 13 years with the Corning Museum of Glass managing remote glassblowing deployments and I also worked extensively on the development and execution of the GlassBarge project that concluded in the fall of 2018 with its final deployment in Watkins Glen. I live in Corning with my wife Courtney, our two children, James and Margaret, and our dog Zippy.

Personally, the Center provides me the opportunity to combine my passion as a car enthusiast with my interests and professional background in business and organizational management. The last six months have been quite an adventure. As a 'car guy,' I jumped at the opportunity to lead the Center. When I began in June I knew there was much to be done. What I found was a passionate and talented staff juggling multiple projects with enthusiasm and expertise, but still in need of more resources and support. I have since been kept very, very busy learning about the depth and scope of the

Center's work, meeting new people, developing new partnerships, writing grants, participating in strategic and financial planning, and so much more.

What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

Leading a small non-profit is not that different from leading any small business and it is the combination of daily challenges and long term strategy development that keeps me energized. Given my business background I am keenly aware of the need to balance our revenues with our expenses and I tend to approach our challenges with a business mindset.

What inspires you?

The Finger Lakes region is one of my favorite places to be during all seasons and it is the wealth of creativity in the area that inspires me most. I have enjoyed the benefit of travelling extensively for business over the years and it has only solidified my love and appreciation for all that we have to offer here.

What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

While I would not say that it keeps me up at night, long term sustainability is always a priority and it requires balancing a constant focus on maintaining and pursuing expanded sources of revenue with our ultimate goal of furthering our archival work and sharing our collections with the broadest audience possible. I'm very fortunate to have joined a team that shares my excitement about the work ahead. 2020 will be another banner year and we look forward to sharing new programming including a feature exhibition, extending beyond the walls of the Center, celebrating our collections while highlighting the contributions of Women in Motorsport.

What is your favorite local activity?

When not "playing with cars," my family and I appreciate being on and around Seneca Lake, enjoying local food, wine and spirits, exploring local art and culture, skiing, biking and most recently creating on our vintage letterpress.

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