

2006 IAMA Lifetime Achievement Recipient

Jim Dunne

An automotive writer for over 40 years, his career began with a column for national magazines in the mid-1960s which continues today. His writing duties focus on evolving activities in the auto industry worldwide, especially as they affect the auto business - mostly the products - in Detroit.

His specialty is revealing the secrets that auto companies like to keep from the public, especially those that reveal the shape and substance of their future vehicles. Despite Dunne's skill with the written word, and many years of track testing cars and trucks, his reputation nowadays is equally based on his ability with the spy camera.

His product-related coverage ranges from air bags, FM, XM radio, DVD, night vision, drive by wire, navigation, turbines, 3-, 5-, 10-, 12- and 16-cylinder engines, flex fuel, turbines, and hydrogen fuel, to rotaries, electrics, and many more.

High profile personalities in the field of autodom found a place in Dunne's writings as well. Five icons of the past stand out: Henry Ford II, John Z. Dloean, Lee A. Iacocca, Mario Andretti and Jimmy Clark. More recently, he has written about newsmakers including Michael Jacson (AutoNation), Bob Lutz (GM), Dieter Zetsche (DCX), Jim Padilla (Ford) and Bob Stemple (GM/Ovonic).

Dunne's photographs have appeared in all the major newspapers and car magazines in the US, in many European and Asian publications, and on television around the world. One of the pioneers in so-called spy photography, Dunne's success spawned numerous wannabes.

His first spy photo to make publication was of the revised Corvair, shot on a test track at the GM Proving Grounds in Milford, Michigan. Taken from over the fence in an area now known as "Dunne's Grove", the photo had the dramatic quality of real life testing, not something posed. That prompted one national magazine buyer to write Dunne that the "Š. photo is electrifying. Get us some more."

Magazine cover photo credits included cars like Corvette, Mustang, Lincoln, Camaro, Chrysler LH.

Dunne points to his Army service as a precursor to a big part of his life's work. During the Korean War, he served as NCO in charge of an infantry Intelligence and Reconnaissance Squad. Jim claims the Recon part - spying from unlikely places - serves him well in his picture-taking pursuits.

Through the years, his work travels have taken him to just about every country in Europe, several Asian countries, Morocco and South Africa.

He has been sued for millions of dollars over a story written on the unproven benefits of so-called "miracle gas savers" (lawsuit withdrawn), and, been investigated in a matter of purloined proprietary photographs (the investigation stopped well short of official government interviews).

And yes, there was life before journalism. In the early years his resume would include a long list of medium-skill jobs, including newspaper boy, produce clerk, driving instructor, salesman (shoes, magazines, office and construction equipment), postal service driver, roofer, furniture mover, Chrysler press machine operator, and repo driver.

A life-long sports enthusiast, Jim's current top recreations are tennis, reading, sport fishing, and travel. Of course, the art of Palmistry, practiced by Dunne as a professional and amateur, is one of his more notable pastimes.

In addition to all the above--auto writing, photography and travel, together with an active sports life--Jim Dunne is a safety device inventor/patent holder, and fit in a stint as technical writer for Redstone Missile.

A native Detroiter, Dunne is a graduate of the University of Detroit and a U.S. Army veteran. He has seven grown children, and lives now in Grosse Pointe, Michigan.