

application with the A.A.A. Contest Board for a racing driver's license—a move that came far from pleasing Uncle Ralph!

De Palma registered a loud protest with the A.A.A. against the granting of his nephew's request, claiming that Peter was too young, too inexperienced to sit behind the wheel.

Remembering an occasion eleven years previous, when Ralph had opposed the granting of a driver's permit to another member of his family—his brother, John De Palma, who, like Peter, had served him long and faithfully as mechanic—I went to bat for De Paolo, with the result that his plea was granted and he was allowed to take his place on the starting line as a rival instead of an aide to De Palma.

Ralph's name will live in speedway history as that one of the truly great drivers of all times. He was a brainy pilot as well as a game one. He had only one fault—jealousy over the bestowing of speed laurels on his kinsmen.

Ralph and I were comrades throughout long years together on the tracks, and only twice did that friendship temporarily hit the toboggan. That was for a few weeks after I had assisted John De Palma in accomplishing a long-nurtured ambition in winning a chance to drive, and for a similar period after I had done a like service for Peter.

Today, however, Ralph has no doubt changed his views regarding John and Peter, for both have been a credit to the game.

Peter's first trip to the French Grand Prix was in 1921 when he was the mechanic for his Uncle Ralph and Jimmy Murphy. The race was held at Les Mans, and the end of the day saw Jimmy the victorious

winner. The following year Pete was invited by the Ballot factory to drive in the Grand Prix at Strassbourg in Alsace-Lorraine. Through some error, the Ballot people thought he had already signed to drive for another company and therefore signed up Count Mazzetti to take his place.

The Count had driven a German Mercedes to victory in the Targo-Floria, race of the 48,000 curves in Sicily, the year before. Because he had driven a German car instead of an Italian, the Italians would not allow him to drive a Fiat at Strassbourg. So he took the French Ballot car that Pete was to drive.

Well, Pete showed up for the race but the Count had already been promised the car.

"Mon Dieu!" cried Ballot when he saw Pete. "Is it really you?"

There was only one thing to do, and Peter, the diplomat, went ahead and volunteered to ride as Mazzetti's mechanic.

"Ah," beamed the Count, "that is good. We shall sing all the way."

It was a race of rain and mud, and Pete did all the singing that was done that day. The Count was too busy driving—and cursing Ballot. Nothing hit its mark except the flying mud, and that hit you squarely in the eye.

And so they were off, and here is how Peter related this priceless story to me:

"We were the last to enter, so we drew the twentieth and last spot. The Fiats were right up front as they had entered first. The Count had his heart set on beating the Fiats because he was sore at the Italians for not allowing him to drive one.

"It was raining and there was a great scum of mud