



## **RACING GREAT JOHN FITCH LAID TO REST**

*By Michael Brown*

Under a cold gray sky that earlier in the day had left a dusting of snow on the Connecticut countryside he loved so much, John Fitch was laid to rest on Saturday. The December 1st interment was near his home and the Lime Rock Park race track that bore his imprint for so many years.

Fitch died in the early morning hours of October 31, 2012. He was 95 years old.

A small private graveside service, under the direction of Trinity Episcopal Church's Rev. Heidi Truax was held prior to a public memorial an hour later. Family and close friends took part in the interment of Fitch's cremated remains along with those of his late wife, Elizabeth. The outdoor service for Fitch, a World War II pilot, hero and P.O.W. included a military honor guard, rifle salute and taps.

Shortly after the private ceremony, a capacity crowd filled Trinity Episcopal's sanctuary in a memorial service titled **A Celebration of Life - John Cooper Fitch.**

Fitch led a remarkable existence which included many diverse descriptions of his accomplishments. He was, at varying times in his life, an inventor, patent holder, automotive and race track designer, sailor, fighter pilot, safety advocate, husband, father and, of course, legendary race car driver. At his death, he remained the only American who ever raced for Mercedes. He was also closely associated with the formative years of Corvette Racing and was an icon to all who knew or knew of him and his racing career.

Though his last professional race occurred in 1966, he remained active almost until the end. In 2010, he famously drove the restored #3 Briggs Cunningham Corvette in a ceremonial lap around the 8.5 mile Le Mans track in France. He was 92 years old at the time. He took the wheel of the 1960 Corvette which he had co-driven with Bob Grossman to an unlikely GT class win and overall 8th place finish in the the 1960 race...the first time Corvettes had ever been a part of the field at Le Mans.

The lap he drove in 2010, with car owner Lance Miller at his side, marked a half-century since the 1960 win at Le Mans.

During the memorial service, his long and eventful life was eulogized by four friends and associates. One of Fitch's three sons, John

H. Fitch, spoke first, followed by actor Edward Herrmann, long-time friend and automotive writer Don Klein and fellow racing legend Sam Posey.

The overflow crowd celebrated his life and shared John Fitch stories at a reception following the memorial service.

----- (Photos with captions below. All photos courtesy the author)



A small group of close family and friends gathered for a graveside interment of racing legend John Fitch and his late wife, Elizabeth. The outdoor private service in rural Connecticut preceded a much larger public memorial for Fitch an hour later.



A capacity crowd of at least 250 people attended a December 1st memorial service for late racing legend John Fitch. Fitch died at age 95 on October 31st. The service, held at Lakeville, CT in the Trinity Episcopal Church, was attended by a long list of friends, family, racing and automotive luminaries.