

Buster Rides Again...50 Years Later!

In February of 1959, Villages resident Arthur (Buster) Burt entered the Modified/Sportsman series race at Daytona International Speedway. It was the first event on the brand new super speedway, and Buster made history along with 99 fellow drivers as they took the green to inaugurate the spectacular “world center of speed.” A six-year veteran of local stock car venues at the time, Buster had built an impressive set of credentials as a quiet, methodical competitor who could get the job done. His credentials included regular competition on the Speedway’s predecessor track—the four mile combination beach/road course at Daytona—and weekly combat on short tracks like Orlando, Lakeland, and Eau Gallie. A frequent winner, Buster came to be known as one of the sports true gentlemen and a pioneer of the early days of stock car racing in Florida and his home state of Maine.



Later in life, Buster re-emerged as a Legends-series driver in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, eventually being named NASCAR Legend Car Director in 1996. As evidenced by his two-year stint as a show-car specialist for Roush Racing on the NASCAR Cup circuit, he kept his hand and his heart in racing at many levels, and was named to the Maine Motorsports Hall of Fame in 2006. After a 55+ year love affair with motorsports, Buster stepped out of that world and into the world of retirement, moving to Florida and then to The Villages in 2003. He thought he’d put the roar of the stock car behind him. He was wrong.

In 2006, at the suggestion of a friend, Buster joined The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club, and quickly proved that “once a racer, always a racer.” With his blood once again boiling, he began to take field trips with the club to local tracks, often fighting the urge to jump in a race car and take off. Then, late last year, Buster won first place in a club raffle—a ticket to join the Richard Petty Driving Experience at—where else—Daytona International Speedway. After pondering his options—tear up the ticket, give it away, forget about it, or use it—his love of motorsports got the best of him and he scheduled his return trip to the Speedway for February 1, 2009...fifty years to the month after last setting foot on the track!



So, on February 1, at the tender age of 79 (very soon to be 80), Buster, accompanied by 30 fellow club members and supporters, made the trip. In the pre-event training session, officials commemorated the history-making event, with Buster basking in an ovation from fellow participants and spectators. His support group added to the excitement with cheers as he took to the track, and afterward presented him with a plaque memorializing the day.

It was a great day for everyone involved, and clear proof

the blood of a racer is always high octane!



Buster Burt shares thoughts on his Speedway experience with Matt Bowers, now driving for legendary Dick Anderson of Wildwood.