

# Car racing, restoration intrigue resident

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By Bob Turner

Spruce Creek South neighbors Buddy and Beth Pearce had arrived at a recent Cruise In at Spanish Springs Town Square in their 1930 Model A Ford. A brief shower before the start of the event left some beads of raindrops on the beauty, which Buddy was wiping off.

Buddy is president of the Heart of Florida Model A Restorers Club. He also is a former stock car racer, having raced with the Allison brothers and others from the "Alabama Gang."

Buddy invited me to stop by his SCS home to have a look at a room he and Beth recently redecorated with memorabilia from his racing days and awards won for his restoration of the Model A.

Just inside the entrance of the converted bedroom they fondly call "the museum" is a replica of a racing car steering wheel, clutch and brake assembly positioned in front of a large TV screen. It is a virtual video racing simulator licensed by NASCAR.

"Ever see one of these?" Buddy asked as he switched the device on. I had to admit that I had not.

In a few moments we were at the Martinsville, Va. speedway, driving Bobby Labonte's No. 43 Cheerios car (the game is an early version). The setting was very realistic with loud track sounds and pitcrew members giving advice from speakers on the TV.

"The next guy I come up on, I am going to spin him out, I'll show you how that works," the former pro driver said to me with a chuckle. Scratch one driver hitting the wall in a puff of smoke!

"OK, now your turn," he said to me, getting out of his seat. I bounced the car from one side of the track to the other, driving off the track several times. Cars were veering all around me. I sideswiped a few as they passed by. Buddy had made the driving seem so easy. Finally, I crashed into a wall ending my virtual NASCAR career!

Buddy notice me glancing at a framed collage of photos of his antique Ford.

"This is the first car show we went to, St. Petersburg," he said, indicating and identifying his car. The car had garnered the national junior award at that event.

His wife saw the senior trophy and told Buddy she wanted that one. "Well, we need about 10 more points to get it," he said he informed her. Undaunted he returned home and worked on the car, getting it close to 100 percent original, even down to the type of bolts that Henry Ford used to attach the license plate.

The coveted National Senior trophy, a silver-plated Duryea, now rests on a trophy shelf in the couple's Spruce Creek South home.

Moving from the "Model A section" of the room, buddy continued the "tour," showing and naming famous NASCAR people he appeared with in the dozens of photos neatly mounted on the walls.



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**Spruce Creek South** residents Buddy and Beth Pearce leaf through a book written and personally autographed and given to them by Bobby Allison. They are sitting in a room of their home that they converted to an archive containing mementos from Buddy's racing days.

Several of the photos show him decades ago driving true stock cars whose engines and carburetors were tweaked by home-garage mechanics.

Propped in one corner, in contrast to the other décor of the room, was a professional water ski. Buddy explained it was from a business he owned in West Palm Beach, where he taught water skiing to a fashionable clientele from a nearby private girls' academy.

Alluding to the current influx of foreign cars, I asked Buddy the type of autos he thought might be displayed at The Villages Cruise In 50 years hence. Buddy has doubts about many of today's imports becoming the classics of tomorrow – as many of our cars of yesteryear have become – saying, "They have no character."

I had to agree; today, it is common to overhear the comment, "I had one just like that, wish I had kept it!" Current owners of the old beauties just smile when listening to the tales of those who gave away their gems decades ago to be turned into scrap metal.

Should you see our SCS residents Buddy and Beth sitting beside their 1930 Ford at Spanish Springs Town Square, ask him about the framed news clipping he has concerning his driving an Edsel at Daytona, but never, never challenge him to a race on his virtual NASCAR game!