

# Fan Connects With Race Car Driver

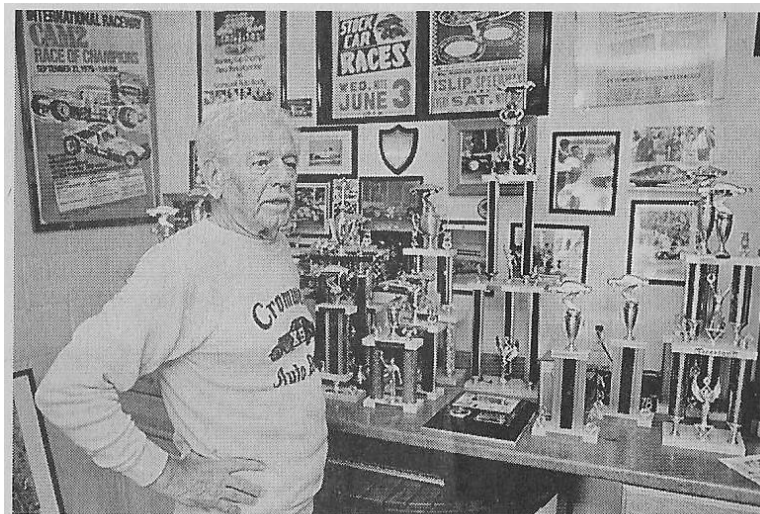
Loyal fan Chris Bleistein ended up in the same club as race car driver George Wagner

The Villages Daily Sun  
Sunday, June 7, 2020  
By Sherri Coner

Roaring race car engines are still music to George Wagner's ears.

And Wagner can always step into his garage in the Village of Winifred and return to yesterday.

In that large garage space, rows of trophies, autographed hats and jackets, newspaper clippings and photos remind Wagner of the guy he will always be. He is a championship driver of modified stock cars.



Photos by John DeClerk | Daily Sun

**George Wagner, of the Village of Winifred, stands in front of his many trophies Thursday. They were won during a racing career that spanned from 1962 to 1982.**

But Wagner never expected that moving south would result in meeting Chris Bleistein, of the Village of Osceola Hills, one of his biggest fans.

When Wagner began his racing career in 1962, he was placed with other beginners in the novice division at Freeport Speedway in Long Island.

Having dreamt of racing since he was 12, Wagner took all of his intentions into the driver's seat, showing that he thought fast and moved faster. He had a knack for anticipating what other drivers might do before he blew past them for the win. He was a force to be reckoned with, on the track and off of it. He was known to speak out for himself and

other drivers about pay and other racing-related issues.

For several early years, he raced at Freeport Stadium in Freeport, New York, Islip Speedway and Riverhead Raceway, also in New York. His career then took him to Daytona International Speedway, as well as Dover International Speedway in Delaware, and Pocono Raceway in Pennsylvania.

By day, Wagner lived a more traditional life.

He married Carol, his bride of 62 years. They brought two sons and a daughter into the world.

Newspaper clips displayed in his garage tell more snippets of his racing story.

When he and Carol decided to move south, he had no way of knowing that eventually, a devoted fan would enter his life.

That fan, Bleistein, grew up on Long Island and watched Wagner race and win as often as his dad would take him to the track.

"I always watched car X-9," Bleistein said with a smile. "I didn't know the driver's name but that was my favorite car."

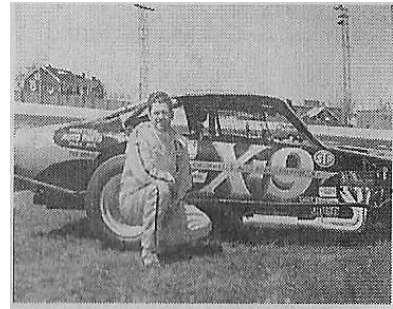
The driver for car X-9 was Wagner. Once he and Carol were settled in their new home, Wagner joined The Villages Motor Racing Club.

Last year, when Bleistein became club president, he was stunned to find that Wagner was a club member.

These days, the driver and the fan are buddies.

Bleistein never tires of hearing his idol's stories and Wagner never gets tired of telling them.

"I feel like a kid in the candy store," Bleistein said of hanging out in Wagner's garage. "All these years later, I finally get to meet the guy, the X-9 car driver."



**George Wagner poses in front of a race car. Wagner's racing career spanned from 1962 to 1982.**