

# Living Life In The Fast Lane

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By Brittany Libby

**Note: Skip Bryan is a member of our club and a Hall of Fame member, Class of 2014. Eileen Daniels is a Hall of Fame member, Class of 2012.**

There are 18 car clubs in The Villages, a multitude of attractive vehicles and thousands of racing enthusiasts.

These residents were and still are participants, supporters, fans, addicts and athletes who were all influenced by the sport of racing early on in life.

Many are still active fanatics today, at least one of them still behind the wheel of a race car.

A number of Villagers have stories of their own experience in racing – from IndyCar racing and road racing to autocross racing, and one very accomplished female drag racer – and the Daily Sun collected some of the stories from residents who lived their life in the fast lane.



## Vintage Sports Car Racing



As a young man, Village of Lynnhaven resident Skip Bryan dreamed of being a race car driver.

After spending years as a racing “groupie” and spending time in the pits, Bryan is finally living his dream – picking up the sport at 60 – and is still racing nine events a year at the age of 75. “I like the challenge of the sport, and enjoy having the ability to be competitive at my age,” Bryan said.

He grew up watching races and wished to one day drive on the famous NASCAR tracks, like Watkins-Glen International or Sebring International Raceway. “I am the luckiest man to have such wonderful support from my wife,” Bryan said.

"I called her one afternoon as I was driving home and told her I wanted to start racing, and at that time I was 60 years old."

Bryan races a 1972 BMW, which he bought stripped and rebuilt with a mechanic friend. It's the same car he continues to race in events today.

"I attend nine events a year at tracks in various states," Bryan said. "I race in Group 8, which consists of series-produced sports cars and sedans in production prior to 1979, and later cars by invitation."

Bryan says his hobby takes 110 percent concentration when he is behind the wheel, driving at high speeds on twisting, simulated courses. "The fun is beating the guys with bigger engines."

## Drag Racing



Eileen Daniels became part of The Villages auto enthusiast community when she was invited to join The Villages Antique Automobile Club as an honorary member.

Even though she wasn't a resident, her lifetime of experience was sought by the club.

Her adventures in racing started in 1956 when she and her husband started fixing up cars to drag race. "I liked cars, and I liked to go fast," Daniels said.

She could keep up with the boys when putting the pedal to the metal or changing a transmission.

The couple bought and built a 1939 Fiat coupe on the stone and dirt floor of their garage. Selling their current vehicle to get the money to buy parts to build the Fiat, team Daniels finished the car that led to their final victory in 77 days.

"Neither of us was ever beaten in the Fiat," she said.

She and her husband were recruited by the National Hot Rod Association to help create car clubs while getting kids off the streets in Ohio. Daniels was the president of an all-girls car club there, and was the first woman to hit 100 mph, receiving a 100 mph jacket from the many guys who had never earned one.

"We agreed, without hesitation, that we would sell the Fiat and go to work for the NHRA. There were no second thoughts about it; we knew what we wanted to do."

Daniels is still involved with the NHRA today, including the 2016 Amalie Motor Oil National Hot Rod Association Gatornationals, held in March at Gainesville Raceway.

