

Local racing legend to be honored tonight

“Buster” Burt started driving back in 1949

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By Keith Pearlman

NOTE: Because of rain, this June 8 event was postponed until July 27.

Arthur “Buster” Burt’s career in auto racing started on dirt tracks in his native Maine and took him to the beaches of Daytona, and later all across the country as part of the Roush Racing family.

Burt, a resident of Sumter Place in The Villages, will be honored for his lifelong contributions to the sport during the scheduled events tonight at Citrus County Speedway in Inverness.

Jerry Conkle, president of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club, said Burt is worthy of recognition.

“We’re all thrilled for Buster,” Conkle said. “If anybody deserves to be honored like this, it’s Buster. He started racing up North, then came down to Florida while he was with the service and was able to keep racing. Then, after he broke his back and couldn’t race anymore, he started working for Mark Martin’s team. So he’s done it all. This is going to be a real nice thing for him.”

Burt was surprised to learn about the plan.

“I was amazed when they told me about it,” Burt said. “I never would have expected anything like this. I’m not too familiar with what they have planned, but I’m excited to go over there.”

Burt began his racing career as a driver in 1949.

“They built a new track near where I lived in Maine, and a couple of buddies and I went to the races when they opened,” Burt said. “On our way back home, we stopped and bought a car to race at the track. We realized pretty quickly that we didn’t have the knowledge or the money to keep a car on the track. But I got lucky and was able to get a couple jobs driving, and I never gave up racing after that.”

When Burt was transferred to Florida while serving in the Air Force, he was able to continue racing on Daytona Beach and nearby tracks.

Burt said he raced on the beach in Daytona for four years. When Daytona International Speedway opened in 1959, Burt took part in the first race held on the super speedway.

“I didn’t do too well that day,” Burt said. I ran nine laps, then my engine blew out. But it was fun being there.”

When Burt moved back to Maine, he continued racing throughout New England, this time in Legends cars. After his career as a driver ended, Burt helped organize the Maine Legends Car touring series, serving as its first racing director and technical inspector.

Burt was elected to the Maine Motorsports Hall of Fame in 2006.

The Legends division is on the schedule as part of tonight’s program in Inverness.

“I know Buster will enjoy watching the Legends race,” Conkle said. “He did a lot of his racing in Legends cars.”

Burt spent several years working for Roush Racing, hauling Mark Martin’s No. 6 show car to appearances all over the country.



Daily Sun file photo
Buster Burt, of the Village of Santo Domingo, is shown at his home with his model cars in 2012. Burt is a member of The Villages Racing Club.

“We’d take the show car and set it up at places like Walmart so fans could come and see the car,” Burt said. “We’d be there to answer questions about the car and, depending on where we were, take people for a ride in the car. That was a lot of fun. My wife and I got to travel all up and down the East Coast.”

Amy Cearley, marketing director at Sumter Place, said Burt loves to share his racing memories.

“He had a lot of success racing and he’s very proud of his accomplishments,” Cearley said. “His personality is very much what I would imagine when you think about a race car driver. He races around here on his scooter all the time.”