



Photos by Michael Fortuna / Daily Sun
Barbara and Joe McLaughlin chat before the start of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club's meeting Wednesday night at Laurel Manor Recreation Center.

Need for speed

Motor racing fans share love of all things fast

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By Michael Fortuna

Nothing made Silky Meegan's day more than when she got to experience the Daytona 500 in person.

"It was absolutely a treat," Meegan said. "A dream come true. It's so loud. To watch the cars going at 200 mph on that curve, it blows my mind."

"It's an event. You don't get to see the race real well. I just like to feel (the seats) shake."

Meegan, who serves as The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club's secretary, led the ladies' month meeting Wednesday night at Laurel Manor Recreation Center.

Things got started when club president (or crew chief) Glen Carter shouted, "Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines!" followed by Meegan saying, "Boogity, boogity, boogity, let's go racing, boys!"

Angie Clifton, who with her fiancé Michael Peters, owns Ocala Speedway, talked to the club about a day in the life of a race track owner, as well as being a racing fan.

"We love fast things," Clifton said. "I ride around on the track when no one else is out there. It's an adrenaline rush like no other. You feel powerful, the world at your fingertips."

Meegan, who lives in the Village of Sabal Chase, has been with the club since its inception. She originally followed the world of IndyCar racing, then she went to a NASCAR race during the 1990s.

"I switched immediately," Meegan said. "I like the roar of the engine (of NASCAR vehicles better) than the whine. I have the need for speed."

Meegan follows Dale Earnhardt Jr. (she was wearing No. 88 earrings during the meeting), mainly because of his father.



Silky Meegan speaks to members of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club during its ladies month meeting Wednesday night at Laurel Manor Recreation Center.

"I pull for (Junior) to do well," Meegan said.

Wendy Touchette, the club's special events coordinator, first got the itch for racing when she learned how to drive. She liked to watch the Indianapolis 500, but she later switched to NASCAR.

"After the kids were off to college," (my husband and I) went to different race tracks (up north)," said Touchette, a Village of Sunset Point resident. "When we came to Florida, we couldn't wait to go to Daytona."

On her second trip to Daytona International Speedway, the Touchettes got to ride around the track.

"It's a feeling like no other feeling," Touchette said. "You cannot appreciate it until you ride on the track. It gives you a better appreciation for what they do. It takes skill, luck and patience."

She is a fan of Tony Stewart; you wouldn't know from her No. 20 earrings or her orange flip-flops. But she will be changing her wardrobe when Stewart switches numbers.

"I've asked the club to take up a collection," Touchette said.

In October 2006, about 20 people showed up for the Racing Fan Club's first meeting; they now have about 250 members.

To be a member, residents have to be fans of "anything with a motor that goes fast," Carter said. "We support motor racing; we follow it on TV and we go to the races."

Carter, a Village of Summerhill resident, has been a racing fan all of his life, even getting behind the wheel himself during the 1970s.

"I love the thrill," he said. "I just have a passion for it."