

Racing Club Honors 10th Hall of Fame Class, Enjoys Night of Fellowship

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By Larry Croom

It was a night filled with laughter, handshakes and plenty of applause. It also was a night based on mutual respect between a group of Villagers and their guests who share one common interest – the need for speed. And it was a night that truly defined what living in Florida’s Friendliest Hometown is all about.

The occasion was The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club’s annual Hall of Fame banquet - a celebration attended by close to 100 people who honored the newest inductees. But equally as important, it was an event complete with memories shared among friends as the club continued to celebrate its 10 years of existence.

If you’re not familiar with The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club – an organization now boasting 162 members – it came to life in 2006, thanks to an idea by Glen Carter, a relatively new Villager at the time. A former driver himself at Alabama’s famed Montgomery Motor Speedway, the Village of Summerhill resident suspected others living here might also share a love of motor racing. So he called and asked for help.

That prompted an announcement of Carter’s plan in the Daily Sun, followed by a group of motorheads forming an organization that quickly grew into something very special.

Ten years later, the club still is going strong, with monthly meetings featuring speakers – Hall of Famers – who bring some kind of racing knowledge to the table. The members, known for wearing bright yellow shirts that proudly display their colorful logo, also attend a variety of events together, from radio-controlled car races to short-track events to the granddaddy of them all, the Daytona 500. And regardless of what’s happening, fun and fellowship are two things everyone can count on.

This year’s Hall of Fame banquet, held this past Saturday night at La Hacienda Recreation Center, saw 12 new Hall of Fame members accept their certificates and have their names engraved on a large trophy. Those new members are:

Rep. Bill Posey from Florida’s 8th Congressional District; Jamie Smith, manager of a vintage boat racing team and director of the Classic Boat Race Association; Tim Ducat, a local watercraft racer; Alan Sheppard, a retired NASCAR technical and safety inspector; Rep. Daniel Webster, who represents



Submitted photo
Jerry Conkle, left, poses with Glen Carter, founder of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club, after receiving the prestigious Crew Chief Award on Saturday night.

Florida's 11th District in the U.S. House of Representatives; Camron Ray, general manager of the Citrus County Speedway; Tom Ward, a National Hot Rod Association competitor; Terry Cordle, a Daytona International Speedway employee who specializes in handling a variety of critical logistics; Roger Edmondson, a 25-year veteran of race series management and promotion; Todd Morey, current driver of the famed Bounty Hunter truck in the Monster Jam Series; Bruce Allen Griffin, a former driver who is preserving South Florida's racing history; and Josh Todd, driver of the No. 7 open-wheel modified car owned by the legendary Dick Anderson of Wildwood.

"It's really an excellent group of inductees," said Tony Kennea, a former motorcycle and automobile racer in England who is serving as the club's fourth president. "Tonight's been pretty special."

Perhaps the most touching moment came when Carter presented his annual Crew Chief Award to Jerry Conkle, the immediate past president who served for more than three years at the helm of the club. If you know Carter, then you know this award – which carries his name – is very important because it goes to a member who constantly goes above and beyond.

As you might expect, Conkle was blown away.

"It's a real honor," he said, fighting back emotions. "I was very surprised. This is something that's extra special and I'm real proud of it."

By now, I'm sure you can tell just how strong the bonds of friendship are between these club members. But don't take my word for it. Ask Silky Megan, a charter member who serves as the board's corresponding secretary.

"As a woman, it was important for me to be accepted like 'one of the boys,' and I was," Megan said, "except that I do get hugs!"

Megan, a huge fan of the Hall of Fame, said it's been interesting to watch the reactions of new inductees.

"We have noticed in recent years a sense of humbleness in the company of the other inductees," she said. "It really made us aware just how much they appreciate being honored."

Count me among that humbled group. In 2006, I was asked to be a guest speaker with the opportunity to share my experiences of covering NASCAR and the Indy Racing League, including the day Dale Earnhardt was killed and the night Tony Stewart won the IRL Championship. And a few months later, I took my place in the club's Hall of Fame.

During my 35 years as a journalist, I've received my share of awards and accolades, but to this day, being inducted by this group – people I truly respect and appreciate as friends – ranks right up there at the top.

So to this year's Hall of Famers, I offer congratulations. To Carter, equal congrats for starting such a wonderful organization. And to every member of the club, my sincere appreciation for your friendship and bestowing upon me an honor I'll always cherish.