



Photos by Bill Mitchell / Daily Sun
Glen Carter has been a racing enthusiast since he was a child, and brought his passion to The Villages in 2006 when he founded The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club. The first meeting of the club drew somewhere between 35 and 60 fans, but it has since grown to about 175 members.

Sharing his love of racing

Carter's passion, vision bring Villages speed junkies together through The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club

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By Larry Croom

The sound of infectious laughter echoes throughout the room as Glen Carter recalls sneaking into the local racetrack near his Alabama home some 60 years ago.

One can see the happiness in his eyes as the true Southern gentleman from Montgomery thinks back to those days – a simpler time when a smart boy figured out how to come in around the woods so he could enjoy the true wonder of auto racing.

Some kids loved baseball, while others preferred hoops or a day on the gridiron. But for young Glen, it was all about that special smell of gasoline mixed with burning rubber, along with the constant roar of mighty horsepower spewing forth from those beautiful, sleek racing machines.

"I've been a fan of racing and NASCAR since I was a kid, about 12 or 13 years old," the 75-year-old Carter said. "I really didn't know much about cars, but I got to learn a lot about them being around the racetrack. It's really something that gets in your blood, and once you've got the fever you can't get rid of it"

Luckily for area racing fans, that "fever" stayed with Carter when he retired to The Villages in 2004 after a 30-year career in the U.S. Postal Service. His love for racing was as strong as ever, and in a community the size of Florida's Friendliest Hometown, he knew there had to be others with the same interests.

Fast forward to September 2006, when Carter decided it was high time to get racing fans together by starting a club. The first meeting drew a crowd of somewhere between 35 and 60 racing fanatics, and before long The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club was operating at full steam with the perfect guy at the helm – Glen Carter.

"We found out there was a lot of interest here in motor racing," he said. "We had some wonderful people that came forth and wanted to start on the steering committee. They showed the passion I had, which is just what I wanted. Thank goodness they did, because that's what it takes to make a successful club."

A little more than six years after its inception, the club boasts a membership of about 175 speed junkies. And while Carter will be the first to credit others for making it such a huge success, his colleagues are quick to turn that praise right back around on their first leader.

"He's the founder and he's really what the club is all about," said Mike Touchette, the club's vice president. "He's done an extraordinary job over the years."

Gerry Hafer, who became club president in 2009, said Carter was the perfect person to get such a successful venture off the ground.

"He had the foresight in 2006 to put the right people in the right position to get something done," Hafer said. "The club really took off fast, and he was smart enough to let it go the way it was going to go."

Hafer said he and Carter enjoy working together to bring in quality speakers to club meetings, such as local racing legend Dick Anderson, who is also known as the "King of the Short Tracks." The group has also hosted former Daytona 500 winners Geoff Bodine and Marvin Panch, as well as Florida racing pioneer Buzzie Reutimann and his son David, who will drive for BK Racing in the Sprint Cup Series this season.

"Glen and I share the same passion for the sport," Hafer said of his close friend. "I think that's one of the things that made him and I click so well."

Special events coordinator Wendy Touchette said she admires Carter for his love of racing and his efforts to back local small-time drivers who do it for the love of racing.

"He is grass-roots, and he's always pushing for the local guys and supporting the local tracks," she said. "He always wants to get out there, and he joys the camaraderie we share."

Tom Horrmann, the club's treasurer and photographer, was quick to compare Carter and his soft-spoken – yet passionate – demeanor to a NASCAR great.



Bill Mitchell / Daily Sun
Glen Carter shows off part of the collection of memorabilia he has gathered during his lifetime as a racing fan.

"He's just like Junior Johnson – really laid back, just a great, compassionate person," Horrmann said, referring to the legendary car owner and driver who's loved by just about every true NASCAR fan alive. "I have breakfast with Glen every Thursday morning, and he's always shaking hands, talking to people. He's not going out of his way to do that; that's just him."

If you ask Carter about some of the club's accomplishments, he's quick to mention how much the group enjoys helping others.

They've provided scholarship programs for students interested in motor racing. They've made charitable contributions in the community. And they've sponsored Anderson's car and been to Victory Lane with him. All of that, by the way, was to the tune of several thousand dollars.

The club also enjoys giving back to Carter, so much so that in 2008, the group created the Glen Carter Crew Chief Award.

Each year, it's presented to a member who goes above and beyond what is normally expected – a person who always steps up to the plate.

Club secretary Silky Meegan won that special award last year, an honor she said was humbling to receive.

"It was very meaningful to me," she said. "I was kind of surprised when I got it."

As for Carter and what he means to the club, Meegan offered a very simple and succinct answer.

"Glen is the one who really got us going," she said. "He's just so full of energy, and he's really been a great leader. He's also very knowledgeable about racing and willing to share that with everybody. He's also a wonderful friend."

If you're fortunate enough to spend time with Carter, you'll find out that he's a die-hard fan of NASCAR great Bobby Allison and the Alabama Gang. You'll also find out he spent a season driving a 1957 Chevy in a hobby-type series some 40 years ago.

If you ask Carter if he ever won a race, he'll talk about how much fun it was to compete and hang out with his buddies. A picture on the wall, however, tells the story of a younger man who is waving the checkered flag from the window of his battered race car as he heads for Victory Lane. Not surprisingly, it also shows the same smile and enthusiasm Carter exhibits today when he talks about a passion that will never change.

"Racing is just something that gets your heart racing and your adrenaline pumping," Carter said. "If you go to a baseball game, you sit in the stands, and you might see a guy hit a ball occasionally. Football is a little more exciting, and you might see somebody throw a pass occasionally."

"But if you've ever been to Daytona, that first lap, if you've ever experienced it, that is the most thrilling thing in the world. It's really the greatest thing in the world."

Spoken like a true racer, indeed.