

Villager Found His Passion in Vintage Racing

Skip Bryan, of the Village of Lynnhaven, recently took second place at a big race.

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By Katie Sartoris

At 60 years old, Skip Bryan got into vintage car racing.

Now 78, Skip is having his best year yet.

On his kitchen counter sits a trophy from the U.S. Vintage Rang National Championship Challenge Series, where Skip took second place in his category last month. He also won first place for the Southeast.

Hot off his big wins, he and his wife, Carol, will travel to Georgia this weekend for another race. He'll be competing in the Season Finale at Roebing Road, hosted by Vintage Drivers Club of America.

"I'm feeling real good," said Skip, of the Village of Lynnhaven. "It's a fun event and it's my favorite track and the track I do the best at."

Skip races his 1972 BMW sedan all around the country.

This year, he's done 30 races over 12 race weekends. He's made it onto the podium five times.

His wins are extraordinary feats as Skip is up against some stiff competition.

"There's several different classes of cars at the track," he said. "Six-cylinder Porsches, six-cylinder Datsuns, and then there's four-cylinder sedans like mine. So the chances of getting on the podium for me are pretty slim. It would be like a pro football team playing a college team. I'm the college team."

Vintage car racing is much different from the commonly known NASCAR.

The cars have to be made in 1979 or earlier to compete. And racers have to follow the rules of racing from the year their car was made.

For instance, because Skip races a 1972 car, he follows rules from 1972.

And the tracks aren't ovals. His last race at the Circuit of The Americas in Austin, Texas, was 3.4 miles long with 20 turns.

Speeds vary widely. Skip can go as slow as 45 mph through turns or as fast as 125 mph in straightaways.

"The fun of this kind of racing is the handling of the car, being able to brake, downshift, get through a turn safely and accelerate out of it," Skip said.

Skip admits he's hooked.

He's always been interested in racing. But he didn't get into it until after he retired.



Submitted photo
Skip Bryan, of the Village of Lynnhaven, sits in his 1972 BMW Sedan at the Circuit of The Americas in Austin, Texas, during the U.S. Vintage Racing National Championship in early November. His mechanic, Rod Atkinson, leans on the car.

Driving home from racing school 18 years ago, Skip called Carol. "I told her, 'I think I'd like to do more of this,'" he said.

She paused.

"And I said, 'Go and enjoy. You have worked hard all of your life. You better do it before you get too old to be able to do this,'" Carol said.

She said she should have seen it coming.

"I had an inkling when, on our second date, he participated in a hill climb, a timed race from the bottom of the hill up to the top," she said. "I thought, 'Oh, my goodness this is crazy.' It was great fun."

Carol is his biggest fan and goes to some of the races with him.

"Oh, I am very proud of him," she said.

They have a deal, though. Skip's racing memorabilia lives in the garage.

That is, except for his new trophy. Carol agreed that it could be displayed in the house.

"I figure I better at least put a couple dozen roses in it," Skip said.