



# The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club

## Pit Report

February/March, 2014

Next *Regular* Meeting—Wednesday, April 2, 2014

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**Arthur "Buster" Burt**

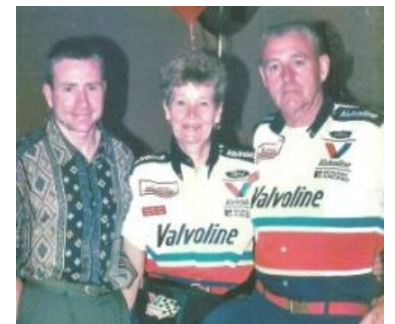
**1929-2014**

We are deeply saddened by the loss of long-time Board Member, stock car racing veteran, and dear friend Buster Burt. He passed away on February 19 after a brief battle with pneumonia, leaving behind a legacy of accomplishment from the far north to the deep south. As a member of the Maine Motor Sports Hall of Fame and The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club Hall of Fame, Buster proudly wore the distinction of being the first Maine driver to make it in the South, building a name for himself back in the day when racing was a grass roots sport and grit and stamina were what you needed for success. From the dirt tracks in the Northeast, to the Beach at Daytona, to the Daytona International Speedway, Buster carved his niche in history and will long be remembered by the many friends he made along the way.

(Continued on page 2)

## Arthur "Buster" Burt

Buster gave us so many fond memories during his time with us. Here are a few classic shots from our archives ...





## Allan Brown—Two Million Miles of Speedways!

Our February 13 meeting gave us an opportunity to meet one of motorsports' most well-known authentic icons...the guy who has dedicated his life's work to chronicling the pedigrees of virtually all of America's race tracks (and some outside our borders as well). Allan Brown and his wife Nancy have covered over two million miles over several decades, visiting and re-visiting over two thousand individual race tracks to compile the information for their National Speedway Directory publication.

During his visit with us, Allan shared a wealth of memories about his visits to racing venues across the nation, as well as the many relationships he built with drivers, track officials, and media contacts along the way. Allan's 30-year tour of duty on the Directory also inspired him to write "The History of America's Speedways, Past & Present," published in 1984 and now in its third edition. This 800+ page digest has been critically acclaimed as the only comprehensive historical account of race tracks in America, leading nationally known motorsports spokesman Dick Berggren (NASCAR on Fox) to observe, "Had Allan Brown done something else with the time it took to write this book, hundreds if not thousands of race tracks would have passed into oblivion without national notice."

In recognition of his contribution to motorsports, Allan was inducted into the Michigan Motor Sports Hall of Fame in 2011 and the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in 2009, and in 2002 he and Nancy received the Stew Reamer Award for lifetime service to the weekly racing industry. In 2009, Allan turned the reins of the National Speedway Directory over to his successors, Tim and Margo Frost of Frost Motorsports LLC, an organization committed to building on Allan's legacy, continuing and deepening the reach of the Directory and its place in the motorsports world.

In his column in National Speed Sport News, reporter and frequent club visitor Ron Hedges summed up Allan's visit this way, "Club members were blown away by the map that Allan and wife Nancy carry showing where they've been, especially when Allen tipped that they've logged over two million miles in their travels selling the NSD and visiting the speedways of America. ... Brown figures he has stopped by some 2300 tracks in his travels and has seen racing at over 1300 of them. Club members were awed when he told them he's seen racing at nearby East Bay some 60 times and had been to Williams Grove 30 times and Skagit in Washington state 50 times." In other words, it's fair to say that the adventures of Allan and Nancy Brown have given new meaning to the term "road warriors."



Nancy and Allan Brown at Allan's 2011 induction into the Michigan Motor Sports Hall of Fame

## Veteran Sprint Car Driver Set for April Meeting

**April 2**—For our April meeting, we'll be heading west to hear from a veteran Sprint Car and Super Modified driver hailing from Wichita, Kansas. Grady Wade, 2002 inductee into the NMAR High Banks Hall of Fame, will share the highlights of his notable career in the Midwest, and he's also promised to throw in a few stories about on- and off-track exploits in the rough and tumble world of dirt track racing. Grady is now a resident of The Villages, adding to our local storehouse of racing talent from years gone by.



## Jerry Conkle Re-elected President for 2014 Wendy Touchette Returns to the Pit Crew

At our February meeting, by unanimous vote, **Jerry Conkle** was re-elected as President/Crew Chief for 2014. As you all know by now, Jerry is recovering from major surgery and is temporarily out of action, but his recovery is progressing well and his return to active duty is imminent. In the meantime, his relief crew is maintaining order and keeping him apprised of what's going on. Jerry did make an appearance at the March 5 cookout, and has indicated that he's steadily gaining strength. We all look forward to his return...we miss the jokes!



The only other change in the Pit Crew lineup up was **Dave Allen** stepping down from his position as Vice President, with **Wendy Touchette** elected to assume that position. Dave, as all of you know, was instrumental in building the R/C car racing program into a major force in The Villages, and going forward will be concentrating on further development of that venue. Wendy returns to the Pit Crew after a one-year hiatus, bringing with her a wealth of experience that will be instrumental as we continue to move the Club to new heights, and as we continue to move into new activities.

The remainder of your Pit Crew remains intact for the coming year, continuing the level of dedication and service that brought the club to where we are today. And special recognition is due **Mike Anderson** who, in addition to continuing his Webmaster duties, stepped in to fill Jerry's shoes during his recovery!

## Hall of Fame Awards Presented to Gary Laplant and DoraThorne

January 31—Our January 11 Hall of Fame night was a great success, but those of you who attended will recall that the contingent from Citrus County Speedway was unable to be with us due to a conflict with their own previously-scheduled annual awards banquet. We didn't let that



stop us from bestowing on **Gary Laplant** and **Dora Thorne** their much-coveted honors. A group from the club headed over to the Speedway on opening night to present their awards at an on-track ceremony. It was a great (but chilly) night, and we had the opportunity to meet with Dora, while track announcer John Berti stood in for Gary who

was "pre-occupied" doing the things that track owners do on race night. In the photo above left, Dora salutes the crowd amid a rousing ovation, while the photo at right depicts the elation that John and Dora had as a result of receiving the awards. By the way, the club also presented a cash contribution to Dora in support of her racing program. It's fair to say we're in her fan club!



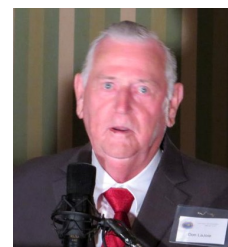


## In the Company of Greatness—LLOAR 2014

**February 19**—What a night! A contingent of club members made the trip over to Daytona to participate in the 22nd Annual Living Legends of Auto Racing Awards Banquet. Our own Hall of Famer Geoff Bodine was inducted this year, along with Northeast stock car legend Don LaJoie. Don is the father of two-time NASCAR Busch Series champion Randy LaJoie, husband of club member Ernie Battee's daughter Lisa. With Bodine's induction, three of our Hall of Famers have now joined the Living Legends ranks—Marvin Panch and Buzzie Reutimann make up the remainder of this triumvirate.



We're already looking forward to participating in this event in 2015. Where else could you have dinner with such racing greats as Ned Jarrett, Danny "Chocolate" Myers, Bobby & Donnie Allison, Glen & Leonard Wood, Harold "Humpy" Wheeler, Rex White, Joe Mihalick, Winston Kelly, Dave Moody, Ron Bouchard, Ken Ragan, "Doctor" Dick Berggren, and of course Marvin Panch, among many others. It was truly a great night, and once again the "folks in the yellow shirts" were in prominence. Here are a few photos:



Top row, left: The "yellow shirts" with Randy LaJoie; right: Geoff Bodine's plaque. Middle row; left: Randy, Corey, and Lisa LaJoie with Dick Berggren; middle: Donnie Allison; right: Glen Carter with Marvin Panch; Bottom row: Bobby Allison shares a moment with Marvin Panch; middle: Dave Moody and Ken Squier; right: Don LaJoie, inductee



## Welcome New Members



Clockwise from top left: Dan Baring - Buffalo NY; George Worton - Baltimore MD.; Lou Palmer - Watertown CT; Sam Harden - Chesapeake VA; Tina and Darren Ivey - Elgin IL and Leesburg FL

## March 5 Cookout—And a Thank You to Our Friends on Millwood Way

**March 5**—In place of our regular March meeting, members were treated to a festive cookout at Lake Miona Rec Center, with our fall yard sale helpers and hosts from Millwood Way feted as our honored guests. As many of you know, these great folks opened their homes and driveways for our October 5, 2012 yard sale and bake sale, and it was the efforts of these volunteers that helped make the event a tremendous fund-raising success.

One of the highlights was a visit from recuperating Jerry Conkle, who dropped in to visit. Another highlight was the appearance of one of the club's favorites—Street Stock racer Dora Thorne—who brought her race car over for a

hands-on review by club members, many of whom made a contribution to Dora's race team in exchange for the opportunity to autograph her car. Sam Patrick also had a friend bring his Corvette for display, so I guess you could say it was a "mini car show" of sorts. By the way, it was Wayne's birthday also! Here are some highlights:



## Another Night Golf Success!

**March 26**—Finally, after a rain-out forced a re-scheduling of our event earlier in the month, we were able to launch a highly successful night golf tournament at Saddlebrook on Wednesday night, March 26. A field of 35 die-hard golfers teed off as darkness settled on the course, with the team of Marco Saenko & Elaine Saenko, Bill Mills & Estelie Budds emerging as the winning foursome (score of 27) after a tie with the team of John Neville, Terry Lazmiercxuki, Joe Darcy and Ed Flynn forced a play-off. The winning team then announced their departure for Disney World for their celebration! The team of Bea Conkle, Silky Meegan, Cathryn Meegan, & Laura Marcelli placed third, one stroke behind the winners.

Event coordinator Wendy Touchette reported that frigid conditions prevailed, but did not dampen the fun for the night. Also, the 2nd place winners donated the proceeds from the win to the Buster Burt memorial fund.

Here are a few of the photo highlights...



Top left: the winning team; Top right: Jim Carter and Silky Meegan plan strategy; Bottom right: Bob & Janine Woodsford and Barb & Jim Pappas; Bottom left (l to r) Mike Anderson, Jerry Conkle, and Marco Saenko getting set.

## Local Racing Corner

As we've mentioned quite a few times in the past, these tracks represent the local roots of racing and they need our support! If you've been to an event at any of these tracks recently, you'll no doubt agree that attendance is down. Car counts are down as well, and it's easy to see that either of these facts represents a cause-and-effect situation. If the cars don't come, neither will the fans, and it's becoming a downward spiral that can only lead to the closing of tracks here in Central Florida. We've already lost two this year (Columbia and Putnam County), and most of the others are struggling. So, let's do our part to keep the sport alive! These tracks are where the future big-league drivers cut their teeth, and they need us in the stands. Remember...without these tracks, there'd be no NASCAR!

Track	Location	Telephone	Website URL
Original Speedway Park	Fruitland Park	352-348-4336	originalspeedwaypark.com
Citrus County Speedway	Inverness	352-726-9339	citruscountyspeedway.com
Bubba Raceway Park	Ocala (Zuber)	352-622-9400	bubbaracewaypark.com
New Smyrna Speedway	Samsula	386-427-4129	newsmyrnaspeedway.org
Orlando Speedworld	Bithlo	407-568-1367	orlandospeedworld.org
East Bay Raceway Park	Tampa (Gibson)	813-677-7223	eastbayracewaypark.com
Marion County Speedway	Ocala	352-812-3922	ocalamicrospeedway.com
Auburndale Speedway	Winter Haven	863-551-1131	auburndaleracing.com
Punta Gorda Speedway	Punta Gorda	941-575-7223	puntagordaspeedway.com
Desoto Super Speedway	Bradenton	941-748-3171	desotosuperspeedway.com
Bronson Motor Speedway	Bronson	352-486-2763	facebook.com/ bronson.speedway



## Great Time in Gainesville!

**March 14**—Comments from club member Ron Pierce: The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club, of which I am a member, chartered a bus for a day of drag racing at the Gatornationals. It sure was a sweet deal, they drove us to the event, we had gotten a block of great seats in the shade just under the skybox section, including pit passes to everything, temps were in the high 60's, low 70's. What a great day. The track had recently done some renovations and was in great shape. I will admit it has been a good 20+ years since I have been to the drags and I realized how much I missed it. The sights, sounds, vibrations and smells are intoxicating..... The amount of money is astronomical, the technology is incredible, with some teams bringing as many as eight 50+ foot haulers, valued into the millions.

I encourage you to look thru all the pages of pictures at [http://backcountrybound.smugmug.com//AmalieOilNHRAgatornationals/Amalie-Oil-NHRA-Gatornationals/37738088\\_SCrTJ5#/](http://backcountrybound.smugmug.com//AmalieOilNHRAgatornationals/Amalie-Oil-NHRA-Gatornationals/37738088_SCrTJ5#/)



## Thursday Morning Breakfasts Heat Up!

As we've noted several times in the past, a subgroup of our club meets every Thursday morning at 8:00 at Bob Evans Restaurant on CR 466 in The Villages. It's about an hour and a half of good old racing strategy discussion, with a good measure of trash talking thrown in whenever upcoming or recent events calls for it. The group has about 12-14 regulars, but there's always room for more! Come out and join us sometime...you'll have a good time (and a good breakfast!

Besides just good conversation, we also from time to time have some drop-in visitors to liven things up. Occasionally, the one-and-only Dick Anderson shows up, and over the past few weeks we've have a few "special guests." For example, on February 13, Steve Trivett from the Daily Sun joined us to do an impromptu interview about the return of the number 3 to NASCAR Cup racing (see Trivett in the photo at top right). Then, on February 20, two-time NASCAR Busch Series Champion Randy LaJoie and his wife Lisa dropped in to chat about racing and to bring us up-to-date on Lisa's dad, Ernie Battee.

The point is...you just never know who's gonna be there!





## Your Pit Crew

Jerry Conkle, President/Crew Chief (750-1185)  
 Wendy Touchette, Vice President (303-9734)  
 Silky Meegan, Corresponding Secretary (259-2029)  
 Mike Anderson, Webmaster (217-714-2245)  
 Gerry Greim, Recording Secretary (215-630-1402)  
 Tom Horrmann, Treasurer/Official Photographer (430-0195)  
 Gary Civiletti, Special Events (751-4030)  
 Bob & Camille Sherman, Membership (751-1771)  
 Wayne Nolan, Member at Large (750-9082)  
 Peter Tetrault, Member at Large (20-8503)  
 Syd and Nancy Baker, Hospitality Coordinators (750-2126)  
 Gerry Hafer, Immediate Past President (751-3643)  
 Glen Carter, Past President (751-6442)

## In Memoriam



## Conkle's Corner...

I want to thank everyone for their cards and prayers. It helped me to get through a lot of tough times. I'm gaining every day. I only wish your cards and prayers would have helped Buster as well.



Anyway, I'm looking forward to a return to duty as your Crew Chief! I'm beginning to feel more like myself, and I'm even getting to the point of passing on some more "thoughts and words of wisdom" that I just know you've been sorely missing. I'm not quite there yet, but stay tuned for next month!

In the meantime, I want to congratulate our own Hall of Famer Buddy Pearce for his recent induction in the Palm Beach Speedway Hall of Fame...



From Ocala Star Banner Correspondent, Bob Turner:

Buddy Pearce was overwhelmed when 320 former stock car racing acquaintances showed up recently at the Palm Beach Fairgrounds to see him inducted into the Palm Beach Speedway Hall of Fame. Pearce, who lives in Summerfield with his wife, Beth, was in the second class of six racers to receive the honor. Pearce, now in his 80s, raced at the speedway in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

"It made me feel good I was recognized for being me, and not because I drove fancy, fast cars," he said. "At times, I would drive any old junk no one else would touch."