



The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club

Pit Report

March—2015

Next *Regular* Meeting—Wednesday, April 1, 2015

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The Legends Just Keep Coming!



March 4—Bettenhausen...it's one of those names you know even if you're not a seasoned race fan. It's a name we grew up with—it's a name that when you hear it, your thoughts immediately go to racing, speed, and specifically the Indy 500.

At our March 4 meeting, we had the opportunity to get to know the middle brother of the three racing sons of Melvin E. "Tony" Bettenhausen, and to learn a great deal about the history of a name that has taken its place in racing history alongside names like Andretti, Unser, Hurtubise, and Johncock.

Merle began his remarks with an extensive discussion of his father's racing accomplishments, beginning with his entry into competition in the late 1930s at Riverview Speedway in Illinois in the Midget ranks and then into Sprint cars, followed by his work as an aircraft engine builder in World War II. Merle's remarks also covered the racing exploits of his brothers Gary and Tony Jr., and served to explain how the Bettenhausen name has been etched so firmly into motorsports history. In fact, a Bettenhausen took the green in the Indy 500 a total of 50 times, making their family name a standard in the sport.

After recording his first race win in 1964, Merle went on to compete successfully in Midgets and Sprint cars, logging his first USAC win in 1968. In 1972, he qualified for the Indy 500, but did not race, and later that year he qualified 17th fastest for the Pennsylvania 500 at Pocono. That event was cancelled as a result of flooding in the area, and he went on to enter the Michigan 200 on July 16, 1972, where he was severely injured in the opening laps.

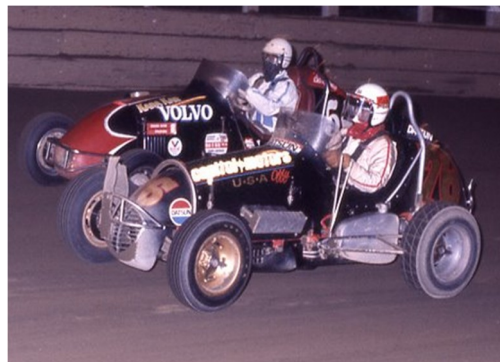
Merle went on to race after the accident, competing at Lost Creek Speedway in Kentucky where he logged a heat race win in his first comeback race. He retired shortly after proving that he could still do it, and pursued related duties in the management of Bettenhausen Motorsports. His philosophy is simple; in a Motorsport.com interview several years ago, he's quoted as saying "our eyes are in the front to focus on what's ahead, not what's behind."

(Continued on next page)

More Highlights from Merle Bettenhausen's Visit

Merle's visit with us will long be remembered as a high point for us—one of the many that we've had in our nine-year run. His candid remarks, coupled with his self-effacing and humble personality, once again gave us a glimpse at the heroes of the racing world. As we find out repeatedly, the greats are great, and the really great ones have personalities that mirror ours!

Here are some of the photo highlights of Merle showing the types of racing he did "back in the day"...



And here's a group photo of our crew with Merle...



New Board Member—John Angiolo

John Angiolo has yielded to the full court press put on by our recruiting team, accepting a position as a participating member on our Board of Directors (also known as our Pit Crew). Many of you know John well, and are well-acquainted with his love of motorsports. He's become one of the "regulars" as we head to places like Citrus County Speedway, Bubba Raceway Park, Volusia Speedway Park, New Smyrna Speedway, and others. In fact, John made the trip to the famed Lucas Oil Chili Bowl at Tulsa Expo Raceway back in January, so that's a good indicator that he's got it bad!

Check out the photo at left of John, representing us in full club attire, and eventual Chili Bowl Champion Rico Abreu. Rico, as many of you are aware, is an up-and-coming racer in the "World of Outlaws" series, and is intermittently pursuing a late model career as well.



On another matter concerning our roster of officers, you all recently received a message from Mike Anderson about our search for a Special Events Coordinator to replace the retiring Gary Civiletti. We're please to report that Darren Ivey has stepped to the plate for us and has accepted the position. A transition is underway and, in the meantime, we all need to show our appreciation to Gary for a job well done!

Welcome, New Members



Our membership ranks got a little fuller this month with the addition on the four race fans pictured above. They are (left to right), Doug Molineux, Dennis Passehl, Sonny Schwaber, and Joseph Lipp. Look them up at the next meeting and get to know them!

Club Members Visit the Big Time Again

February 18—For the second straight year, a contingent from our group made an appearance at the annual Living Legends of Auto Racing Awards Banquet over in Daytona. We created quite a stir (again) in our yellow shirts, with many of the guests and onlookers openly wondering just who we are! Get a group of us together in our gleaming club shirts and we really stand out in the crowd. This year's festivities once again showcased a new crop of award winners, including Buddy Parrot, "Tiger" Tom Pistone, Ken Schrader, Dick Berggren, Linda Vaughn, Yolanda Sheridan, and Eddie Spurling, plus this year's recipient of the Allison Family Corporate Award, Havaco Technologies. It was another great night of breathing the rare air, with hosts Caron and Danny "Chocolate" Myers providing a steady stream of delightful and insightful commentary. There were even drop-ins by Mike Helton, presenting the "Distinguished Driver Award" to Ken Schrader, and Chip Ganassi, presenting the "Pioneer of Racing Award" to Linda Vaughn.

It was a great opportunity for us to showcase our group, and it was rewarding to again learn that so many notables in the world of racing are aware of us. Of course, we got to spend time catching up with Marvin Panch, who's always the center of attention in a race-themed setting. We also had the opportunity to spend time with some of the biggest names in the sport, as evidenced by the photos below. They're a series of "group shots" taken with yellow shirts surrounding several NASCAR notables, along with several individual shots. Dignitaries in the group photos are (from top left): Donnie Allison, Marvin Panch and Danny "Chocolate" Myers, Dick Berggren, and Robert Yates. Individual photos (clockwise): Mike Helton, Ken Schrader, Chip Ganassi and Linda Vaughn, and Buddy Parrott.



Night Golf—Another Winner Delivered by Wendy!

March 3—It was another great night of “Golf in the Dark” at The Villages’ Saddlebrook Executive Course, as our lively group of racing enthusiasts took to the links to chase the glow balls once again. The field of 36 is pictured below just prior to the shotgun tee-off at about 7:00 pm, with the eventual winning foursome of Dan Famularo, Marcous Saenko, Peter Tetrault, and William Forbes (pictured in top right photo below, clockwise from top left). As has become our custom, event coordinator Wendy Touchette arranged to launch the night with a putting contest, this time using baseball bats as the club of choice. Irene Barnes took the honors in this portion of the competition, a few fascinating pictures of which are shown below. Combined with the pot luck pre-golf snacks, it was a great evening and, as the saying goes, “a good time was had by all.”



Our Logo Keeps Popping Up in the Right Places!

Whether it's an Open Wheel Mod or a Non-winged Sprint, our logo is regularly occupying podium spots these days. Devin McLeod (Hall of Fame Class of 2013) picked up an OWM win at Showtime Speedway on March 14 (Below left), while ageless Stan Butler (Hall of Fame Class of 2014) registered third place honors at Citrus County Speedway March 7 in his Sprint Car. Let's do our part on their behalf by getting out there and showing our support!



Daytona on the Big-Screen

February 22—It was the usual festive atmosphere at the club's Seabreeze Rec Center gathering as the 2015 racing season's marquee event unfolded over at Daytona International Speedway. As Mike Anderson reported on the website recap, there were about 40 dedicated NASCAR aficionados on hand to trade all sorts of trash talk, hand gestures, and generally good-natured camaraderie as the green dropped, and they were rewarded by a tremendously competitive event uninterrupted by weather problems!

One of the sideline activities again this year was the addition of an element of drama with the "Predict the Top3" contest, with 37 entries competing for the \$100 prize. Lou Palmer (of "Hot Wheels" golf cart fame) prevailed with his prediction of Logano, Harvick, and Earnhardt Jr., although it wasn't that easy...Dennis Pessehl matched those picks, necessitating a tie-breaker decision.

The Villages-News.com was also on hand to enjoy the event, and their resulting article is available in the club's website archives.

Here are some photos that capture the spirit of the



Skip Bryan Continues to Burn Up the Track

Club member and Hall of Famer (Class of 2014) Skip Bryan had another great day racing in the SVRA ranks, this time down at Sebring in the Spring Vintage Classic event. After placing 9th and 6th, respectively in the scheduled sprint races, and after running well in open practice, he placed 6th (first in his class) in the Vintage Classic Endurance race. "We had a fair start and then ran very well for the first half of the race. I felt like

I might be able to move up in the second half," reports Skip, "(but) just as I came in for our scheduled/mandatory pit stop, it started to rain." Although optimistic that he could have moved further up in the field in the second half of the race, it wasn't to be, with a tropical downpour characteristic of Florida weather bringing out a Red/Checker flag and ending the event. Skip anticipates continuing momentum as he heads to Virginia International Raceway in April, and from there to Summit Point in West Virginia for May's competition. Check out Skip's white No. 316 in the photo above as he launches in a modified LeMans Start, and here are a few more thumbnails of Skip in action:



Prediction Row—2015 Edition



The spring segment of Prediction Row is well underway, and the intensity has been incredible. Six races in, Jim Pappas is dominating, leading in both wins and points. Kim Garcia is close behind with 192 points and two wins, while Dan Gammon's two winning predictions have also guaranteed his spot in the Chase round. Darren Ivey and Lois Taylor have also logged wins, while Tony Kennea continues to search for his sweet spot in the competition. There are seven races to go in this segment, so it's going to be pretty interesting as the season unfolds.

Mike Anderson and Silky Meegan keep close tabs on the predictions and the results, so if you want to keep current on the program, all you need to do is visit our website (www.villagesracingclub.com) and select the "Prediction Row" tab at the top of the home page. There, you'll be able to track the individual predictors' progress, and you'll have ample opportunity to grill them the next time you run in to them on the logic behind their predictions. In the lower portion of the Prediction Row webpage you'll also see the slate of predictors waiting in the wings for the summer segment...start lining up your trash talk material early!

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 our "home track" (Citrus County Speedway) seems to be in trouble. 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 Address
Original Speedway Park	Fruitland Park	352-348-4336	speedwaypark.biz
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	marioncountyspeedway.com
Auburndale Speedway	Winter Haven	863-551-1131	auburndaleracing.com
Three Palms Speedway	Punta Gorda	941-444-9461	threepalmsspeedway.com
Desoto Speedway	Bradenton	941-748-3171	desotospeedway.com
Bronson Speedway	Archer	352-486-4998	bronsonspeedway.net

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)
 Syd and Nancy Baker, Hospitality Coordinators (750-2126)
 Gerry Hafer, Immediate Past President /Newsletter (751-3643)
 Glen Carter, Past President (751-6442)

April Meeting Preview



Our guest speaker is Paul Vitrano, vice president of global government relations for Polaris Industries.

Vitrano has served as general counsel for the Motorcycle Industry Council and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. Paul also served as executive vice president and general counsel for both the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America and the Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association.

Paul is an avid motorcyclist, has ridden his motorcycle across the country and enjoys commuting to work on two wheels.

From the Vault



Dick Anderson giving a post-race interview at Palm Beach Fairgrounds Speedway (Henry McKenzie photo)

Conkle's Corner...

Kind of hard to believe, but we're almost a quarter of the way through the regular NASCAR season, and at this rate Kevin Harvick will win about 15 races in 2015! That's not likely to happen, though, once the rest of the field figures out what the #4 team is doing, and once Tony Stewart wakes up and once Jeff Gordon shakes off his pre-retirement blues!



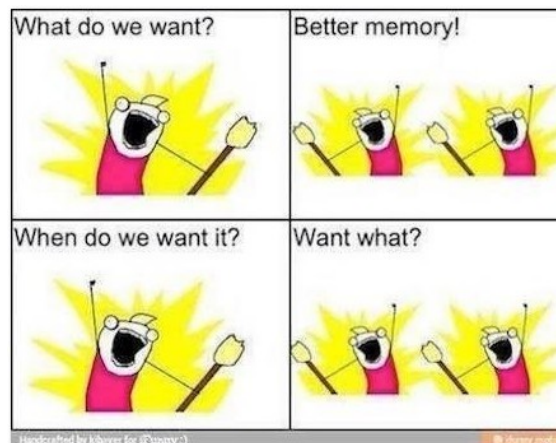
No matter what, it'll be interesting, and our local short track racing will be just as interesting. I just hope the car counts can improve.

Now, a little humor

Each Friday night after work, Bubba would fire up his outdoor grill and cook a venison steak.

But, all of Bubba's neighbors were Catholic. And since it was Lent, they were forbidden from eating meat on Friday. The delicious aroma from the grilled venison steaks was causing such a problem for the Catholic faithful that they finally talked to their priest. The Priest came to visit Bubba, and suggested that he become a Catholic. After several classes and much study, Bubba attended Mass, and as the Priest sprinkled holy water over him, he said, "You were born a Baptist, and raised a Baptist, but now you are a Catholic."

Bubba's neighbors were greatly relieved, until Friday night arrived, and the wonderful aroma of grilled venison again filled the neighborhood. The Priest was called immediately by the neighbors, and, as he rushed into Bubba's yard, clutching a rosary and prepared to scold him, he stopped and watched in amazement. There stood Bubba, clutching a small bottle of holy water which he carefully sprinkled over the grilling meat and chanted: "You wuz born a deer, you wuz raised a deer, but now you is a catfish."



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