



national sprint car hall of fame

JEAN LYNCH

BY DOUG KENNEDY

Publicist; scorer for National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) and Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART); including ten years at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS) and its Indy 500; official for Al Gerber's Race of Champions for modified stock cars; coordinator for the All Star Circuit of Champions (ASCoC) Ohio Sprint Speedweek; board member for Bert Emick's ASCoC; track manager; promoter; administrator for Jimmy Mingo's East Bay Winternationals in Gibsonton, Florida, and Glenn Donnelly's Super DIRT Week in Syracuse, New York; and wife and mother to racing drivers, Ed Lynch, Sr. and Ed Lynch, Jr., respectively. That can describe none other than Jean Lynch of Apollo, Pennsylvania.

Jean was general manager/promoter at Tri-City in Franklin, Pennsylvania; Sharon Speedway in Hartford, Ohio; West Virginia Motor Speedway in Mineral Wells; and East Bay Raceway in Gibsonton, Florida; and rented tracks and promoted races at Mercer and Hickory in Pennsylvania; and Fremont, Muskingham County, Wayne County, KC, Skyline, Raceway 7, and Portsmouth in Ohio.

Jean recalls one time that, when officiating races at Tri-City, she had to give her husband a two week hiatus for improper on-track behavior.

Jean also became the first woman ever to be allowed in the pits at Ed Witzberger's Heidelberg Raceway, home of the Pittsburgh Racing Association (PRA) Pittsburgher 100.

According to sprint car and NASCAR Sprint Cup owner/driver, and owner of Eldora Speedway in Rossburg, Ohio, Tony Stewart, "Crowning the King is an honored tradition and a very important part of the Kings Royal heritage. The person that performs that task is as important as the race winner."

Jean Lynch performed that honor on July 20, 2010. Ironically, on the night that she was asked to do the crowning by then director of operations Larry Boos, who had fallen ill, she was at a driver's meeting at Sharon Speedway's NASCAR night for the Lou Blaney Memorial. As luck would have it, Stewart was participating in the sprint car race that evening, so Lynch didn't need to travel very far, even though it took some time to grab his attention and graciously accept the offer.

On the night of her crowning of the King in 2010, she was rehearsing her call before the race had even ended. "I had my speech written on the inside of my hand," said Jean, who was going to make the call for Kerry Madsen. At the

time, Madsen had a healthy lead with two laps to go before the caution came out.

Steve Kinser would go onto grab the lead and win his seventh Kings Royal sprint car championship. "It didn't sound right when I said King Kerry so I thought I would pause between King and Kerry, but when Steve won I had no problem saying King Steve - it just sounded better."

On that special night, her son, Ed, Jr., finished eighth in the race and was able to witness first hand, the crowning made by his mom.

It was Jack Freeman who gave Jean Lynch her first job in racing back in 1968. "He came to me and said he had just leased a track in Latrobe," said Jean. "He said I think I can prepare and maintain the track, keep the grass mowed, paint it, and prepare the surface and my mother can do the concessions, do you think you could do everything else? That's how I really got started. I wrote the pre-race releases, sold tickets, helped with the lineups, scored the races, did the payoff and wrote the results story. After all these years, I guess I haven't come far from my roots."

Ed, Jr. recalls the times as a youngster that he would take the line-ups his mother had made after an accident and race them down to the flagman (Jack Freeman). "Before the race, he would go behind the grandstands that weren't lit, cross a little creek bridge, and then see the yellow lights to the track," said Jean. "Then he would bring the line-ups to Earl Baumann and Bucky Fleming, who worked the blackboards to line up the cars."

"The first time I went to any races was when I got married," said Jean. "It was a hobby then."

And that hobby turned into a weekly event when Ed, Sr., began racing coupes after seeing a friend, Ham Moore, race.

The racing careers of her husband, Ed, Sr., and her son, Ed, Jr., are nothing short of stellar. Husband Ed won 27 Sprint Car features and 113 Modified races competing against drivers like Lou Blaney, William "Blackie" Watt, Ralph Quarterston, Gus Linder, Walter "Buddy" Cochran and Ted Wise.

Son Ed, Jr. is a Western Pennsylvania racing legend having won a record 105 sprint car races at Don Martin's Lernerville Speedway in Sarver, Pennsylvania. Her grandson, Ed III, competed in the 2011 Steel City Stampede at Lernerville against his father.

"I think it's well overdue with the amount of accomplishments she has done for sprint car racing, and racing in general," said Ed, Jr., regarding his mom's selection for the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame, joining Beryl Ward and Della Rice as the only females in the Hall to-date. "She's in some other Halls of Fame, but this is the one she really wanted."

Jean's other memberships include the Pittsburgh Circle Track Club Hall of Fame (1997), the DIRT Motorsports Hall of Fame (2002) and the Lernerville Speedway Hall of Fame (2010).

Husband Ed, Sr. added: "All the racetracks she's promoted and all the things she's done for the sport is above and beyond. She did the promoting for the love of the sport. Not too many promoters do that anymore. When she did it, she loved it."

Besides Ed, Jr., there is daughter, Jill, and four grandchildren, Ed III, Sye, A.J., and Bobby.

Jean is still recovering from a severely broken right leg that she got in an August, 2011, car accident as she was returning from the Knoxville Nationals. That injury, which still requires her to utilize a cane and a walker, forced her to miss the 36th annual East Bay Winternationals in February of 2012 and the 40th anniversary of Syracuse Super DIRT Week in October of 2012. "That was the first year I missed," said Jean, referring to the Winternationals.

Jean also has a number of people, besides the ones already mentioned, that she would like to acknowledge for helping her during her illustrious six-decade career. People like Earl Baltes of Eldora Speedway, Jack Gunn of Williams Grove Speedway, and Chris Economaki of National Speed Sport News (NSSN) are at the top of that list.

Asked if her fondness for the sport is still there, Jean Lynch responded by saying, "Oh yes, it's never left."



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