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national sprint car hall



Photo by: Max Dolder

Terry Gray

by Tony Martin

Terry Gray was born in Memphis on August 8, 1958, to open wheel racer Elmer Gray and wife, Shirley, who already had two daughters, Amy and Cathy, who would later marry racers, Sammy Swindell and Joe Gillentine.

Gray says he grew up in a perfect family and can't remember having any interests outside of racing. From a young age, he was committed to a life of chasing racing up and down the highways. Now, after many years involved in the racing vocation, he becomes the eighth Dixie Ditch Driver (West Memphis' Riverside Intl. Speedway competitor) to be inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame. He joins Bobby Davis Jr., Greg Hodnett, Hooker Hood, Rickey Hood, Jeff Swindell, Sammy Swindell, and Bobby Ward as well as car owner, M.A. Brown and chassis manufacturer, Jack Elam from the Mid-South.

As a youngster, Terry accompanied his dad to races all across the Mid-South, learning the trade that would propel him to a Hall of Fame career. Sometimes they would

race five times a week and Terry had to persevere until he turned 16 in 1974 in order to run his first race at West Memphis.

It wasn't long before Gray moved up from behind the wheel of a B-car into a sprinter and In 1980 he captured the World of Outlaws main at Riverside driving the Fed Ex car which had formerly been brother-in-law Sammy Swindell's ride.

The 1981 season saw Terry move from behind the wheel into the crew chief position of the Nance 1N, which Sammy drove to the World of Outlaws title. At 22 years of age, Terry became the youngest chief mechanic to win the championship. He turned 23 late in the season. The following year, he split his time between wrenching and driving and between '83 and '87, Gray ran the full World of Outlaws tour

In the early 1990s, Gray was largely devoted to running with the NCRA and won the title three times. Numbers are a big deal in Terry Gray's career and he followed up these championships with four ASCS titles. Coupled with being the USCS champion a total of 13 times, his total of national titles comes to the astounding number of 20 - a personal goal he had set for himself. In addition to his titles, Gray also claimed the inaugural USCS race at Talladega Short Track 25 years ago.

It is interesting to note that Gray has claimed 94 wins coming into the 2022 season with USCS, 25 of which were pavement races. He feels his pavement prowess was passed down by his dad who was especially good on the pavement at Lakeland Speedway

near Memphis. As an example of how good the Bartlett pilot is on paved tracks, one must only look at the 2017 King of the Wing event at Montgomery Motor Speedway. After arriving from a dirt race too late to qualify, Terry had to start on the tail. Against a field of some of the nation's top 410 pavement machines, he was able to garner a 5th place finish in his 360 dirt car.

One of his biggest stand-alone wins came in 1994 when he won the prestigious Short Track Nationals at Little Rock, Arkansas. This is just one of 108 tracks where Gray has claimed at least one feature victory.

A dark year for Terry occurred in 2002 when he lost his number one fan to a tragic auto accident. Ginger, his wife of 18 years, fell victim to a highway mishap leaving Terry to raise their daughter, Stevie.

Recent years have seen Terry Gray Racing competing in duplicate with Morgan Turpen in the seat of the second of the two #10s. Terry was called to help the talented young lady's career and rather than working the bugs out of her car, a second machine was added to the stable. The results speak for themselves as Terry and Morgan routinely finish next to each other and Turpen was the USCS champ in '15 and '16. "I'm most proud when I see Morgan winning," said Gray.

After all these years, Gray continues to be competitive and narrowly lost out on a 14th USCS title in 2021. Strangely, the guy who beat him out is set to welcome Gray into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame - 2015 inductee Danny Smith.