

GARY "DEUCE" TURRILL - MECHANIC

By Doug Kennedy

GARY TURRILL is a native Ohioan – Belpre, to be exact - but had many other stops including those in Nebraska, Tennessee, Iowa, and a return to Memphis. He currently resides in Flora, Indiana, about 50 miles north of Indianapolis. During his illustrious racing career, "Deuce" worked with some pretty high-profile race teams. It all began with Rick Ungar, a relationship that began in 1972 and continued through 1977.

In 1978, he moved to Grand Island, Nebraska and worked for Butch Barr and Shane Carson. "It was the first time that I was getting paid for working on cars," said Turrill. After a year of that, he moved to Memphis, Tennessee to reunite with Ungar. That's also where he met his wife Susan. Her dad, Bob, and brother, Joey Gillentine, also raced. The second go-around for Rick and Gary lasted through 1980. Then in 1981 it was Brad Doty and the team's first All-Star win in 1982. He chased the Outlaw tour with Ungar and then, in 1983 and 1984, it was Sammy Swindell and a Knoxville Nationals win. In the mid part of 1984, Ungar and Turrill captured their first Outlaw race win in Sedalia, Missouri. "That was my first win as a crew chief," said Turrill. Dave Blaney took the ride in late 1984 and through 1985 got his first WoO Series win with Gary Stanton as car owner.

In 1986, he decided to take on a different job in racing with a chassis company. "I got hungry to get back on the road, so in 1988, we moved to Bloomington, Indiana, working for the late Sheldon Kinser. Then in 1988, we moved back to Memphis to work for Mike Ward. That's also the time I figured that I wanted to have my own race team and not bounce around with different owners."

By the end of 1988, the USA (United Sprint Association) was going head-to-head with the Outlaws. At the time, Doug Wolfgang was driving for Max Rogers and a few phone calls later, "Wolfie" hooked up with "Deuce". "I met with Danny Peace in 1989 and asked him if he could sponsor a car that Wolfgang was driving. We ended up driving for Danny in 1989 and had our best year ever. We won 43 of 86 races, the Knoxville Nationals, and a lot of other big events," said Turrill. In 1990, the pair started driving for the

Williams Brothers based out of California. They wanted to run for points but that's something Wolfgang and Turrill didn't really want to do. They went on to win 13 Outlaw races that season, in addition to the King's Royal, and finished second in WoO points.

Looking back to that Knoxville win, Deuce said, "Wolfie" started in the D-Main and clawed his way into the A-Main finishing 5th overall. "Nobody wants to do that because it's tough work and emotionally draining. Our job was to win races and that's what we were doing."

In 1991, he teamed with Kenny Jacobs and won several Central Pennsylvania races. Then the following season, it was "Deuce" and Terry Shepherd and the All-Star circuit. They found victory lane eight times and finished third in points, produced eight wins and a third in final points. It was back to Jacobs in 1993 as they ran the World of Outlaws.

"By then I was getting somewhat burned out all the road travel. "In 1994, I did a little thing called Turrill Tech. If any driver had a race car and thought they might need some help making the car right, then they could come to me and hire me for a night or a weekend. I was a major consultant. That was actually pretty successful. I met a lot of good people, and it was satisfying to see some of those drivers improve their on-track performances."

Turrill also formed a driving school at Memphis Motorsports Park. "I called it Deuce Terrill's Checkered Flag Driving School. It was for anybody who wanted to putz around in a race car and there were advanced classes for those who wanted to race."

After two seasons in 1997 and 1998 of working with Roger Johnson, Deuce made a deal with Australian driver, Brooke Tatnell. "They wanted to go Outlaw racing, but I had had just about enough of the road travel so I took a job with Franklin Racing Supply located in Saxonburg, Pennsylvania." The company manufactured rear ends and Turrill was the main salesperson. He also spent a couple years with his son, Eric doing some wingless racing, but financially, it was a struggle so Deuce took a job with an emergency transportation company. "I drove people to their doctor's

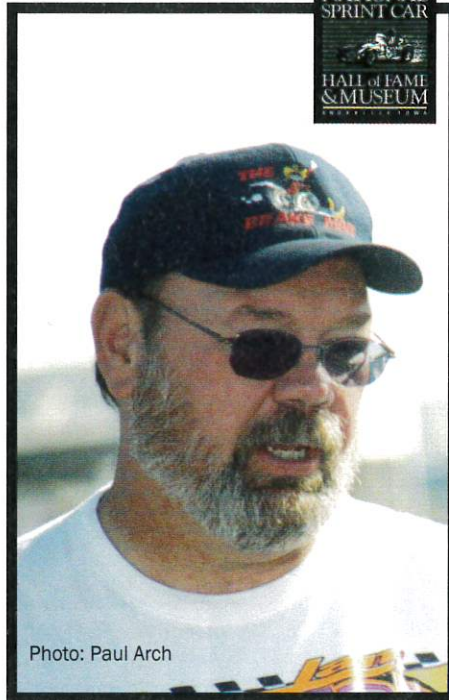


Photo: Paul Arch

appointments."

"Now I'm just enjoying my life and my two grandkids," said Deuce. "I'm pretty much retired from everything right now," said "Deuce". "I do enjoy a good race and it's something that will never go away, and I miss it every day."

And just how did he acquire the nickname of "Deuce"? "My dad, Max, was a card player. So he and his three brothers started calling me "Deuce" and my older brother, Terry, was known as "Ace".

The two drivers who had the most influence and experienced the most success with Turrill were Rick Ungar and Doug Wolfgang. "We just became really good friends," Deuce said of Ungar, however, there was no other driver who had a more successful run with Deuce than Doug Wolfgang. "He (Wolfgang) made you feel like you were just as important a team member as he, the driver. He truly appreciated your help and input and anything that could make the team better. We certainly had each other's back- it was more than just the wins."

"To be in the Hall of Fame with some of my mentors and heroes and to be mentioned with that same group of people is beyond words. It's very humbling to think of something I had a passion for and then to fulfill my dreams and then be inducted into the Hall of Fame with these people is very special." ■