

**We didn't have a fancy name for mechanics back in the day, they were just called "mechanics" or "guys that worked on the car".**

**Whatever they were called, they were a breed all by themselves, they were loyal and would always go above and beyond for their driver.**

**Nowadays they are called "crew chiefs" and it's time to give those guys the credit they deserve. Now I'd like to tell you about my crew chief.**

**His name is Ray Bartling, he grew up in the New Gretna area, hung around with Russell Groff, who had a junkyard and still does today.**

**Ray went in the Army in 1963 to 1966, he went into tele-communications as a lineman and when he was stationed in Germany, one of their trucks broke down, so he fixed it and they put him to work in the motor pool.**

**After Ray got out of the service he worked for Sears in the automotive center as a mechanic and that's where we met up.**

**Now Ray's wife Pat, enters into the mix along with all the other women that were directly or indirectly involved with racing.**

**I said earlier that crew chiefs were loyal, well Ray was that and then some.**

**P'ville had their 1<sup>st</sup> race on mother's day one year and she wasn't a happy camper that she sat home alone on mother's day, I think how he put it was "she had tight jaws about that episode".**

**Another occasion was Ray's dad had come into town and he told his dad "he was sorry that he couldn't spend Sunday with him because of the races", now if that isn't loyalty I don't know what is.**

**Ray would bring his nephew Kenny to the track every week but then there was a fatal accident involving a firearm and we lost our little buddy.**

**Kenny's dad wrote me a letter shortly thereafter which all of you can read in the pictures below.**

Roy Miles

November 1974

Dear Friend

It would please me a great deal if you would accept this small gift for your scrapbook. It is from one of your fans and one who loved racing. You "Roy" were his idol at the speedway on Sundays. Kenneth Lee Ross drew this picture about a day or so prior to his checker flag. I know since I gave him the tablet only about three days before.

The next season you race, race it clean and fast. My son "Ken" will be rooting for you all the way in "27" "Ken" knew something that has taken me almost a life time to learn I'd like to pass it on. "The best and nicest winners are not always the first across the finish line!"

You were his winner

Chuck Ross

One night I had blown a tire and came into the pits to get it changed and I got out to help and Ray was getting ready to tighten the lugs when I took the wrench from him and tightened them myself. After the race Ray let me have it with both barrels and said if I didn't trust him to tighten the lugnuts on the wheels, that maybe I should find someone else to work on the car.

He taught me a "life" lesson that night and I'm damn glad he did and so after that night we had 9 damn good years together and if you asked me would I do it again with him, ABSOLUTELY !!

We didn't have a lot of money to put into the car and by many peoples standards we shouldn't have done as well as we did, but Ray and I made this checklist up and that list was adhered to every week without fail, so we didn't have to many nuisance breakdowns like plug wires coming off or nuts coming loose and I would say that was a large factor that kept



us in the top ten in points for all those years.



It took about a year before we really clicked as a team and had the routines down pat until we were able to work on and around the car without getting in each others way and that was no easy task as it was only a one car garage and not much room on either side of the car.

Ray and I would be working on different projects on the car and he would have the correct wrench or socket in my hand without me asking for it and if any of you turn wrenches in racing you know that is a big asset and a timesaver.

I even got Ray to drive my car in a few times when I drove the #14 for Ed Brown for a couple of races so we could keep up the owner points on the #27.

Another member of the crew was Jack Carty from Somers Point, who also worked at Sears. At night Jack had a part time job at Pontierres Auto Service in Ocean City, where he would do our cylinder heads and valve work.

Jack was and still is a good mechanic, he's 70 years old and still busting wrenches.

Tommy Harte, also known as "Tiny" helped us on occasion and the one time I remember I threw a party for the crew after a complete rebuild of the #27 and my man Tiny was the life of the party. Tommy usually hung out with Harry McConnell and when racing season was over Tommy and I would go to Brigantine Beach and fish as we were avid surf fishermen.

Joe Permuy was the scrounger for our team, he would go all over the place looking for parts we needed. One day he brought this big window fan over that he'd found somewhere, he said we needed an "air conditioner" and he set it on the bench in front of the window and turned it on, it worked but it had a slight vibration, so much that it vibrated my tool box off the bench

scattering tools everywhere.I took my 10 lb sledge and beat the crap out of that fan.

I'll wind this up by saying to my guys,"Thanks again for sticking with me all those years,I really appreciate it,you guys always gave a 100 %".

If any of you want to see an article done on anyone that was affiliated with your car or the track send me an email at [raycer27@lsracers.com](mailto:raycer27@lsracers.com) or call 561-642-1999 and let us know who you would like to see featured on our website.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Scroll down to read the next article:      659 Memories**



afternoon to go to New York with the crew. Charlie recalled a funny incident that happened in 1967. Joey Panerella had a drivers license and so he drove the hauler with the 659 on it with Charlie riding shotgun. Tom and John Lyons had to get cleaned up and were a bit behind. Parker was already at the track and Joey and Charlie were on the G.S.P. and they were running late, so when they got to Lakehurst, Joey pulled over, Charlie got up in the 659 and fired it up so the engine temps would be up when they got to the track.(pretty smart thinking)



Now they're flying up the parkway at 70 mph fire belching out of the large exhaust pipe, and you can just imagine what the people on the GSP were wondering, as they're following behind the hauler looking at this spectacle. They got to the track just in time for the consolation race but missed qualifying by 1 spot.



The following two weeks they won features from the back against big block fuel injected modifieds like the XL1. In fact they won the Trenton qualifying race with a stock head and 3 2 barrel carbs.

Don House let Tommy Elliot go who was the driver of the XL1 and brought in Lee Roy Yarbrough to try to beat the 659.

Another top running car was the #14 that Richie Massing drove, that was owned by Dick Barney. One of the last shows that the 659 ran, Massing started up front and had a straight away lead, when Parker broke out of the pack and was in 2<sup>nd</sup> place and ran Massing down. Massing hit the wall going into turn 3 and Parker wound up the winner. According to sources, Dick Barney took Massing out of the car. The guys on the 659 crew still joke about the 659 being the cause of why 2 drivers lost their rides.



Another good story was the Delmar Delaware episode, it happened in 1973. They had run Wall Saturday night and Tom

wanted to run Delmar on Sunday, which I believe was dirt. The tires had to be changed and a different gas tank had to be installed that held more fuel for longer races.

So the next day the crew was supposed to show up early to get all the changes done to the car, but nobody showed except for Charlie, so he did the tires, changed the tank and now everyone starts to show up.

Now the dilemma was, who's gonna ride in the truck and who's gonna have to drive their own car to get there, so everybody's telling Tom that this one and that one are gonna ride in the hauler with Tom, and Charlie took exception to this and said to Tom that they needed to find their own way to the track and Tom said he couldn't do that and that Charlie was being a poor sport about the situation, so Charlie says he's not going.



Now Charlie had always mixed the fuel as Tom had taught him and Tom said "well at least mix the fuel for me if you're not going with us" and Charlie said ok, no problem. He

goes in the back to mix the fuel, well instead of putting 10% nitro in the fuel, he puts 15% in and they all went to Delaware minus Charlie.

So they went through warm ups and practice and Parker says "This thing is a rocket"!! They start the feature, from the back and Parker gets it up to 2<sup>nd</sup>, next thing he's backing off and back then they didn't have radios so no one knew what was going on and eventually it cracked a cylinder wall and Parker comes in the pits and raves about the power the car has and Tom said it's the same motor and nothing was changed.

When they got back to the shop, Tom gets the meter out to check the fuel and sees it has 15% nitro instead of 10% and needless to say he wasn't a happy camper! So when Tom asked him why he did that Charlie's reply was "I just wanted to make sure you had enough straight away speed so you could get to the front". Of course things calmed down over time and got back to normal.

Charlie credits Mr. Skinner, Tom's dad and Tom for keeping him off the streets and out of trouble as Charlie's dad passed away when he was a youngster, so the Skinners were now his family.



**Charlie said if there was one fault about Tom was that he was stubborn, like Charlie and his son C.J. had tried to get Tom to restore and revive the 659 for 5 years until they took matters into their own hands and did what they had to do to get the car looking as it does today.**

**I remember when Tom was helping me with my car, the engine specifically, we had gotten the motor back from the machine shop and he told me to wash the block, which I did and told me to do it again, well the third time I think all the guys at the shop said , Tom make him do it again, but people, that's just how it was at Skinner's shop. I wish I could turn back the time and do it all over.**

**Later John Lyons bought one of the other 659 coupes that was built in 1963 and he put a V8 in it and he and Tony Siscione ran it at P'ville.**

**The last year that that Tom ran Wall Stadium which was in 1977, they were bringing back the sportsman class. Rules said they would start up front because of the lesser cid motors. They had stopped doing that after they won the championship in 1973 and they told Tom if they did that that Tom would only be able to run a single carburetor, no fuel injection or multiple carbs. That's when Tom and Charlie parked the 659, plus everyone else on the crew had gone their own separate ways, Joe Panerella had moved, John Lyons and Tony had their car they ran at P'ville and the Terruso Brothers with the T2 had left, so it was basically down to Tom and Charlie.**



**At this point I'd like to add that I learned so much from Tom when I ran my #27 car, he was always ready and willing to help and I wouldn't have had the success that I had if it weren't for Tom Skinner.**

**\*\*\*\*\***