

MY LIFE IN RACING... I WAS “DRAWIN” TO IT

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Here is my story, it’s the Gods honest truth and I have pictures to prove it!!

I was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey in August 1945, the son of a son of a
Mechanic/race fan.

1st Heat...37 Fords

My Dad started taking me to the races in 1947. I don’t remember much about the first races as I fell out the 2nd story window landing on my head that summer. It has not affected me at all at all at all. Whoops, sorry!



I lost the bag of pictures he took of Hinchcliffe, Dover and the other bullrings but I was there. In 1948, Dad and his buddy built a race car out of a 37 Ford coupe to run as a sportsman at the local tracks. Dad took



me to see it at the buddies’ back yard by the Bayway circle on US 1. There sat a shiny red 37 Ford coupe with yellow wheels. Dad said “Here’s yer race car Charlie”! I was the happiest 3 year old on the planet! He opened the door and stood me on the bucket seat. I grabbed the wheel and started making race car noises! This was the beginning of a life long love of 37 Fords! They told me that I started

drawing race cars shortly after that and I have not stopped since.

2nd Heat...I'm gonna be a race driver!!



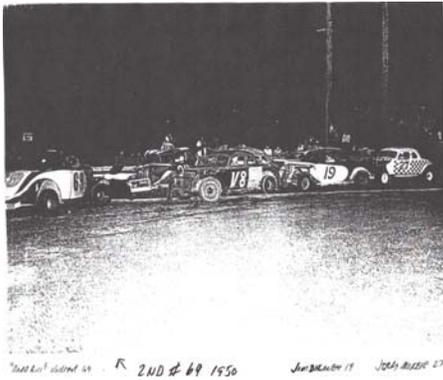
Dad towed the car home to Newark with his 39 Desoto and my artistic mom painted the numbers and Dad's name on the car. I got to play in the car while the final preparations for racing were being made. My dad didn't have any welding equipment so some of the work, like the front and rear crash bars were done by drilling and bolting. I got to help out by holding the nuts, bolts and washers while him and the young guys who were helping him did the work. Most of the time I was in the seat making race car noises! The pit crew called me "Little Hotrod".

I don't know where he started racing the car. Dad told me he drove it once, started last, finished last, and then decided to let other men drive it. We would flat tow to the race track. Upon reaching the pit gate, Dad would pay the entry fee and get his hand stamped. I would stick my little paw out and get my pit pass stamp too! Then Mom and I would go inside what I recall as baseball stadiums, possibly Veterans Mem. in Bayonne or a track in Lodi. I would be dragging Mom by the hand to hurry up because I could hear the "warm ups" and the beautiful sounds of the flatheads popping as they backed off in the turns. Mom would buy me a plastic stock car (More on these later) at the novelty stand for a dime and we would get seated. I would show the people seated nearby my 'pit stamp' that I was SO proud of!!



When the races started, my Mom would point out the cars and drivers we knew. "Look, that's Jack Mulrain in the 27 and Frankie Schneider in the deuce"! What's a deuce Mom?? "Oh, Number 2". And sometimes she'd say "There's your cousin Jimmy"! Very confusing... My cousins are little kids like me? "No, no he's your Daddy's cousin, but he's your cousin too!" Later

I would find out that ‘Cousin Jimmy’ was rising NASCAR star Jim Delaney, who was quickly establishing himself as a winning driver in the sportsman/modifieds and soon the short track late model and Grand National ranks of the fledgling NASCAR sanctioned races. It turned out that my Grandfather had been in the auto repair business in Cranbury N.J. with Jim Delaney Sr. and married one of his sisters. Although I never knew my real grandma as she had passed away after the birth of her 5th child, my Uncle Bob, (still alive in Daytona). Jim Sr. had a couple of daughters and two sons ,Jimmy, who won the Race of Champions on the treacherous Langhorne dirt



circle 3 times (52,58,59) and raced on the old Daytona beach road course in modifieds and late models from 1950 to 1957, before retiring as a driver. He and younger brother Bill would work for several Nascar grand national teams including Jack Smith, Bud Moore, Hal Needham and the Rod Osterland team that featured Dale Earnhardt Sr. When I saw ‘cousin Jimmy win the race, I told my Mom “I’m gonna be a race driver too”!

3rd Heat...The Red 69 is mine!!!

By 1949, Jim Delaney is winning races on a regular basis, driving cars owned by other people, or cars he has built for others and been hired to drive them. My Dads car is funded by what he earns working at a Cities Service oil terminal in Tremley Point, Linden, behind the Linden airport. An underpowered back marker, driven by a number of different drivers, whose names are a mystery to me. By mid season he got hooked up with a former midget racer named “Papa” Bill Kohler, who had come over to the hardtops when they became popular In his mid forties he was considered an old timer among youngsters like Wally Campbell, Frankie Schneider and Jim Delaney. He had picked up a couple good rides and was enjoying racing frequently close name for himself as a top contender in the mod/sportsman and short track late model divisions finishing in the top of the point standings before early retirement due to other obligations.



Dad and Bill got along well and Bill's experience was helping keep the red 69 in one piece. Still, 1/5 mile bullrings were brutal on equipment. After one



too many crashes Dad gave up and bought another 37 Ford coupe. He and the crew began removing the race parts from the Red 69 and into the "new" car. After all the good stuff was in the "new" car, Dad painted the sides trunk lids and hubs yellow and mom did an ace job on the red numbers and wheels and painted "Papa

Bill" on the doors. It was looking pretty spiffy! The battered remains of my first love was sitting on blocks behind the 'new' car. My Dad said "You can have the old 69 Charlie, It's all yours"! Wow!! I'm 4 years old and I got a real race car!! I crawled in through the hole where the transmission had been and stood on a milk crate all day playing race driver. I had sweet dreams that night and woke up early, looking forward to racing all day again. I ran to the back window (the window I had fallen or jumped from 2 yrs.

prior). The red 69 was gone!! Mommy, Mommy where's my race car, I queried?? "The junkman took it" she said. I experienced heartbreak for the first time. I was inconsolable for hours. The only thing that got me to stop crying was my Dad promising to buy me a whole bag of plastic stock cars. 4th Heat...I can still play race driver

After I calmed down my Dad took me for a ride in the new 69. He had me stand up and hold tight on the roll bar. He fired it up and slowly drove out of the backyard and on to the backstreet. "Hold on



RUPPERT STADIUM

Charlie" and he lit it up! It felt like we were flying! We went to the end of the street and back twice then parked it before somebody called the cops. Boy that was fun! He told me I could play race car in it but not to touch anything but the wheel.

They ran Ruppert Stadium regular and according to his old record book, he actually



made a couple bucks that season. In the middle of July the car made \$140.00, one night, so I guess that they won their heat and finished the feature pretty good. That was a pretty exciting summer for a kid turning 5 years old. My dad made good on the plastic stock car promise and I had accumulated a bunch of them and a box full of axles and tires my Dad would glue back on for me with Duco cement and matchsticks. When the races were over Mom and I would go in the pits and I could sit in the car while it had the fresh race stink on it. It was an intoxicating odor. It was a mixture of burnt race fuel, burnt rubber and sweat.

Papa Bill would leave his Black Cromwell helmet in the car and I would wear it when I played race driver. I was getting real good at race car noises, including the rumpety-rump of the high lift cam idle, a skill I've taught to my 4 year old grandson. My Dad had picked up an old pedal car that he fixed up for me to race around the back yard and a plastic stock car helmet at the novelty stand for my birthday!

I started school in the fall and in the middle of winter my parents bought a new house in Woodbridge. My Mom's Dad had passed away and my grandmother moved in with us. Mom got a job as a secretary for National



Oil & Supply, a Quaker State/ DuPont distributor in Newark. Shortly after we moved in, my Dad built a small garage to keep his "new" car, a used 48 Desoto. The 69 was towed to the new house and parked next to the garage. I couldn't play race car in it anymore because it was full of tires, wheels and spare parts.

Consy...Changes

Dad was busy making a living and the 69 sat idle for a while. We started going to Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City to watch the races. Dad would take his camera; buy the Illustrated Speedway News and 2 plastic stock cars for me. Afterword, we would go in



the pits and visit Cousin Jimmy and Cousin Bill Major. His mother was also a Delaney sister. He was about the same age as my Dad. He was the track welder at Roosevelt and the Dirt track at Morristown and had been the welder at Hinchcliffe. I found he was still alive in Toms River and looked him up a few years ago. He was ninety yrs. old and had a heart attack a few months earlier. His wife Jo, insisted he stop riding his Harley -Davidson at this time. I spent a wonderful afternoon with them talking about family and racing back in the 40s-50s. He told me you could pay “welding Insurance” at the gate back then for 50 cents. In my day it was \$2.00. Wonder what it is now or is that just history? I asked who his favorite drivers were back then. He said Cousin Jimmy of course and Tommie Elliott, but “he wrecked a lot whole lot”. I gave them a couple drawings I had with me and sent them more when I got back to Fla. Jo sent me a thank you card and said “I woke him up” and he started remembering stuff from way back and talking about it! I was tickled!!



During the next few years we would go to Roosevelt, with occasional trips to Morristown or Wall stadium .I read the Speedway news and played with plastic stock cars. My Dad had infected our next door neighbor and a guy in our neighbor hood with the race fan bug. Next door kid was a year older than I, the other a couple yrs younger with a cute sister my age. My dad had heard that they were building a new race track in Old Bridge about 12 miles from home. He said it might be a NASCAR deal. My Dad registered as a car owner and was told the #69 was taken in N.J. He picked 56, painted the sides’ silver and mom painted red numbers on the car. We went to the site of the track on what was then Rt.18. The grandstands were up and they were working on the guardrails. It was a sea of mud! I had been to the Trenton speedway when it was 1 mile dirt but Old Bridge looked huge! It opened in 53, but not as a NASCAR track, and he never got the 56 race ready, but he wouldn’t sell it. We went there faithfully for the next 7 or 8 yrs. and saw some great racing I consider O.B. my home track although I never raced my stock car there, but I did win a couple trophies drag racing my high school hotrod 53 Merc, 2-2 flathead in the H/G class. I was especially thrilled with the yearly 200 lappers that brought cars from all over the northeast and as far

south as Va.

During these years my Dad would take me to visit my grandparents in Roselle where my grandma would cut open a paper bag for me to draw on. I would draw my favorite race cars and color them in with crayons. In school I'd struggle to get passing grades, but get A's in art class. Go figure! My next door neighbor kid and I each had a paved track in our cellars to race our plastic stock cars on and a dirt track in his backyard. We had regular bicycle races all the time and at the end of summer a 200 lapper at the park on our street.

As we got older we were into custom and street rod cars too and I and some of my classmates started a car club although none of us were old enough to drive. We bought a 34 Ford panel truck as a club project, but within a year we were buying our own cars to fix up for when we could drive. When I was 15, one of my buddies who was already driving, got a job at Custom Auto Body on Rt.1 in Avenel. They sponsored the famous XL1 modified and other race cars. I got to hang out there for the couple years and be a fly on the wall and listen to the banter between the great racers who came there for bodywork, parts, advice, or just BS. It was an enlightening experience for a young race fan! When I turned 17, old enough to drive, I started driving my Merc and drag racing. I was working in a Sunoco station as a H.S. senior. That summer I bought a 55 Chevy 2dr, pulled the 6 for a 265 that smoked, then a cammed 2-4 283 that carried me to Lincoln Tech for a course in auto mechanics. When I got my certificate I got a job in a truck garage and bought a brand new 409 -400 Chevy SS . Then one Sunday night watching modifieds at Old Bridge I decided it was time to fulfill my destiny and live my dreams. The drag racing was fun, but "I'm gonna be a race driver"!! That little car club we had started had morphed into a well respected safety conscious drag racing club, Performance Plus. Now, my pal George Perkins and I would become the 'Oval Track Division'.

INTERMISSION...

Go pee, or get a drink, have a smoke, whatever...then come back and read the rest.

1st Semi-Final.... Ya picked a fine time to leave me loose wheels!

Remember the part about falling out the window? That was the first of 6 official concussions I've had, so indulge me while I tie up loose ends. Earlier

I had mentioned about my Dad and his camera. In 1953 he bought a movie camera and started taking home movies in color. Mixed in with all the relatives and my kid brother Danny doing wheelies on his bike, (He was the wheelie King) was race track footage he shot at Roosevelt Stadium in Flemington, early Old Bridge, very rare footage of Nascar's 1st road race, held at Linden airport and finishing up with my 69 at East Windsor in 1965. If you have ever been to a Fillimon brother's race movie party you have seen it.

My Dad did sell the #56 coupe in 1957/8, not sure. A local racer bought it and told me he cut it up for parts. It was only 40 years old at the time...what could have been wrong with it???

Jim Delaney stopped racing on a regular basis around 1957. He was staying close to home at that time building modifieds and race engines for other people. He would roll out his #4 coupe at the end of the season and run a local dirt track to shake it down. That must have worked pretty good as he won back to back Langhorne '58 & '59. He passed away in 1992. I'm still in contact with his brother Bill and his youngest daughter.

When I decided to go racing in 1964 I was 19 and still building plastic stock car models. This hobby was put on hold over 20 years and it would be another 16 before I returned to those little novelty stand coupes.

I've never owned a real 37 Ford, I came close 5 times. I'm still dreaming!

THE FEATURE...1965

George Perkins and I were going to go partners in a limited sportsman. We started looking around for something to work with. We settled on a gutted '39 Pontiac coupe sitting at Ed Kimball's shop on Rte.27 in Iselin. We were both working at the GM assembly plant in Linden. It was hard work, long hours, night shift and lots of money. I



put the coupe behind my Dad's garage and started in on it working outside; dead of winter and ice cold. I want to be racing by spring. We ain't gonna make it. We had looked at a derelict 37 Chevy coupe modified that looked like it was built in the 50's. It had been

bouncing around from garage to garage in Woodbridge. It was rough so we

passed on it. Now between freezing my butt off starting from scratch, I tracked it down to Julian's auto body on Rt.9 in So. Amboy. I went to look at it and bought it. Rolling chassis, no engine and no trans. Perk was gracious enough to buy my half of the Pontiac. I towed it to his parent's house. Towed the Chevy home and attacked it. I spent almost every available minute on it for the next 4 months. I had help on the weekends from club members, Perk and my cousin Richard Slater, but mostly me. Bought a junkyard 283, and an Isky cam, solid lifters, an aluminum 4 bbl. manifold, a header kit and flex pipe. I bought a 3 speed transmission; Perk gave me a Carter AFB that would not work on his 55. Richard and I brush painted it Rust-Oleum red and had it lettered up by a professional. I bought some used wheels and race tires, including a pair of old asphalt tires from Al Gehrum at Custom Auto Body. XL1 owner, Don House gave me a piece of flex pipe from his junk pile. I bought a 52 Ford pickup that ran on 7 cylinders and had a worn out steering box (It wandered a little) I was ready... "I'm gonna be a race driver"!!



Maiden voyage to Wall Stadium; we decided to tow it with Perks, 48 Ford ¾ ton truck. It steered straight. We left Woodbridge at 4:30 for a 25 mile tow. My Dad and the family blew by us on Rt.34 in Colts Neck and at 6pm. Perks Ford has almost no compression! We're pulling hills in the granny hole. We got there at 7, passed inspection. We still have to put the race tires on and the driveshaft in it. I get called for the 2nd heat. So far this car has made it once around the block in my neighborhood. I'm waiting to enter the track from the pits. I get the wave, let out the clutch, drop the driveshaft, and roll to the infield. Watch the race. Get towed to my pit. Watch the races, and go home. Better luck next time!

We put in a new driveshaft and universals. Sat. night, let's go to Weissglass, its closer. We'll take my truck. Get there in time for hot laps, great! Make ½ a lap, the old Pappy Hough style Quick change, grenades. Who was supposed to check the fluid in the rear?? Me, I guess. I went to the pay window. The promoter, Gabe Rispoli says, "Nice lookin' car, you coming back next week?" Yeah, says I. "Well here's 10 bucks, I'll pay your bridge toll," Thanks!! We dragged it back to Jersey, the rear end banging and

clanking, So much for the Pappy. It's off to the junkyard for a Chevy rear end. I'll take the whole thing. Exchange the rear wheels for wide GM's, new yoke, I'm good! Back to Weissglass! We'll tow it with the race tires on it, save time. UH-OH!!! This car is too high! The cars that race here are sitting on the ground and I remember a trick my Dad told me about "wedge". Have the crew stand on the left side crash bar. Chain it bent over hard to the left. This should work, right?? Oh boy, this is worse, I'm gonna lay it over! I can't race here! I tried the pay window again. Gabe says "Yer kiddin' ain't ya"? When I got back to the truck there were 2 kids waiting for my autograph (the only 2 I ever signed) pit crew Pete says "here he comes kids, A.J. FOYT ha ha." Last time we went there.

GM plant closes for retooling; I'm off for 2 months. Now I can run Ft. Dix on Thursday and East Windsor on Friday!! Woo Hoo!
Ft. Dix worked real well for me. I was able to get around there pretty good and qualified every time. I had my best finish ever, 2nd in a semi-feature. I got to race with a mix of rookie, like me and veteran racers. I got to be racer buddies with the late, great Mike Grbac. I really liked racing there.

I have a few humorous anecdotes from Ft. Dix. We got there way too early one Thursday afternoon, nobody there, I mean nobody! If I shut off my 7 cylinder Ford, It's not going to start again for at least an hour. I'll let it idle awhile....now it's starting to overheat, I have to shut it off. Five minutes later the pit boss shows up, we pay, the truck won't start. It's still hooked to the race car, so we start the 69 and push the truck in. Hot laps, I'm going to try to go into the 1st turn as hard as I can and see if I can get around, so I wait till the other cars are off the track and here I go down the front stretch wide open, Uh oh, too fast! I slam the guardrail square and bounce off hard. I'm sure everybody saw that. I drive to the pit entrance like nothing happened. The crew is sure the throttle must have stuck open. Nope, I was experimenting. YOU IDIOT!! While they're checking the car for damage, I'm busy rubbing a gas rag on the tires trying to get the whitewash off. The car was a tank, no damage, and a slight bruise to the ego.

During a Heat race one night Johnny Bate and I are coming through the field side by side. Car in front of us pops his motor; we both spin to the infield in fluids. I'm about to go backward so I dump the clutch. I had a hydraulic clutch setup using a master cylinder from Perks 39 Pontiac and a slave cylinder. I had welded a piece of angle iron to the cast iron brake lever

so I could reach it with my 220 Lincoln welder. You can't weld to cast. If you put enough slag on it you can make it stick for awhile. It came off. Oh S**T! I can't reach it without the angle iron. After they cleaned up the slop, I got pushed off and we finished the heat race. Back in the pits I have to figure out how to use the clutch?? If I loosen my shoulder harness and seatbelt and scrunch down in the seat and pull the firewall back so my cowboy boot will fit thru, I can reach it. Okay, once we get going I won't need it! I'm starting outside pole for the feature, I roll out and while I'm idling my left foot is right next to the last cylinder on the left side of the engine. There's a hole in the boot where my big toe is. There's a hole in the flex pipe where I welded it to the header kit. Every time that cylinder fires it shoots a flame on my toe! I can't push the clutch down far enough to keep the car from creeping forward. I wedge the big right front M&H against the guardrail hoping we'll get going soon, but we're not. I don't want to shut it off because I'll need a shove to get started uh oh!! The boots on fire!! Now I have to shut it off. I had a black toe for a week.

I finished the feature one night, Mike Grbac won it easily. He passed me early. I never saw him again. I'm taking an insurance lap. Right in front of the starter's stand I get drilled square in the ass a ton!! Grbac slides off me and goes by. What happened?? Did I get in his way?? I roll into the pits and park, unhook, and climb out. Grbac is still rolling around the track. After a few more laps he comes bouncing in the pits slides up behind his wrecker and stalls the engine and comes out the window heading for me! I'm bracing for impact, he says "Charlie are you okay?? Is your car okay?? I got no brakes. I couldn't stop! I was going to have to hit the fence so I hit you! I'm sorry!" We were buddies after that.

Garden State Classic, Wall Stadium 1965

Now that I'm an "experienced" asphalt racer, I'm gonna run the GSC! Well, sort of; well not really.

Wall had a novice class that was flatheads and sixes so I have to run as a sportsman there. No problem!! I'll just stay out of the way. We arrived there early enough for warm ups so I was able to take enough turns to know that I'm a little lost on the high banks. 2nd. Heat I'm starting outside pole. A couple of parade laps and he drops the green! I stand on the throttle; it coughs, bucks, wheezes, and then responds too late, Dan McLaughlin is pushing me faster than I've ever gone! The inside lane is blowing by and

I'm holding the outside lane back, not on purpose, so I steer as far to the right as I can so they can go under me but I get turned and pushed into the rail left front first. I bounce off and as I'm rolling backwards down the banking, I look out my right side window to see Dave Hulse in Woody Johnson's white 68 about to t-bone me. As I braced for impact I thought, I'm gonna be on the front page of the AARN next week!!!

I can only guess that Dave's expertise saved me as he barely touched me as he dove under to get by. I kept rolling backwards until I bumped the 1/2 55 gallon drums they had in the infield, knocking over the strategically positioned fire extinguisher, filling the air with a white cloud. As I looked up the hill I saw McLaughlin's crunched 38, with Bill Altonen in his trunk. OOPS, my bad. I climbed out to survey the damage to see my 2 r/f shock absorbers rolling toward me and my front wheels toed in. They towed me into the pits and dropped me off and went back for the other 2, which took quite a bit longer. While the racing continued I hammered my tie rod straight and had the welder put one r/f shock back on. I walked to the pit shack to request a last place starting spot for the consy. "Oh yeah, you're starting last!! I rode around a few laps at a leisurely pace thinking maybe some body else would cause a wreck and I could make the field by attrition. Not today. I



1965

got black flagged and parked. Don Stives won the classic that year and I'm sure I'm not even a footnote in the archives of that event, but I was actually on the track for 1 10/100 of a lap with some of the greats of the day! I didn't get my picture in the AARN that year, but in Oct. 2010, Earl Krause's column about the Old Bridge reunion had a picture of me, reunited with

the now "Infamous 69", 45 years later!! All good things come to he who waits!

I RACED AT EAST WINDSOR....I HAVE PROOF!!

The truth be told, I raced there every Friday night in July and August of 65 and later season Sundays. I loved it! It was absolutely the most exciting, most fun, most thrilling racing that I did. I got around pretty good considering that the extent of my and my crew's knowledge of setting the car up was very, very slim. The tire formula was this: the big tires go on the right side of the car, the small ones on the left. I was able to qualify every time I ran there and had a couple of top 15 finishes, maybe a little higher once or twice. The only time I didn't make it in was the night it wouldn't start for the feature. The first time I ran there I still had the beer keg fuel tank that was in the car when I bought it, apparently the 260 Sunoco I was running was eating the aluminum keg and clogged the fuel pump. I tried to determine what the problem was by pouring gas down the carburetor from a glass milk bottle, while turning the engine over. It belched, lit the bottle on fire, I dropped the bottle in the dirt, it broke and the fire went under somebody's modified pitted next to me. That crew freaked, but I was able to stomp the flames out before any damage was done. Good old cowboy boots! The next morning I took the fuel pump off my 409 and put it on the 69. It fired right up. I took the old one apart and found the problem. Okay, off to the junk yard for a regular car gas tank. 57 Chevy, 1 size fits all. Made new brackets out of angle iron and spare pipe,

When I ran out of pipe, I "borrowed" some bumper jacks from my Dad's garage. (If you've seen the 69 on display, their still in there). That oughta' work! And it did, until my last time out in the car. I'm in the 100 lapper for limiteds at E.W. S. Yeah Buddy!! I'm in the big show! Went out for my one and only time trial run ever, took the green and I'm flyin', the 3rd & 4th turn is really rutted and bumpy. Coming by the starter, he's waving a black flag. What's up wit dat?? I'm the only one out here? I'm hammered down and make the 2nd lap, starter standing on the track, pointing the red at me to the infield? I pull in, and

another driver who had already taken time sticks his head in my window and yells (69 was really loud, 6 inch stove pipes) "did you put another fuel tank in for the big race?" What? No! Why?? "Because your fuel tank is in the 4th turn!" Huh!?! Yep, there it was. I drove the car back in the pits still running, thinking I was done for the day. My crew says, NO! You qualified in the top ten!! Track crew brought the tank, we roped it back in. I guess I



should have secured sideways too, not just front to back! I always brought 2 hot batteries with me and put the fresh one in for the feature but they were calling for the start so there was no time to tie it down. I ran I don't know how many laps until the battery bounced out and snapped the post out of it. The Taylor twins finished one-two and I was done for the season.

Uncle Sam had called something about a war somewhere. I put the 69 behind dad's garage and joined the U.S. Marines. "I'm gonna be a Jarhead"!! My dad who had finally sold his racecar 7 or 8 years before, when he opened the door and the hornets got him! He says "Sell the car". No! I'll be back in a few years. It's not staying here, says he. I sold it to Jim Longstreet from So. Amboy. I started a new adventure. Made PFC out of boot camp at Parris Island S.C., Went to motor transport school, "I'm gonna be a truck driver"! My hotrod buddy Ray Estok sent me the AARN while I was away, but I missed the Sept 68 cover of it when he made the front page 3 picture spread flipping it at E Windsor. I wonder what ever happened to my old race car?

IT AIN'T OVER UNTIL IT'S OVER.....THE PITS

I got out of the Marine Corps in 1969. I never got to the jungle. I was too valuable as a tractor trailer instructor. Traveled from N.C. to Puerto Rico with the Navy, went on a Med cruise to the far reaches of the Mediterranean Sea with the 6th fleet, back to N.C. then to California for jungle warfare, guerilla school, survival and hand to hand. Combat. Got to Okinawa transit base and finished my enlistment there. My last duties as an E-4 over 3 was as the Battalion sign painter. Good Duty! I met a lot of great guys, still in contact with a few, including former USN Seabee Tommy Vroom (yes, that's his real name). I met Vroomie in the mess line of the USS Walworth County LST en route to the Med. I heard him jabberin' to somebody, Where you from? Says I. Jersey, he says, where you from? Woodbridge says I. You fool around with race cars? Yeah, he says, I'm with Sonny Strupp. Wow! I show him a picture of my 69, I know this car, I saw it at E, Windsor says he! Yeah Buddy!! Off we went! He's from Plainfield, been around race cars his whole life, me too! We had a swell time on the ship. He's a former go-kart champ, gonna build a modified when he gets out. He had been crewing with Sonny since he was a kid. We swapped stories and became very good friends. He got out before me and sent me pictures of what he was working on at his Dad's body shop. His Dad had done the body and paint work on Sonny Strupp's modifieds since the early 50's. When I got out, I looked him up. He

had one of Will Cagle's former coupes and was prepping for Middletown. I had acquired the 39 Pontiac that Geo. Perkins had working on and a 36 Ford flat back while I was on leave before shipping out my Dad had relented and let me keep them behind the garage. Go figure??

He also let me keep this beautiful '61 Chevy convertible I bought when I thought I was going to finish up at Camp Lejeune, N.C. It was a 1 owner beauty with what I thought was a 283 column stick, But I ran the block numbers and it had 340 327 in it. I put in a 4 spd. and Ray Estok put a cam in it while I was away. I did some welding on Vroomies coupe and went to Middletown with him and then got sidetracked by other irresistible forces. I sold all the race car stuff, hid out for awhile then reemerged started driving tank trucks where my Dad was driving, met the Love of my life and bought my first BIG truck.

For the next 28 years I was running regional, then long distance over the road back to regional and local tank trucking in a series of my own Kenworths and Peterbilts. All big engine chromed up hotrods. I married my Love who had a young son and we had a boy. We were settled in Brick N.J. I didn't get to the races very often but I kept up with a subscription to the AARN and Stock Car magazine. Our younger son had a problem with noisy places so we were apprehensive about how he would be at a race track. Wall Stadium was the closest track so we took him there in the early 80's. He loved it! We became regulars as he was a big Tony Siscone fan. I stopped doing the long work in the early nineties and discovered that there was a lot of time spent waiting around in the local workplace. Waiting to load or unload, 3 hour lab tests, waiting for papers, etc., so I started drawing to pass the time, after I had wiped the truck all shiny!! Mostly cartoons that people would hang up in places I loaded or unloaded or the drivers room in the terminal where I worked out of in Keasbey N.J. for Krajack tank lines. Right down the hill from Racz's garage. Yep, same place those yellow 41 cars raced out of when I was kid! Now strictly towing businesses run by the late Joe Racz's nephew Tom Rhodes. I had an occasion to be in his office one day and saw the walls filled with pictures of Joe's racecars. I drew some color pictures for him, discovering at the same time that a guy who still worked there as a wrecker driver was there since the mid 50's and was part of the pit crew of the 41's and like me; he had a passion for that era. I had not known him in my street racing days, but knew of him and his white 57 Chevy that was not a 283. His name is Dickie Pressnell. My involvement with Racz's led to an amazing opportunity for me. I was up in Jersey, visiting about 10 years ago. Krajack was still in business at the time and

while I seeing old truck buddies, they told me Tommy Rhodes was looking for me. I went up the hill to his garage where he told me that he wanted a picture drawn for his Uncle Joe's headstone and would I be interested in drawing it? Of course, says I. How much do you charge, says he. Nothing, say I, honored to be asked. He says okay, I'll buy you dinner and give you some t shirts. Okay! When I went back to Florida, I did a black and white drawing of one of Joe's famous flat back 41's and sent it to him. I didn't hear from him for about a year and thought, maybe he didn't like it?

Christmas Eve day I got card from him with a check for \$500.00. Uh oh, maybe they gave me the money that the guy who etched on the stone is supposed to get? I called him up. Tommy I got a check for \$500?? "What he says, not enough"? "No, "I said", "I get 25 bucks to draw". "No, No! That's for you, it's already on the stone, and we love it!

"I'm waiting for the t-shirts but they are not ready yet. I will send them when they are done, Merry Christmas and thanks." The t-shirts and hoodies had the same drawing I had done for the headstone but in color. They appeared in my mail just before my trip to Speed week Daytona. I called my friend Ray Estok at his shop in Woodbridge and asked him if he would go to the Hungarian cemetery in Hopelawn and take a picture of the stone. He did and sent it to me.

I got to see it person for the first time a few years ago and was amazed at its size, as it is large and the drawing was blown up larger than I had drawn it and etched in exactly as I had



drawn it. I have seen a picture of it on the three wide website when someone who went to visit a relative there stumbled upon it and it was also in the Weird N.J. Magazine.

We moved to the Florida Keys in 1998 to take over a motel that had been in my wife's family for 30 years. It was a lot of work the first couple of years but then it settled in to me sort of managing it. I had to stay in or near the

office so I could take care of the customers. I started drawing again and since I had access to a computer, discovered websites that dealt with N.J. racing and provided pictures of the old coupes and coaches and the fond memories that went with them. I decided to really apply myself to drawing my favorite cars. I had drawn my own car, then the 659, Bob Malzahns SSS, the Ace of spades, the XLI, Racz's 41 and others. I also had a small workshop in proximity to the office that allowed me to start building the



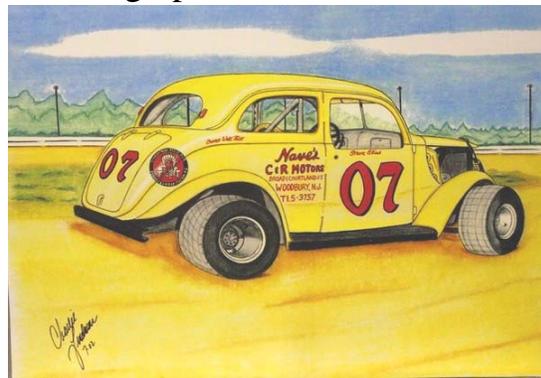
little plastic novelty stand for the 37 Ford coupes. Though they were out of production at that time, I had bought a bagful the last time I had seen them at Wall stadium. The two hobbies went hand in hand as my drawings were getting pretty good and I was putting the detail in to the little coupes

with the patience I lacked as a boy. I was also inspired by the columns being published in the AARN and the Garden state vintage stock car club (GSVSCC) of which I have been a member since shortly after it's birth. Earl Krause, Ken Kuhlman, John Snyder, and Marty Little were writing about the "golden era" of modifieds, right up my alley! One night I had called Marty little, a Fla. Native who as a young man had ventured to Jersey to see his Florida modified heroes in action up north. He had seen Malzahn, Red Farmer, and the Allison's at home and later in the bigger venues. I called to talk to him about an article he had written in the GSVSCC newsletter about Bobby Brack a Fla. favorite who had come north in a beautiful 37 Ford that I had seen a number of times. While we were talking he asked where in Fla. I lived. I told him Islamorada. He said "that's were Bob Malzahn lives". Wow! I had built a plastic SSS 20 years prior and recently drawn it. I gotta look him up! I looked in our local phone book and there he was, 3 miles below on the same island!! I called him and he answered the call. I told him I had been a fan of his since 1957 and could I stop by for a visit? A day or two later I went over and had a wonderful visit with a true Living Legend and his wife Bernice, They had been together forever and she was as knowledgeable about that era as he was! I had him autograph my original drawing of him and gave him a copy. He also signed the model car. I visited them a number of times and did more drawings and built replicas of his 36 Chevy Batissa coupe, Fireball 99 and the # 1 Cope flat back Ford that he

won the Langhorne ROC in, out of the little plastic coupes. When they left the Keys for better health care, after it was determined he wasn't going to go fishing in his boat anymore, they stayed at our motel while they cleaned out their house. I've visited them a number of times at their new home and try to see them during speed week, although I missed them this year. During this time period my son Jonathan and I attended races at the now defunct Hialeah speedway where Marty Little was the announcer. At a later date they advertised a tribute night to former drivers including Bobby Brack.

I dropped off some prints of his #57 to Marty and he had Bobby sign one for me. In 2002 we had some disagreements at the motel and I went back in the trucking business. I bought a beautiful 91 Peterbilt and leased it to Dana transport, working out of a terminal in Jacksonville. I would bobtail to Jax pick up a tank and run the southeast for 3 weeks, visit my family in Daytona, then head back to the Keys to draw and build plastic cars.

I went up to Jersey for a visit and went to Wall Stadium. I introduced myself to AARN's Earl Krause and asked if he could give some prints of the 659 drawing to Parker Bohn and Tom Skinner who were selling tires there. He did, and had them all sign one for me. For the past 10 years Earl has helped with phone #'s, addresses and contacts to have drawings of the greats of the past receive copies of my prints and autograph one for me. I was inspired by an article Earl wrote in his column about Sonny Strupp. I drew a picture of Sonny and Frankie Schneider racing together and Earl provided a phone # to reach Sonny, whom I had known in Jersey when he was tank trucking. This led me to contact my old friend Tommy Vroom and renew a friendship that has



blossomed into a brotherhood. I had sent Tommy copies of my prints as gifts and he asked me if I ever considered selling them. We talked about it and he set me up a website that he ran for me for a couple of years. I continued drawing and building aiming to make each of my efforts better than the last. I have done over 200 drawings in the past 12 years, many of which have been autographed by their subjects. I've been blessed by getting to talk to many racers I've considered my heroes, and received thank you's and accolades from others. Many of these drivers have passed on but will live in the memories of those who have my drawings on display. Because of my ability to draw, just one of many blessings, I've been introduced to Living

Legends and taken to places I had only heard about, but not seen, 4 or 5 years ago I was visiting legendary mechanic/crew chief Ray Fox's Living Legends of Auto Racing Museum in So. Daytona, I was picking up autographed copies of a drawing of a famous Fish carburetor sponsored M car that Ray had built for the late Fireball Roberts that I had left before. While there it was brought to my attention that someone from NASCAR was trying to reach me. A call was made on my behalf and I was invited to visit the France family archives by one its curators. I was given directions as it was not part of the famed speedway. Upon arrival I entered what appeared to be the makings of a museum in disarray. The curator Eddie Roche asked me to excuse the mess as they were in transition. I asked if this is a museum, how anyone would know it was here. He explained that it was NOT a museum. It is the artifacts and archives of the France family (NASCAR). It is not open to the public, it is by invitation only! Wow! What am I doing here, I queried??? I saw your art work; you are drawing early NASCAR, welcome.

I'm astounded. It was like when Nicholas Cage's character found the "National Treasure"!!

We talked awhile, my eyeballs bounced in my head!! Every place I looked I saw artifacts I had only seen in pictures. He gave me a tour, pointing to the old film room, the picture room, the record book room, the yearbook room. Hanging on the walls, were driving suits pictures, shelves full of helmets, advertisements, even little plastic stock cars. I've been playing with them for 60 years and they have theirs on display. There were hundreds of trophies on the shelves and floor. I saw a huge one that was engraved to the NASCAR national modified champion 1952. I asked how it could be here, as I had seen a picture of this being awarded to Frankie Schneider many years ago. He explained to me that NASCAR always had 2 trophies made, one for the recipient, one they kept. His phone rang and he said he had to take it. I said okay thanks, I'll be going. No, he said by all means you're welcome to stay. Enjoy yourself. Four hours later, (he was still on the phone) I explored the file cabinets of every NASCAR driver and track, poured thru the old record books and absorbed all that I could. I said I should be going and asked if I could bring my friend Tommy Vroom, who will be arriving on Wednesday and would enjoy this as much as I have. Sure, he says, sign the guestbook before you go. I look in the guestbook and that morning, Tony Stewart, Junie Donleavy and Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Parks were there, then me, a racing kid from N.J.

The next day I was at Ray Fox's place again, and got to meet Mr. and Mrs. Parks. Raymond was a wealthy Atlanta business man who made his fortune in a number of businesses including moonshine and vending machines. His racecars were the first recorded modified (39 Ford) and New Car (49 Olds) Champions, with Red Byron driving, in NASCAR history. Some of his other cars were driven by the Flock bros. (Bob, Fonty, Tim) and, earlier 2 of Raymond's moonshine driver cousins, Lloyd Seay and handsome Roy Hall for whom the Jim Croce song, Rapid Roy the stock car boy, was written about.

That same day I met Mr. Jimmie (J.B.) Day who has a family business and museum in Greenville SC about vintage race cars. An informed source told me that J.B. once owned and lost both the Greenville Pickens and Columbia speedways in a card game. He won them back at a later date. A former racer himself, his auto restoration business is on property adjacent to the G-P speedway. I drew both his and Raymond's race cars and received autographed copies back from them. My prints are on display in J.B.'s museum and I receive an invite to the annual reunion he has at his place, attended by the Allisons, David Pearson and luminaries of the past. I hope I get to go some day.

I MUST BE DREAMING

Since I sold my #69 in 1965, I've had dreams about racing it again, many times. In the dreams it's as if I never sold it. It's in the same condition it was in when I put it behind my Dad's garage. Unfinished business I guess. The last dream was at East Windsor. I'm flying down the backstretch about to pass Alabama gang legend Red Farmer in his C97 flat back. I had met Red at the Talladega short track in 2004, while hauling transformer oil from Jax to Birmingham Ala. on a regular basis. Red was racing his super late model at the time and I had him sign a copy of a drawing of his early modified I had done for him. Even though I don't get to drive race cars any more, I really enjoy the dreams.

July of 2010, I get a call from my old friend George Perkins. He, Bob (Cos) Cosgrove, the legendary race car letterer and I were hot rod buddies and racers since high school and are still in touch, though thousands of miles apart. Perk asked if I had been on the 3 Wide's website today. Nope, computers down I said. Ya gotta look, there's a picture of your car on it! No way! How could that be? Who posted it? R. Shea he says. That's Ray Shea, the president of the GSVSCC. I call Ray. Hey it's Lindmar, you posted a picture of a #69 on the 3 Wide today? He says yes. I asked him where he got

it. I took it this morning in a barn in South Amboy. Could it be? Could it possibly be?? I go up Rt.1 (same U.S. 1 in my home town, but 1400 miles

south) to a local garage I frequent. He lets me look on his computer. There it is! 45 years later. I must be dreaming! That's pretty rare for this to happen. They found Hoop Schaibles 95 a few years ago .This isn't big news like that was, as many people remembered that car, but it's BIG NEWS to me!! I called Vroomie, then my kid brother Danny. It was big news to him too. He wanted to buy it. While he was trying to contact the seller, the racing Allen family, Chris and Lee, the sons of GSVSCC Jerry Allen, made the widow of Jim Longstreet an offer she couldn't refuse. What's the price of a battered derelict 37 Chevy rust bucket with the front end knocked out of it? \$1000.00. I was happy to see it go to a good home as I had met Chris briefly many years ago, but knew people who knew the Allens as good folks. It was made known to me that they planned on displaying the car as is at the Old Bridge reunion in October

My good fortune was that I was able to attend the event and be reunited with the car and to my surprise, a number of men, who were neighborhood boys when the car lived at my Dads! Scott Sorensen, Bobby Safchinsky, and Bunky Schneider all grew up to be involved with race cars as crew members



and Bunky ran his own sportsman at Flemington and E. Windsor in the 80's. Pete Linzsky who grew up in the neighborhood that Ray Estok's dads, now his, shop was, off Main Street, Woodbridge, sat behind my brother in school for 10 years and he and my brother played race driver in it back then when I was working.

The 69 was the Belle of the Ball At the reunion. There were about 20 race cars on display. When people entered the grounds, the first car they saw was the XL1, then the 69. They couldn't walk by without looking at the time capsule from way back! I had a ball telling stories about the car and meeting race fans. I must have posed with the car for pictures 50 times in the

2 day event. I met new people and old friends. My face hurt from grinning!!

I was able to repeat this experience in 2011. The now “Infamous” 69 was again on display. I got a kick out of listening to younger fans commenting on the crudeness of the car, as the store bought race cars of today are much slicker. One young man told me he would not even get in something like that. I didn’t reply, but thought if you were 19 and wanted to go racing like I did, and your dad was not going to buy you a race car, you would get into what you had.. I was living at home with my parents back then, making good money at the GM plant, making payments on the 409 SS. The total cost of my racing experience for the season was a little more than a thousand bucks.



Things are a lot different today, as we all know. My oldest son Rob, who has listened to my race stories his whole life, came on Sunday with my grandson Matty, an aspiring 20 yr. old gear head. They both had a good time and took a roll of pictures. Matty has a hot rod Mustang and has recently showed an interest in drawing cars. I gave him a little advice and he actually listened! This could be a lot of fun for both of us!

I could go on forever about the wonderful things that my gift has brought me. I’d like to thank the Love of my Life, Lee, for her support in allowing me to share my blessing and indulge my Passion for racing.

Also all those who have encouraged, aided, supported and helped me in my quest.

The good people, Lew and Cary at Coastal 181, Earl Krause, Tommy Vroom, Bob Wagner, Ed Duncan, Joe Mcfarlan and if I forgot you., remember, I fell on my head.

P.S. If you have seen my drawings and like them, you should see what I’ve done with little plastic stock cars!!! If you are still awake, blame my new buddy Ray Miles. This was his idea. Thanks Ray.

P.S. 2, I know this is long winded, thanks for staying with me. Be grateful I eliminated all the Harley Davidson stuff, big truck adventures, the wreck with the propane truck and the baseball stuff. Now go to bed!

Editor's note:

I have only known Charlie for a very short time; I met him online through the 3Wide website. I obtained his phone number and we eventually had a long talk about how racing was and is today....a whole lot different.

Listening to him talk about him growing up and his experiences in the racing world, I knew this was a story that had to be told.

There is no sugar coating to his story, it's a raw, down to the bone and honest a recollection of past and present times.

So we all thank you Charlie for taking time from your busy schedule to tell us your story.....raycer27