Club experiences driving the Richard Petty way

Motor racing fans ride 3 laps at 160 mph in Daytona

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By Matt Dixon

It's an indistinguishable sound, one referenced by those who best know it as the "Call of the Wild."

Wendy Touchette knows that call.

"Just stepping out of the car today and hearing the cars warming up on the track I had to stop and just listen, it's just the best sound," said Touchette, a member of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club.

Bill Mitchell / Daily Sun

Wendy Touchette of The Villages snaps a photo following her ride Sunday with the Richard Petty Driving Experience.

On Sunday, she and 30 club members made the trek to Daytona International Speedway.

As part of the trip, Touchette and fellow club member Joan Ryvacki participated in the Richard Petty Driving Experience, which allowed them to ride along with a professional driver as they did three laps around the nation's most iconic racetrack at more than 160 miles per hour.

"I am excited, not nervous at all," Touchette said before strapping on her helmet and being escorted around the fabled track.

And after her run?

"It was awesome," Touchette exclaimed. "You can't even imagine the feeling when you're going around the turns," she said.

Of her ride around the track, the Village of Sunset Pointe resident said it is like no other driving experience.

"There is no way to compare it to an interstate drive," she said.

Fellow club member Joan Ryvacki said that her ride-along experience was not as nerve-free.

"I almost backed out three or four times," the Village of Caroline resident said, "but I did it."

After overcoming her initial stomach fill with butterflies, Ryvacki said it was a great experience.

"Everyone should do it," she said. "It's worth every penny."

Ryvacki came away with newfound respect for the drivers who make a career out of what, for her, was an adrenaline-packed experience.

"I can't imagine how they can drive on that track with one car, three abreast," Ryvacki said. "How do they do it?"