

A PASSION FOR CARS

**TWO MOTOR CLUBS IN THE VILLAGES
FOR ENTHUSIASTS, RACERS AND COLLECTORS.**

BY JOSEPH SIRIOTIS

There's something about cars to be marveled at, with every single inch of metal, piping and tubing. This remarkable concept was once thought of in ancient days as a myth. Unlike other myths, however, the concept of the car was given life piece by piece by the imagination of the human mind. Here are just a couple of clubs in The Villages that celebrate the amazement of this awesome accomplishment.

THE VILLAGES MOTOR RACING FAN CLUB

It started out as a dream. Thousands of hours turned into a reality. Now, at this very moment, the engines are growling. They are getting ready to reach top speeds in a matter of seconds to the sound of thunderous applause from the crowd. This is the scene of over 100 years of engineering innovation come to life. This is motor racing.

The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club, established in 2006, is dedicated to allowing Villages residents to share their excitement and passion for the sport in all its forms. The club started out with only 60 members and has grown to over 150 active members. "There are a lot of race fans here in The Villages," said club president Chris Bleistein. This should come as no surprise. Motor sports is one of the fastest growing spectator sports in the United States with an annual attendance estimated to be more than 15 million people.

While sharing their common interest, the club also hosts numerous trips and venues for its members. In the past, the club has toured Detroit City Customs, the International Speedway Corporation's archives in Daytona Beach, as well as the NHRA Gatornationals. It doesn't stop there. On January 14th, the club headed to Gainesville for the Charles Poindexter Gold Mine Tour. Members toured the personal car collection of former engine and car builder Charles Poindexter, who is also a member of the club. Poindexter also brought one of his legend race cars to the club's hall-of-fame celebration.

Meets: The first Wednesday of every month

When: 7 p.m.

Where: Colony Cottage Recreation Center





Above: Board Members of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club stand with the club's Hall of Fame trophy.

Another great outing was the Living Legends 29th Annual Awards Banquet in Daytona Beach - a very big deal, notes Chris. Various racing legends have been honored at this event, and were inducted into the Motorsports Hall of Fame. Chris recalls his experiences attending the banquet.

"I got to see such old-time stars, Donnie Allison, Red Farmer, and Danny 'Chocolate' Meyers."

In mid-March, the group will attend National Parts Depot. The family-owned business started out providing mail-order services of restorative automotive parts for classic American cars. After many years of success, the business has since expanded into three additional branches in North Carolina, Michigan, and California. It's not the retail aspect that's the main attraction for the group, however. It's the tremendous collection of classic cars.

"That's what you wanna see," Chris says.

One of the best aspects about the club though, is that it doesn't end here. The club doesn't just go to see racing legends in person; they bring the legends to you. Over the years, the Motorcycle Racing Fan Club has hosted a variety of speakers to at their meetings and talk about their experiences.

"That's a big part of the club-arranging guest speakers," Chris said. On some occasions even, the speakers have brought their own vintage race cars.

"We had Bill Watson this past month and he was the staff photographer for the Indy 500 for 48 years," Chris recalled. "When he came, he brought a Nascar pace truck 50th anniversary to the meeting." Other speakers the club hosted in the past were Karl Eckhardt and Ed Rensi, former CEO of McDonald's USA and owner of Team Rensi Motorsports.

Arguably, the true fountain of youth isn't just limited to Florida, but anywhere in the world. How is that? The answer for Chris and his fellow club members is simple: To do what you love doing. Racing legend Red Farmer is a perfect example of this. At 90 years young Red is still racing. "When I called him four weeks ago, he says to me 'I just came in from the garage. I'm putting a new transmission in my race car,'" Chris said. With this in mind, if you appreciate cars in any way, if the sound of an engine revving excites you, The Villages Motor Sports Fan Club may be that fountain; they are always looking for new members.

"You know what I see with a lot of these guys (who are) into racing," Chris reflects. "They stay young. They have such a positive attitude that they stay young."



John Angiolo and club president Chris Bleistein with Michael Hinde, new Motor Racing Fan Club's Hall of Fame inductee.