

# Villager Backstory

You might know John Mulloy from the Sumter Landing Bicycle Club, but what you may not know is the Village of St. Catherine resident was a NASCAR pit crew member, who won seven titles and even served as a tire carrier for Dale Earnhardt.



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By Cody Hills

Whenever John Mulloy encounters an issue with a tire on his bicycle, he doesn't panic. The Village of St. Catherine resident knows a thing or two about tires.

Mulloy, a native of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, spent a total of 25 years working in NASCAR, including seven years spent as tire carrier on the pit crew for legendary driver Dale Earnhardt. He won seven NASCAR Cup Series championships – five with Earnhardt and one apiece with Bobby Labonte and Tony Stewart – throughout his career.

"When I look back on it now, I just think about what a thrill it was," Mulloy said. "You had a job and you knew what you had to do – and you had to do it at a high level – but everyone was like family. I got to live out a pretty cool dream, man, I really did."

Mulloy first got into NASCAR by approaching Hall of Fame driver Rusty Wallace during a sponsorship visit in the mid-1980s, who instructed Mulloy to meet him at a track – and bring a resume – to promote himself throughout the garage. That chance encounter allowed him to meet NASCAR team owner, Richard Childress, who told Mulloy to visit his race shop in North Carolina whenever he got the opportunity.

In wanting to make the most of his open door into the sport, Mulloy moved from Wisconsin to the NASCAR-centralized North Carolina, where he worked for drivers Alan Kulwicki and Michael Waltrip in various crew roles.

The experience afforded Mulloy that awaited visit with Childress, who offered him a job at Richard Childress Racing to work aboard Dale Earnhardt's team for the 1987 NASCAR Winston Cup Series season.

"Childress was a great place to work and I was very fortunate to be hired there," Mulloy said. "Working for Richard was like working for my buddy. He's a real good person and he takes care of people."

Mulloy performed a number of duties on Earnhardt's car, including as fabricator and mechanic, before making his start as tire carrier for the 1990 Daytona 500.

With Earnhardt barreling down pit road, Mulloy carried an 80-pound tire under each arm to service the car's right side – dropping one tire for the front-tire changer and placing the second onto the car for the rear-tire changer – before collecting the old tires to bring back to the pit wall. He repeated the process on the car's left side – avoiding the work of both the jackman and gas man – all while completing the pit stop in 17 seconds.

"When that car pulled down pit road, you'd take a couple deep breaths and tell yourself, 'OK, here we go,'" Mulloy said. "It was awesome when you'd beat other teams off pit road. There was nothing like coming in second or third and you come out in first."

Mulloy went on to win five season championships (1987, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994) with Earnhardt, the sport's most popular driver, who was tragically killed in a last-lap crash at the 2001 Daytona 500.

"Richard (Childress) used to tell us all the time that working with Dale Earnhardt, we were making history," Mulloy said. "You don't think of it like that in the moment, but you look back now and see all that we accomplished together. You see how many people loved (Earnhardt) and everything he did, and how he did it. He was the toughest person I've met in my entire life."

Mulloy then made stops with Bill Davis Racing and Joe Gibbs Racing, where he won series championships with Labonte in 2000 and Stewart in 2002. His final stop was at Chip Ganassi Racing, where he closed out his career by working on the electronics inside Jamie McMurray's 2010 Daytona 500-winning car.

That was pretty cool to finally win it," Mulloy said. "It was the only thing, out of all the races and championships I'd won to that point, that I hadn't won in my career. Daytona is the crown jewel and our Super Bowl, and I still get chills thinking about winning the 500. After that, I pretty much decided I could go out on my own terms."

