

## 25 YEARS OF NASCAR AT EVERGREEN AND THE MEMORIAL HALL OF FAME

By Program Co-Editor Benson Chandler

The recent 2010 induction of 35-year figure-8 racing veteran Doug Delfel, and returning long time announcer Scott Ellsworth into the Evergreen Speedway Memorial Hall of Fame, got me thinking that this would be a great time to reflect on inductees from the previous 25 years. To find out where they were now, why each was inducted, and to perhaps consider what it truly means to be honored **“for outstanding dedication and contributions to auto racing,”** as it has always read on the header in the program each season. Created by (then) Promoter Mickey Beadle in 1985 when NASCAR first came to Evergreen, and with honoring that goal in mind, the HoF has consistently inducted special racers, many of whom were also honored as “Top 50” drivers when Evergreen Speedway celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> season in 2004. Long time employees and exceptional supporters of our track have also been inducted over the years. In fact, “the Hall” was re-dedicated in 1988, after the tragic loss of super supporter Fred Butler, and Superstock racer John Gay. Both were inducted that year posthumously, and their names will be at the top of the Hall of Fame “Memorial” header in the Program, on the Evergreen Speedway.com website, and in our hearts forever.

**1985** was when it all started. I asked Mickey Beadle at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary NASCAR Awards Banquet about the creation of this “Hall”, and about his choice for the first inductee, **“Crazy” Carl Zaretzke**, back then. “Carl was a ‘no-brainer’ choice, a real legend - and the track’s first SUPERSTAR,” said Mickey. Already a 4-time Champion in the figure-8 Superstock division between 1971 and 1975, Carl was among the first to embrace this new NASCAR connection. In fact, Carl went on to win the NASCAR Superstock Oval Championship three out of the next four seasons! A Charter member of FEAR, meaning he helped create the figure-8 Club back in 1966, Carl is also a FEAR Hall of Fame member, of course, and his famous #2 was retired by the Club. A Snohomish resident now and father of popular Superstock Champion John, BOTH were inducted into the Evergreen Speedway “Top 50 Drivers” club, as we all celebrated Evergreen Speedway’s 50<sup>th</sup> season of racing back in 2004.

In **1986**, Mickey inducted the first of several couples, **Dale** and **Gail Youmans**, into his new Evergreen Speedway Hall of Fame. Both had already been involved with racing for over 20 years by then! Dale, like Carl, helped start FEAR as a charter member, and was its initial Club treasurer. After several years of figure-8 racing, Dale went on to be the figure-8 pit boss, then flagman, and Chief Steward of the track, before joining his wife Gail as an official lap counter for the next two decades. Currently involved with the Cascade Push Truck Assn., Dale was also inducted into the FEAR Hall of Fame a few years back, as he and Gail celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> season of outstanding dedication to the figure-8 Club, and to Evergreen Speedway.

The fourth inductee into the Hall of Fame was **Lyle Merrifield**, in **1987**. Another early member of FEAR, Lyle started out racing Mopars in the late 60's, taking the 1970 "Super" Championship with co-driver John Beeson, in a '62 Plymouth. For well over 25 years Lyle was a huge supporter of both the track and the racing community through his business, Northwest Auto Wrecking, in south Seattle. After being either sponsor or car owner of Champion drivers like Beeson, Vern Dietz, Joe Constance and Don Nolan, Lyle went on to work with the Cascade Push Truck Assn. for many years with his hot-rod El Camino, before quietly retiring with wife Misty to Boring, Oregon, where he manages various commercial properties.

As mentioned before, **1988** was a tragic year for the track as we lost two very dedicated and popular gentlemen, **Fred Butler** and **John Gay**. Fred succumbed to a heart attack (at just 58 years old) that June, and two months later John was involved in Evergreen's most horrific racing incident, piling into the rear of another Superstock car which had stalled on the backstretch of the 3/8. Both were heavily involved at Evergreen, as were their kids and their wives, Althea and Marti, who was actually the videographer filming John's tragic final race. The Butlers lived near Kirkland and owned Aldercrest Auto Rebuild for some 20 years. Staunch supporters of son Tobey and his glowing racing career, they are the only family inducted separately into this Hall (see 1996 and 2006). John Gay was a contractor specializing in building laundromats around the Northwest. Also a father of three, the Snohomish resident started his racing hobby in the figure-8 club, was voted onto the first FEAR Super (oval) board, and then helped create and support the early NASCAR Superstock division. In 1988 the Hall was renamed the Evergreen Speedway Fred Butler - John Gay *Memorial* Hall of Fame.

**1989** saw the only induction of a "club" into the Evergreen Speedway Hall of Fame, as the **Cascade Push Truck Association** was, as a group, the seventh inductee. Mickey Beadle still says "we could not race at Evergreen without the help of these dedicated volunteers!" CPTA was first created in 1971, making this year their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Membership ranges between 12 and 15 skilled, neatly dressed members each season, all with cool looking, well-equipped trucks. Always seeking new members, they ask that if you want to join Cascade and help out at Evergreen Speedway, to contact any of the drivers for Club requirements and information.

**1990** inductee **Gene Brookover** was, like so many in this Hall, a skilled figure-8 driver and former FEAR President (1983), before joining the staff at Evergreen Speedway. Known as "*Kaptin Blackflag*" from his hard driving style on the track, Geno spent the past 25 years as a NASCAR official, not only here, but also at South Sound Speedway and with the NASCAR NW Tour series. A Vietnam vet and mechanic by trade, it was exactly 20 years after *this* induction that he was posthumously inducted into the FEAR Hall of Fame, after losing a tough battle with cancer this past (2010) summer. He will be missed by many, including wife Kathy, and kids Gene Jr., Diane and Lee.

**1991** saw the induction of two very popular racers, **Mike Estabrook** and **Ralph Lewis**. Both were early FEAR members. Ralph, who raced for 23+ years, starting in the 60's, was often on the Board, as was his wife, Leslie. The father of two, Lewis *still* works for Safeway beverages. Estabrook, who joined FEAR in the 70's, was famous for often having the "best appearing" car, with the SHINIEST tires in track history! Both were instrumental in the early creation of the NASCAR Superstock division, and both drivers were very successful at it before retiring from racing. Mike still lives in West Seattle and is a master mechanic, while Snohomish residents Ralph and Leslie Lewis remain involved with son Gary's super successful racing career, with Ralph often helping out as his crew chief (see 2006).

**1992** saw the induction of **The Pierce Family** into this Hall of Fame. The first of two "family" inductions, Frank "Pops" Pierce and his son Gary each spent three decades actually taking care of Evergreen Speedway, both during the week and on Saturday nights. "Pops" worked first for Snohomish County as the official groundskeeper, then a couple of years with Mickey at South Sound Speedway, where he also controlled the sweep and safety crews. Gary worked for the State during the week and helped his brother Neil, who raced Mini-Stocks. Mrs. Pierce even helped with running practices and play dates before passing away in 1980. "They were always ready to help us out; they even helped guard the back gate for years", said Mickey Beadle. In fact, daughter Shelly still works for the track, said Gary with pride. "Pops" passed away in 2005, and Gary is semi-retired and living with wife Dawn near Hermiston, Oregon.

**1993** inductees **Mick** and **Randi Tomlin** were also longtime employees of Evergreen Speedway with deep roots in the figure-8 club. Mick was FEAR President four times between 1978 and 1982, when membership was over 600 strong! He raced on the figure-8 track for 10+ years, in both divisions, always with the #72 that was retired by FEAR in 1991, when Mick was inducted into the FEAR Hall of Fame. After a couple of seasons as our pit boss, Mick assumed the role of Track Steward from 1984 thru 1991. Randi Tomlin spent 11 years at the back gate and was involved with the FEAR women's auxiliary (where they met), and was then elected Club treasurer for two years. Retired from racing and from Boeing, Mick and Randi live quietly by the Skagit River in Concrete, Washington.

**1994** inductee **Joe Nye** was another former figure-8 racer who moved up, and into the Track Steward seat, between 1991 and 1995, after working the figure-8 pits for a couple of years. Joe and his brother Ted raced Fords together for over four earlier seasons, always with the distinctive (and probably unlicensed) Seahawks paint scheme! Ted went on to be a flagger at Evergreen for several years when his brother hung up his racing helmet. Very popular with the drivers and fans at Evergreen Speedway, both the brothers were married with kids, lived in the Clearview area, and both worked at Boeing, until sadly, Joe took his own life just a year after this Hall of Fame induction.

**1995** inductees **Dick Avalo** and **Cole Porter** were both longtime supporters of the track - Avalo as an employee and Porter through his photography and press expertise. "Official" Dick Avalo actually got his start at ES in the early 70's by joining the new Cascade Push Truck Assn. and pushing the guys around with his Jeep! After a couple of seasons racing on the figure-8 track, Dick went on to be a pit boss, flagman and Chief Steward. A widower for two years now after losing his wife Bobbie, and retired from Coca-Cola and Evergreen, Dick lives in South Everett, and is a great-grandfather of five! Cole Porter was a quiet "behind the scenes" guy who worked for the Seattle Times 28 years as the photo editor before moving on to Getty Images in 2005. A grandfather of 13 and living in Kirkland, Cole owned race cars, helped with both Evergreen press releases and photos over the years, and was a renowned photographer whose racing and WTO riot photos were published all across America.

**1996** inductees were another great couple, **Phyllis** and **Gordy Stewart**. Gordy was a top "modified" racer in the late 60's and 70's before switching over to the pavement of Evergreen Speedway. As a FEAR member, Gordy was one of the last to race a '57 Chevy on the 8 track, then among the earliest NASCAR Superstock (oval) drivers. An Evergreen "Top 50" driver in 2004, Stewart also helped his son Gaylon win two NASCAR "Bomber" Championships. Gordy lost his wife Phyllis just two years ago (2009), after 44 years of marriage. She had been involved with the operations of Evergreen since the earliest days of IPI, working as a lap counter, an office manager/bookkeeper, and as John Beadle's "right hand." Gordy is semi-retired and spends much of his winters down South, but remains a big fan of auto racing.

**1997** saw the induction of **Althea Butler** into the Evergreen Speedway Hall of Fame. Althea was a popular and loyal employee for close to three decades, starting out first in advertising sales and at the back gate, before spending several years as Mickey Beadle's administrative assistant in the front office. The daughter of a Seattle area racer, Althea was widowed when she lost longtime husband Fred, in 1988. Althea stayed with IPI at Evergreen until Mickey's retirement in 2007. Now living in the Snohomish area and partially retired, Althea is the mother of three, Kayla, Jana and Tobey (see 2006), and also a proud grandmother of seven.

**1998** inductee **Lee Daily** made recent history as *that* seaplane pilot who created a "National Emergency" by landing in Kenmore - while POTUS was in town! Jets were scrambled, the Secret Service involved, and one of the top racecar drivers in Evergreen history was *really* famous now! A three-time Champion on the figure-8 track (in *both* divisions) and FEAR President in 1980, Lee went on to race in the Winston West Division and win the FEAR "Oval" Championship in 1981. Lee was inducted into the FEAR Hall of Fame in 1990, and his #20 officially retired. The owner of 1998 Superstock Champion John Zaretzke's "Miller Lite" Ford, Lee was named a "Top 50" driver in 2004, as Evergreen celebrated 50 years of racing. Owner of a Redmond area trucking & recycling company, Lee is still flying into history!

**1999** saw the induction of **Steve Dunn**, another dedicated 30-year employee at Evergreen Speedway. Steve spent five+ years racing on the figure-8 track before moving into the figure-8 pit boss role. Meanwhile he also helped with time-ins, drove the tow trucks, and was Asst. Steward for a few years, then Track Steward for six more years. Dunn grew up in the Kenmore area but has been a Snohomish resident for 11 years. Married to Joann for 20 years, they have two children, Tasha and Sara. Steve has worked at Boeing “building airplanes” for 24 years now, but on weekends he still enjoys watching, and sometimes promoting auto races.

**2000** saw **The Ruddell Family** inducted into the Hall. Carol was first to work at the track, starting in 1980, initially at the front gate, then in the office as administrative assistant and bookkeeper, as her husband Bill raced each week on the 8 track. Carol recently retired after 30 years at Evergreen. Daughter Amanda started selling programs at age 6 and helped out at the front gate for years before also moving into the front office, for a total of 28 years here! Carol’s parents Clayton and Eleanor both spent over ten years each working at Evergreen until they passed away, within weeks of each other, and just one year after sharing this honor with their daughter, granddaughter and grandsons, Charlie and David, who were both racers and employees as well. Carol and Bill still live in Monroe, and remain racing fans.

**2001** inductee **Gib Repass** was a good friend of ES as a longtime NASCAR executive. The Director of the NW Tour for over 20 years, Gib was also the Winston West director for several years. A long time friend of the Beadle family, Mickey said “he was known by all as an extremely fair man, because Gib was himself a racer from way back”. Gilbert Raymond Repass, Jr. was also a retired Navy Chief who spent his final days at his home in Bremerton, before passing away on Dec. 18, 2010, at the young age of 76. “Gib”, who grew up in Virginia, and his wife of 56 years, Jean, were proud parents, grand and great-grandparents.

**2002** saw **Dennis Keeler** and **Gary Breakfield** honored for their dedication to the Speedway as exceptional and longtime employees. Dennis spent 25+ years as Chief Steward and assistant manager under his brother-in-law Mickey, while wife Carol worked nearly as long at the back gate and in the front office. A resident of North Bend, Dennis still works for the state highway department. Gary Breakfield started out as a mechanic on Jerry Smith’s figure-8 car back in the 60’s and assumed the role of head flagger in the 70’s. Gary, from Ballard, then went on to be the pit boss for a total of 28 years at ES, before finally joining the Cascade Push Truck Assn. in 1999, where he remains today. Retired from the Seattle Parks Dept., Gary also works part time during the week for Lee Johnson Chevrolet in Kirkland.

**2003** inductees **Gary Cressey** and **Tom Moriarity** were also honored by ES for their many years dedicated to our track. Gary “*Hollywood*” Cressey was himself a longtime track promoter at Shasta Speedway, who started out his announcing career at Evergreen some 25 years ago,

calling the big NASCAR West series events every season. An ordained Minister *and* a former beer distributor who spent over 43 years as an announcer, at 51 different tracks, “Hollywood” actually commuted for 12 years from Redding, California to announce here each weekend. Gary just turned 75, and is *still* announcing at Shasta every week! Tom Moriarity was just crowned the 2010 Super Late Model Champion *again* after he finally returned to the weekly battle at Evergreen, after winning a South Sound Championship. The Monroe resident is a three-time Mini-Stock Champion and (now) six-time champion in the Superstock division. An Evergreen “Top 50” driver, Tom also was the NASCAR Great West region Champion in 2001. Married to Terri and the father of four, TJ, Tianna, Trisha, and Trenton, Tom plans to keep racing in 2011, and to defend this latest Championship, but now with his own familiar #5.

**2004** inductee **Bob Beadle** was “the Man” behind the IPI curtain. Wife Dorothy was the woman behind the man, and they were the proud parents of two sons, Mickey and Terry. Bob started out as a drag racer back in the late 50’s, successfully raced “modifieds” in the 60’s, and later created the International Drivers Challenge series. Bob co-created the “Dirt Cup” in the 70’s, before forming International Productions Inc. (IPI) and taking over promoting Evergreen in 1978, with his brother John, and two other partners. Bob was owner of Aircraft Standards in Ballard and grew up in Seattle, but loved his ranch and fishing boat in Hawaii, as well. Sadly we lost Mr. B in 2008, nine years after Dorothy passed away. I was proud to be invited to his memorial/wake that was MC’d by Reverend Cressey, along with several hundred of Bob’s very closest friends, who will all miss him.

**2005** inductee **Ben Chandler** a.k.a. “*the Wizard*”, fancies himself to be a writer *and* a figure-8 racer! Proudly inducted into this Hall on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his “rookie season,” The 1977 Stock class Champion was an eight-term FEAR President, between 1985 and 2003, and an Evergreen “Top 50” driver. Chandler claims to have created the Stinger-8 class, in which he races each week, still with the unique “back-to-back” #99 that was retired by FEAR when he was inducted into the FEAR Hall of Fame in 1994. A 40-year member who has raced in five different decades, Chandler again runs the figure-8 club, now online at [fearracing.org](http://fearracing.org), writes and helps edit the program each season, and even announces on occasion. A lifelong Bellevue resident and bachelor, he shares his “fun world” with Louise Coleman, and a cat.

**2006** saw the induction of **Tobey Butler** and **Gary Lewis**, two of the best drivers to have successfully moved up, and moved on from their home track, here in Monroe. Both are second generation members of this Hall of Fame, both were inducted into the “Top 50 drivers” of Evergreen back in ‘04, both had several Championships here, and both even work at Longacre Racing Products, Inc. Tobey was 1976 Mini-Stock B-Champ and “rookie of the year” at age 16, and the ‘82 Superstock Champ at just 22. Married and the father of 2, Butler won the 1987 NW Tour Championship before moving up to ARCA, then joined the Craftsman Truck series in the early 90’s, placing 10<sup>th</sup> in ‘95, before retiring. Gary was Evergreen’s first NASCAR Bomber

class Champion in 1986, then ES Superstock Champion in 1992. Lewis went on to win the 1998 and 2006 NW Tour Championships, 2007 ARCA West Championship, and 2009 ASA NW Tour Championship. As the defending four-time Champion at the Montana 200, Gary, who is single, now just races in the “big ones,” including Evergreen’s ARCA West 200 in August.

**2007** is the year **Doug Hobbs** was chosen for this memorial Hall of Fame, after two decades of “behind the scenes” support of Evergreen Speedway. A track, racecar and Superstock series sponsor since the late 80s, Doug became very involved with his years on the NW Chevy advertising board, Alley Chevrolet and his 9 years at Speedway Chevrolet. Hobbs has spent time in the event world over the years working with Seafair, the Good Will Games, and four Olympic Games, most recently with the Winter Olympics in Vancouver. Doug and his wife Traci are excited to be rebuilding Evergreen Speedway. Doug, originally from Eastern Washington, is the proud father of two, Derek and RaChelle. He and Traci make their home, when not at the track, just outside of Snohomish.

**2008** marked the end of an era at Evergreen as **Mickey** and **Lyn Beadle**, for the first time in 30 years, were no longer in charge of promoting the races in Monroe. Mickey retired as the President of IPI, but fancied himself a figure-8 racer in the early days. He created the Figure-8 “Nationals” and “60 Minutes of FEAR” well before he was inducted into the FEAR Hall of Fame in 2006, as FEAR celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> season. Married for 28 years, Mickey met Lyn at Evergreen Speedway as she was involved with the FEAR Women’s Auxiliary in the 70’s and 80’s. Living in the picturesque town of Rainier, Mickey and Lyn now run a beautifully restored bowling alley in nearby Yelm. They are the proud parents of four, grandparents of 12, and now great-grandparents too.

**2009** inductee **Mike Buse** is better known to fans as super-stuntman “*Mr. Dizzy*”! Mike is a longtime entertainer at ES, a figure-8 and “Thundercar” racer who acquired the nickname, he said, “because of all the donuts he made” before, during and after the various racing events. Buse, who now lives in Monroe, sold popcorn, programs and hotdogs as a kid at Evergreen before attending Sultan High School. The father of three, Mike works during the week as owner of an HVAC service company and Mr.Dizzy’s Automotive Repair, in Monroe. He proudly owns several “world records” for jumping strange vehicles over other stuff. Limos, busses, motorhomes, trucks, explosions and fire are all fodder for our flying stuntman, Mr. Dizzy!

**2010** marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary for NASCAR at Evergreen, and our latest Hall of Fame inductees, **Doug Delfel** and **Scott Ellsworth** both celebrate anniversaries, as well. Doug is at the 35-year mark of his figure-8 racing career, while Scott marks his 20<sup>th</sup> year as Announcer here. Delfel, known as “*the Grizz*,” is a two-time Super-8 Champion, and was the President of FEAR four different years. An Evergreen Speedway “Top 50” driver, Doug was inducted into the FEAR Hall of Fame in 1999, when his #01 was “retired” by the Club. Doug has raced in five

different decades, and is the *only* driver in track history to have raced the same class, and with the same number, for 35 *consecutive* seasons! Married to Kelly and the father of two, Doug owns Harbour Pointe Towing Co. near his home in Everett. Scott Ellsworth was inducted into this Hall of Fame, at what most thought was his final Evergreen appearance before retiring at 63. Recently married to Jan, after the loss of first wife Elly in '09, Scott was “re-energized” by the “Orville the Clown” entertainer of the year award he received from the Track Promoters Assn., *and* this Hall of Fame induction...and “unretired!” Now living on Lake Sammamish, in East Bellevue, Scott and his new bride both enjoy boating, fishing, traveling and camping out in their motor home. Welcome back to Evergreen, Scott!

So that was my roundup of the first quarter century of NASCAR racing, and the Memorial Hall of Fame, at Evergreen Speedway. It's important to remember that there was another 20 year period *before* the NASCAR era, when FEAR and FSCRA “ran the show”, working with several different promoters each week. And 10 years before *then* when only dirt modifieds and “jalopies” raced at the Fairgrounds. Most of that early era had been completely forgotten, until now. However, the *next* 25 years of racing should be just as exciting to see, and the HoF inductees just as deserving, with Highroad Promotions in charge... of a *whole NEW era!* BC