

Georgia Racing Hall of Fame - 2014 Inductee Banquet

Story & Photos by Phillip Prichard, MSA

The Georgia Racing Hall of Fame held their 2014 Inductee Banquet on December 13. Five racers were inducted – four dirt racers and one drag racer. Buz McKim, historian at the NASCAR Hall of Fame served as the Master of Ceremonies. Hundreds of race fans, family members and racers attended the gala event in the atrium of the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame. McKim reflected on the racing history and moon shining associated with Dawsonville, Georgia, home of the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame. He, also, discussed the racing history of Georgia and the contributions to the sport of racing.

Each of the inductees or their family's representatives was introduced individually by McKim, with a brief racing biography of the driver and a video presentation of each driver's career.

Leon Archer of Griffin, GA driving his iconic number 222 was one the first full-time drivers. He became one of the biggest stars in the National Dirt Racing Association series by winning four major events including the inaugural championship in 1979. First place was the only acceptable result for Archer.

Archer won numerous races across the southeast. He also won numerous poles and set a number of track records during his career that earned him induction into the National Dirt Late Model Hall of Fame in 2003.

One of his most memorable second place finishes was against Larry Moore in the 1979 Word 100 at Eldora Speedway.

Roscoe Smith was born on December 13, 1939; his induction into the GRHOF was an outstanding birthday present. Fast cars appealed to him at a young age. He began his racing career in 1956 driving dragsters and go karts. He won Top Eliminator at an NHRA Meet in Phenix City, Alabama in 1965.

Smith switched to oval-track dirt racing in 1969 driving the Number 44 with the checkered board roof. He found his way to victory lane 200 times in his career. He won the Florida State Championship in 1977, the 1976 Pepsi 100 at West Atlanta Raceway and 100 lap feature at Middle Georgia Raceway.

Roscoe Smith was very successful as a car builder, his Roscoe Smith Racing Equipment parts were familiar sights at tracks across the South. He built more than 300 race cars in his career. He retired from racing in the late 80s, but worked 22 more years preparing cars for law enforcement officers at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center. In 2011, Smith was honored by the National Dirt Late model Hall of Fame for contributions to the sport.

His son, Clint Smith drives the 44 in the World of Outlaws Late Model series and other series.

Augusta, Georgia's Jack Pennington started racing in 1974. His dad, Delmar, bought him an old Winston Cup car, they took to a dirt track and finished third. He raced on asphalt for a few years, in 1979 back on dirt; he began winning some the sport's major events. Some of his major victories were the 1984 National Dirt Racing Association's race at Bladen County Speedway in Dublin, NC, the 1980 Queen City 100 at Metrolina Speedway in Charlotte and the 1983 Tiny Lund Memorial. In 1985, was one of his best years, he won 39 feature races.

In 1989, he competed in some NASCAR races. But in

the 90s, he returned to dirt racing and his winning ways. He drove for cars owners; Barry Wright, Morris Partain, Scott Ward and Ronnie Milford. He has won over 400 races. He says he is not officially retired. In 2006, he was inducted into the National Dirt Late Model Hall of Fame.

Julius Hughes was a drag racer that set national records, a car owner, owner of the Atlanta Speed Shop, a promoter and track owner. Hughes began driving drag cars in 1955. He raced in the 1955 National Championship Drag Races at Kansas City, winning his class in 1932 Ford Roaster.

From 1955 to 1964, he directed racing events at Ted Edward's Dragstrip in Fairburn. In 1960, he opened the Atlanta Speed Shop, the first of its kind in Georgia. He held the annual "Atlanta \$10000 Drag Race from 1964 until 1972. He was famous driving a variety of "Zot" named vehicles in his career. He was, also, an owner of cars that raced in the ARCA and NASCAR series.

He was inducted into the NHRA Division 2 Hall of Fame in 1989 and the East Coast Drag Times Hall of Fame in 2003. He passed away in 1992. Elaine Hughes Jape accepted the award for the family.

Charlie Burkhalter began his racing career in 1958 at Banks County Speedway when a regular driver did not show up. His first race did not finish well but the next week he won the race. Some of his greatest success came driving a 1934 Ford Coupe with a flathead engine that he built himself. In the early 1960s, he won 35 races before he rebuilt the engine, the engine rebuild lead to 17 more victories. He won up to 60 races in one year.

He won several hundred feature races and several championships in his 12 year career. Burkhalter passed away in 2010, but his racing legacy lives on. Charles and Shirley Burkhalter accepted his induction for the family.

The Georgia Racing Hall of Fame is located in Dawsonville, Georgia. Visit <http://georgiaracinghof.com/> for more information on the Hall of Fame and the racing heritage in Georgia. The Dawsonville community is known in auto racing circles for its long tradition of



involvement in the sport, many racing skills originally developed as a consequence of moonshine activity in the area and celebrates its involvement every October with the yearly festival aptly named by locals as the "Mountain Moonshine Festival." Dawsonville is the home of retired NASCAR driver Bill Elliott, who won the Winston Cup championship in 1988 and is to be inducted into the NASCAR Hall of Fame in 2015, and his son Chase Elliott, who the 2014 Nationwide Series Champion in his rookie year.



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