

## The Georgia Racing Hall of Fame - 2015 Inductees

Story/Photos: Phillip Prichard, MSA

On November 14, the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame inducted three legendary dirt-track drivers, a nationally known engine builder and a sports car racer who helped develop the HANS Device to make up the 2015 Class of Inductees. The inductees are: Dirt racers C.L. Pritchett, the late Billy Clanton and the late Harold Fryar, along with engine builder James Lyle and sports car driver Jim Downing.

C. L. Pritchett joins his late father Swayne Pritchett in being elected to the Hall. In his career he won more than 800 races, according to racing historians and is considered one of the best ever at both preparing a car and driving one.

Long-time car owner Gerald Voyles, who won 66 features in a little over two seasons with Pritchett wheeling his cars, said Pritchett was both a talented racer and

a true gentleman.

The late Billy Clanton of Riverdale was both a talented car builder and driver in his day. Like the Wild West outlaw of the same name, Clanton was known to stand his ground if he felt he'd been wronged on the race track. But he also won his share of races, estimated to be over 200 victories, and instilled his work ethic into his three sons, all of whom followed in his tire tracks and became successful race drivers.

His youngest son Shane Clanton is the 2015 Champion of the World of Outlaws Late Model Series.

For 2013 Hall of Fame inductee Freddy Fryar, seeing his big brother Harold elected to the Hall is right up there with his own induction. Harold Fryar was one the South's top dirt track drivers from the time he first took the wheel in 1948 until he was killed in a racing crash at Gadsden,

Alabama, in 1971.

Jim Downing grew up in the Atlanta area surrounded by stock cars, attending races at the Peach Bowl and sneaking under the fence to watch races at Lakewood Speedway. But he made his mark as a sports car racer and continues to race – and win - at age 73. The Georgia Tech graduate is a five-time IMSA champion, but his greatest contribution to motorsports is his work with the head and neck restraint device commonly known as the HANS. Downing, recognizing the problems associated with a restrained torso and an unrestrained head in a crash, worked with his brother-in-law Dr. Robert Hubbard to develop and market a restraint device that has been credited with saving countless lives in racing circuits.

For decades, when racers across America wanted reliable and powerful racing

engines they made their way to Maysville, GA, to the shops of James Lyle.

Many a driver already in the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame, including Bud Lunsford and Doug Kenimer, got there by winning races in cars powered by Lyle engines. And when Bill Elliott was setting speed records on the NASCAR circuit in the 1980s, it was with engines that Lyle helped prepare.

The 2015 Class of the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame already is being called one of the strongest yet, according to veteran motorsports writer Rick Minter, who chaired the Nominating Committee.

For more information on the inductees and the Georgia Racing Hall of Fame, visit [www.georgiaracinghof.com](http://www.georgiaracinghof.com) or call 706-216-7223.



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