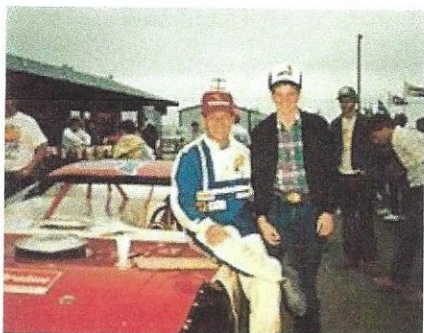


Larry Phillips

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Ozarks racing legend Larry Phillips won hundreds of races in a forty year career. He competed against many future superstars including Mark Martin, Rusty Wallace, and Jamie McMurray. Phillips is the only five time national short track champion and was inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame in 2001. Today, his son Terry is an accomplished driver on dirt tracks throughout the country.

A biography, "Larry Phillips: NASCAR's Only Five-Time Winston Racing Series Champion; Master of the Short Track" by Kendall Bell and David Zeszutek was released this month. The authors will sell and sign copies of their new book on Thursday, January 27, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Library Center and from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Library Station. Additional information on the rich history of racing in the Ozarks can be found in Ozark's Racing: History and Legends by Lynn Sanders. The above photograph is Local History associate Michael Price with Larry Phillips in 1989.

Fast Larry, *Springfield () Leader & Press*, July 8, 1982, 1C

"Whether it be business or hobby, Larry Phillips is successful. And with him, the two run nearly hand in hand. His business: supplying chassis parts, engines, and any other racing equipment to car owners and drivers, both locally and nationally. His hobby: beating those people on the track.

"Just like anyone else in racing, competing isn't always an automatic checkered flag for the Springfield driver. But this year has been exceptional for the 22 year veteran. Of the 31 feature races Phillips has started in 1982, his No. 75 racer has crossed the finish line in front 21 times. 'Up to this point we haven't had any bad luck,' Phillips commented. 'Everything has worked real well for us mechanically.' And if the mechanical parts hold up, Phillips is hard to beat.

"In the only area races he has entered this year, it was all Larry Phillips. At the only appearance on the 3/8 mile track at the Monett Speedway this season, Phillips had a relatively easy time despite motor problems. The first Bolivar Speedway special event featured a hard-charging Phillips who lapped every car on the track by the 31st circuit of the 40 lap main event.

"The difference between Phillips and his competition? 'It is a combination of things' Phillips said. 'Phillips the driver and Phillips the car builder both play important parts. Anybody can drive a car like I have and do well' he continued. 'But being able to adjust the racer to the track conditions whether it be tires, weight, adjustment of the chassis, whatever, that is where Phillips the builder is a big factor.'

"Phillips the car builder may be more successful than Phillips the driver, at least monetarily. A completed racer, minus engine and transmission, from Phillips Racing Inc. runs in the neighborhood of \$15,000. And it appears to be worth it. Ozark racer Harley Hanset, one of the premier local drivers before suffering a broken arm, has a Phillips racer, as do a dozen of the regulars at the Thunderbird Speedway in Muskogee, Oklahoma where Phillips has a huge lead in the point standings this season.

"The hobby is a break even venture when it comes to the pocketbook. 'Generally, everything that I make from racing has been spent during the season,' Phillips said. 'During the first 10 years that I did this, I would say everything that I made anywhere went into the racing. But I am on the track more or less just for the racing involved,' he continued, 'I'll race anytime, anywhere.'

"And the hobby, piloting his racer around various dirt tracks in a four state area, is an aid to the business. 'Sure, having a business so closely tied in with racing helps,' he said. 'It helps both my racing the business itself. People see me race, prospective sponsors and the drivers I compete against and win and look at the mechanics of the car in addition to my abilities.' Phillips continued. 'Every place that we race, I visit the sponsors that we already have or prospective sponsors,' he said. 'You have to push hard to get sponsors and be successful. Nobody is just going to give it to you.' Along with numerous product sponsors, Phillips has Freeman Chevrolet from Lindsay, Oklahoma as his main sponsor.

"For a hobby, it is hard work in the Phillips garage. 'What people don't understand is that it takes twice to three times as much money and hard work to finish first as it does second,' he said. 'While some of the people that I race against have their cars on the trailers tonight and are taking their wives to the movies, I am working in the shop and my wife is at the movies alone. That is just the way it is in my life,' he concluded. At the track the Phillips' crew (which includes son Terry) is all business. 'When we get to a track, we are there for one thing and one thing only,' Phillips said, 'to race! In order to compete on the level I do, with the equipment that I use, you have to be a winner,' he said. 'We work hard at it, but it pays off, especially this year.'

"Starting in the sport because 'it was something that I thought I would like to do,' Phillips admits that his career will end within a few years. 'I would say that I will probably compete four, maybe five more years,' he said. 'After that I will continue to be involved in racing as long

as my health is good and my interest is there.' Maybe, Phillips the promoter? 'No, never,' he said. 'I couldn't listen to the whining and griping from the drivers I know that it is there. I have heard it already, even from myself.'

"Will the family tradition carry on with son Terry? 'I won't say one way or the other right now,' dad said. 'But he definitely has an interest in the sport and is working hard to learn all he can about it.' For now, look for Phillips to keep charging his No. 75 around half-mile dirt tracks with much the same zeal he did when he started 22 years ago. He's still easy to spot. Most of the time, he's the one in front."

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