



Vintage Views

Dedicated to the Preservation of Stock Car Racing History
January, February, March 2009

The Press, Atlantic City, N.J.
By Emily Previti
February 10, 2008

Bob Menschner is one of
15 Racing with Jesus
Minister Chaplains.

Nancy Shea Photo



Racing puts the rev in Wall Township Speedway minister.

Ocean Township—Every winter's a long one for Bob Menschner.

The 58 year old Waretown resident has been going every Saturday since childhood to the Wall Township Speedway. The auto track typically closes October through May, and it takes 'years' for that time to pass, Menschner said Saturday. Whether the track will open this year is in question amid layoffs and rumors of commercial development at that site.

Regardless of the track's future, Menschner is obsessed with racing. He gets his fix during the colder months by visiting friends garages, where he said he opts to watch crash tapes on Super Bowl Sunday rather than tune into the football game.

Now divorced, Menschner admits his fixation with the sport cost him his marriage and even prompted to leave early from his daughters wedding. And 18 years ago, he added another layer to his duties at the track where he works on the safety track crew.

Menschner is one of 15 Racing with Jesus Ministry chaplains nationwide, according to the Rev. Don Rivers, president of the ministry, which was founded by the late Rev. Pat Evans in 1980.

Chaplains travel with the circuit, or are affixed to one track or region of the U.S. The ministry aims to help drivers understand their relationship with God and stresses that the bond is not performance-based. That becomes increasingly important as the habitual competitors progress through racing levels, Rivers said.

In its 58 years of operation the track has been the site of two deaths. Racecars top out at 100 MPH at Wall, meaning crashes rarely result in serious injuries, Menschner said.

But Menschner said he was met with enthusiasm when he became a chaplain after reading about the ministry in Area Auto Racing, a weekly magazine.

"I think..they feel there's somebody out there, whether it be the Lord or whatever, and they feel relieved that (they're) not alone," he said.

The ministry assesses chaplain candidates' commitment to Christianity and to racing by interviewing raceway regulars and their acquaintances in the world beyond the track. Then the six-member board of directors votes, Rivers said.

We're looking for a people person whose main focus isn't to watch races but to minister...and who sees other people as more important than themselves.

The process can take as long as a year, according to ministry vice president Dan Petfield. CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

GSVSCC meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the West Long Branch Firehouse, 7:30 pm, Rt. 71 (Monmouth Road) and Cedar Ave. West Long Branch, NJ. For directions call 732-330-8349