

V.R.O.A. Spotlight

“Mike Becker”

(Club President)

Another great season of racing has almost come to a close for the 2007 season. The end of this year will close with a banquet on October 20th. This year was full of competitive racing, meeting new fans, & greeting old ones, most importantly spending quality time with family and friends.

The following is a closer look into the personal side of Mike Becker. Aside from racing with the club, he is also the club president. In which he has had that position for about the past 8 years.

In Mikes personal life is his wife Vivian, who he has been married to since February 1983. They have two children and seven grandchildren. Their children are Ward who is married to Tina with three girls: Katie, Allison, and Megan. And Ginger who is married to Charley, with four children: Nicole, Brittany, Michael, and Charley Jr.

In grade school is when Mike started going to the races. He has fond memories of going to the races at the Speedrome Track in the Comstock Park area. His favorite drivers were Duke Melinn, Jack Linhout, Little Beard Hann, & Wild Bill Wiltse.

Racing slot cars with his cousin Steve Zimmerman & friend Jim Gust was the start for Mike's racing adventure. Forward from this point in his life he graduated from Rockford High School in 1967. Before Mike was even out of high school, in May of 1967, he started working at Wolverine World Wide in Rockford. After paying his dues for a few years he went into the maintenance department as a journeyman and millwright. He continues to work there still to this date.

Then onto the Army in February of 1969 where he served his country during the Vietnam war. He was placed in the 1st Calvary unit. He came home with two bronze stars and the purple heart for being the unselfish man and hero he still is today to his family and friends.

An important part of racing is choosing your car number. Mike went with the #72 because it was the number Benny Parsons had when he won his NASCAR title. Then a friend - Tim Peters who raced in the late model class had the number 42. He had a nice template so I used it, and his number changed.

The first race car Mike ran was in the 6 cylinder class in 1971 out at Berlin raceway. During these years he was helped out by many people including Rick Gould, Joe Christiansen, Dan & Jeff Bloom. During the next several years if Mike didn't have a car to race he helped out some of his friends like Bob Bliss, Tim Peters, & George Jewell. Other classes of cars Mike has raced out at Berlin were street stocks, thunder cars, & sportsman division. Some of the other friends that have lent a helping hand during his time of racing at Berlin were Craig McGahn, Tim Peters, Mike Hall, Mike Hoppe, and Arnie Snyder.

The last 9 years has been devoted to racing with the V.R.O.A. This is a traveling race group that goes to tracks all over Michigan and northern Indiana. The group has made major strides forward. Mike has been helped out while racing with the V.R.O.A. by the D.P.R. race team which consists of Dan Stokes, Paul Ouendag, and Roger Estelle. These friendships still continue today. But the majority of support is given by his wife and family. He says his wife puts up with him being gone from home, costs involved, and the hard times that racing alone can have, then add into that the time it takes to be the club president.

Mike has won a few heat races, a few features, and has been the runner up in the points championship for four years. He says he enjoys the type of cars he races now because they are unique. Even though there is a small car count at the present time, there is still a lot of competition with a variety of winners during each race season.

He went on to explain that the club is more like a family and there is a camaraderie with the majority of the members and families. Even though they may not always be happy with each other all of the time, there is still team work, the loaning of tools, parts, and even cars when they are needed.

He feels very fortunate to have a great pit crew. It consists of most of his grandchildren. Allison has helped out for the last few years, Brittany traveled with him for a few years, and the last two seasons his two grand sons Michael and Charley have also helped him for almost every race, & Nicole is the pit director for the club. Son in law Charley pulled the car and helped keep it running all season, and daughter Ginger is the club secretary. Also the club treasurer is Mike's nephew, Chuck Pierson.

There is one wish that Mike has for the club of the V.R.O.A. and that is to provide this type of racing for years to come for our fans that enjoy it as much as we do. We try to provide the younger generation with leadership to teach them respect, teamwork, ethics and family values by the leadership we hope we are sharing.

Being the gentleman Mike Becker is, he wanted to give gratitude and thanks to everyone that helps in every area of the V.R.O.A. Without every helping hand, the club would not be where it is today, and would not continue on the path of growing that it seems to be on at the present time.

The last thought from Mike was to say "Thank you to our military people for keeping our country a free nation, so we can enjoy this great sport of racing".