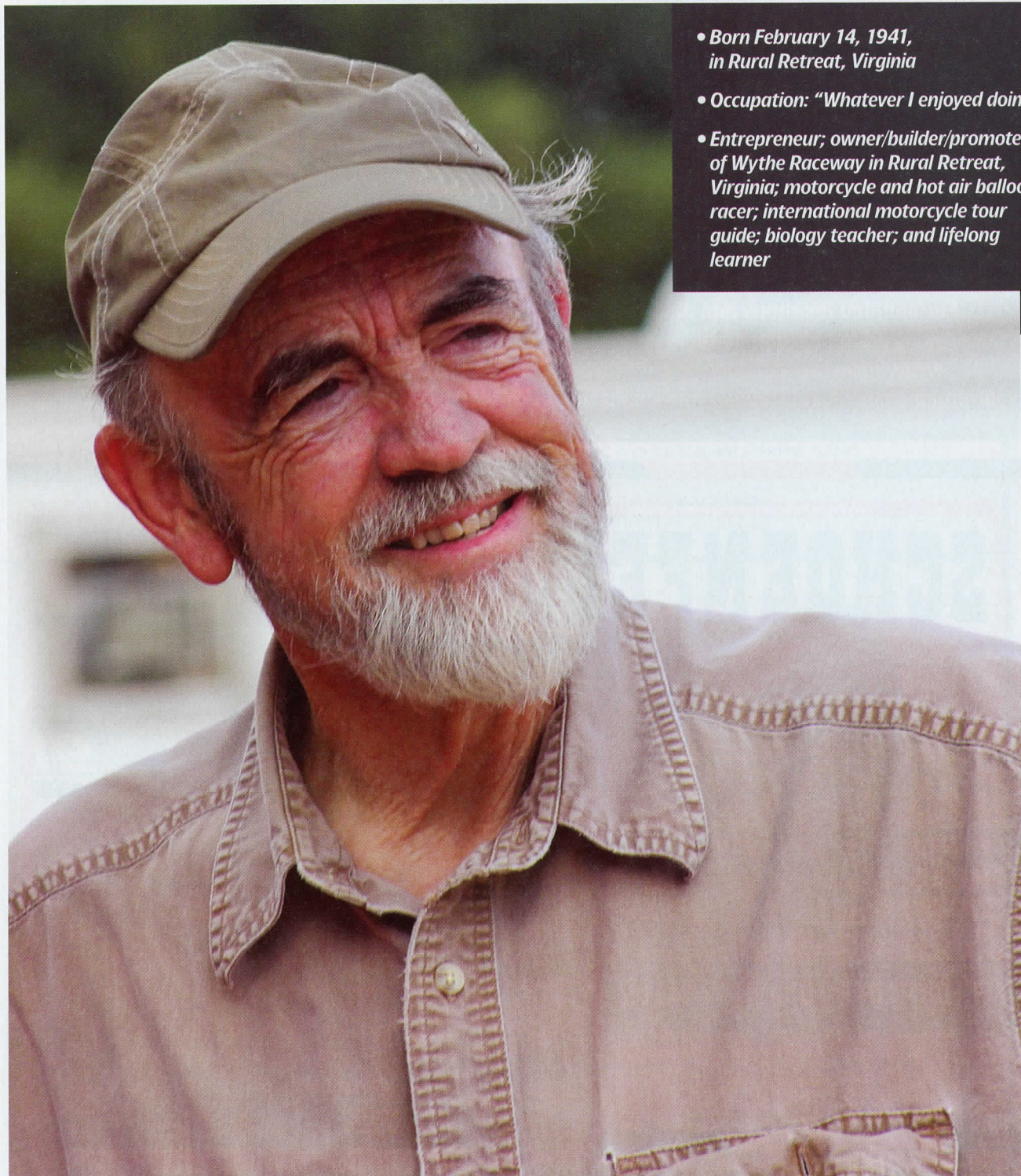


Fred Brown

In his own words As told to **Lew Boyd**

PRESENTED BY:



- Born February 14, 1941, in Rural Retreat, Virginia
- Occupation: "Whatever I enjoyed doing."
- Entrepreneur; owner/builder/promoter of Wythe Raceway in Rural Retreat, Virginia; motorcycle and hot air balloon racer; international motorcycle tour guide; biology teacher; and lifelong learner

Things were a lot different in Rural Retreat, Virginia, in the 1940s, but it was a great place to grow up, and those were the best of times.

It was an active life. Both my dad and mom were college graduates. They both taught high school, Dad was also the postmaster, and we had our family dairy farm. It was not the agri-business of today in the Midwest. We brought cabbage in from the field by horse, and our only electricity was for hot water in the barn.

Nonetheless, there was a lot to learn and enjoy, both about mechanical and living things. As you can imagine, I started driving early on the farm, and I got intrigued with some local stock car racing. At 12 I would make a dime an hour putting up hay. I'd save faithfully all summer. Finally, a friend and I would hail a passing bus and go down to Martinsville to the races. The admission back then was \$10.

At the same time, I was serious about school and learning about the world beyond Rural Retreat. I eventually made my way into Virginia Tech as a biology major. After that, I entered a special program at the University of Connecticut to begin working on a doctoral thesis. During that time, I spent a year in Venezuela doing medical and biological work for the Smithsonian Institution.

By the mid-'60s I decided to come back to Virginia and did some teaching myself. But then there was this '47 Chevy six-banger—my new \$75 race car. It was pretty rough. I knew I couldn't wreck it at the track because I had no trailer and had to flat tow it. And it didn't take me long to learn that I had to tie the steering wheel straight while towing if I wasn't going to wreck on the road.

About then a local farmer began asking me about racing. One thing led to another, and he suggested we team up and build a track on some of his land. I was all in and jumped right on a D-8 bulldozer. I stayed on that perch for a while. I worked day and night for six months carving a half-mile high-banked dirt track out of a ridge. It was serious. The first cut was 95 feet deep. We kept right on digging until we reached slate. That happened first in the third and

Longacre®
Racing Products
Time-tested, innovative racing products.
THE CHOICE OF PROFESSIONALS

**Pro Digital Tire Gauge
With Dual Bleed Buttons**

#52-53010

- New, improved electronics with higher accuracy and wider temperature operating range.
- Rubber bumper protects the 2-1/2" gauge.
- 17" hose with swivel chuck.
- Auto-off feature for extended battery life.



Reads to
0.1 psi with
0.3% Accuracy

**Caster/Camber
Billet Aluminum Gauge**

#52-78272

- Expanded range - measures camber from +9° to -9° and caster from +12° to -4°.
- Glow-in-the-dark vials for easy measurements even in great light.
- Super magnetic adapter for increased accuracy.



**COMPUTERSCALES®
XLI Wireless Scales**

#52-72717



- Accurate setups made extremely easy.
- 10" full color, high resolution tablet.
- Also available with 7" tablet or no tablet.
- Set up and ready to use out of the box.
- Easy to use, customize, and upgrade.
- 15" x 15" x 2-1/2" single cell pads.

f | v | t | i | LongacreRacing.com | 800.423.3110

ROD END SUPPLY

800-284-2902

**Swaged Steel
Tubes**

BOM Steel tubing
Left Hand Thread
indicated with
Knurled Ring
Aluminum Swedge Tubes Available



**EM
Series**

- C1045 Steel
- Heat Treated
- 52100 Bearing Steel Ball
- Zinc Plated



**BBEM
Series**

- 11/16 4130 Chromoly Steel
- 52100 Bearing Steel Ball
- Black Oxide Coated
- 45% stronger than EM

J Bar

- 4130 Chromoly tube
- Tig welded
- Adjustable length
- 7/8" adjuster (nut 3/4")
- Black Powder Coat finish

**XM
Series**

- 11/16 4130 Chromoly Steel
- 52100 Bearing Steel Ball
- Nylafiber Molded Race
- No Lubrication Needed
- Does not heat out or loosen up
- Chrome Plated
- Aluminum Rod Ends Available



Call or write for our FREE catalog today!

P.O. Box 2080 Olathe KS 66051 Ph: 813-768-1017 Fax: 813-768-4462 www.rodendsupply.com



VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

fourth turns, which is why the fourth-turn banking is steepest at 27 degrees.

We opened up Wythe Raceway in August 1970. I announced, groomed the track, and cleaned the restrooms—and taught biology at a local college for a while during the off months. It was a good overlay of schedules.

It was very fortunate that we were able to start out without a lot of debt, and other than challenges with rain, the track has been steady and has done well. That allowed me to go after other things I enjoy as well, especially on two wheels. I opened a motorcycle shop in 1972, and I'm talking with you from Mark 4 Honda in Wytheville today.

During the summers, I often had Sundays free, so I've done quite a bit of motorcycle racing myself. We—my son Peery and Wythe Raceway tech official Tommy Tomlinson—won the Baja 1000, which was 1,051 miles. I still try to do at least one race a year. During the colder months, I've taken a somewhat slower course. I've toured in Europe, Australia, and South America on a motorcycle and have run frequent group tours of Costa Rica.

In the more leisurely paced department, I've also enjoyed hot air balloon competitions and have been all over the place racing a balloon for Texaco-Havoline.

Meanwhile, the track continued to grow. When we started out, I was a 50-percent partner. Soon I was able to buy the whole thing out. We've always had a good crowd base, and it has always been my intention to emphasize local competitors. We have tried various touring shows along the way, but there really aren't a lot of super late models in Virginia, and so, generally, we didn't get enough cars that way.

I believe I was one of the very first to bring in the Chevy crate motors. That represented a good cost break for racers, but now even the crate cars are falling off. Things change and a promoter has to stay on top of them. It seems that top-division car counts at tracks all over the country are weakening and require serious thought.

Our other division car numbers are good,

especially our U-cars, with front wheel drive. We average 30 a night, paying \$25 to win, \$5 for last. Our folks realize they are racing for fun and they want to do it. Another track pays them \$200 to win, but only draws 10 to 12 cars. The U-cars are quick, though. I was clocked in one recently at 90 mph before blipping the throttle for the turn.

Meanwhile, the problem with the crates is they have more traction than horsepower. That makes our track almost seem too big and too fast. The crate track record is now 17.13 and supers are 15.73, with sprint car ace Dave Blaney in the 13-second range during a practice session. The crate cars are like go-karts—like the old wedge cars of years ago. They're wide-open almost all the way around. The speed is so high that it becomes all aero, and it is very difficult to pass. The result can become a single-file speed show rather than a race. That's bad for both fans and competitors.

Right now, we're looking at and testing anything that has to do with traction—tires and anything to reduce the impact of ground effects. We have to be so careful. It is true that what is important in racing is how a team spends its money. We have a big winner here—a track champion—who has spent a total of \$15,000 on his car. Another, even though the motor only costs \$6,000, has spent \$60,000. What really hurts about that is the perception some people have that it is necessary to spend that much money. We need rules that will help and not penalize either of them and will attract new people to the top division inexpensively.

I would say that, with chassis adjustments and changes, our future looks good. Owning the track for so long has allowed us to reinvest in it, which a lot of facilities can't do. I'm proud of Wythe. To be honest, we even advertise our restrooms, they're so tidy. We now have a 275-acre facility, featuring a cross-country motorcycle track that draws 400 bikes to its events. We have a succession plan in place in that my sons Peery and Christopher are both very active and capable.

As for me, rest not, rust not. I'll go on enjoying life and continuing to learn as much as I possibly can along the way. 🍷



85/86/87/88 Steel Bulb Gas Shock

- 2.5" bulb for better clearance and lighter weight.
- Available with Schrader valve or the new IMCA Universal Fill Port.

NEW Rotors 16+ Ultra-Lightweight

- Unique curved vane design reduces the chance of cupping while retaining surface support to the tire.
- Available in a slotted or flat faced design.
- Allows the use of standard mounting configurations without using pad spacers.

1968-1972 Chevy GM Replacement Frame



COMPLETE FRAME KIT: *ASSEMBLY REQUIRED. PICTURE SHOWS ASSEMBLED PARTS



HELP W

WE'RE
... AND WE'RE SEEK
EMAIL INFO@SPEEDW