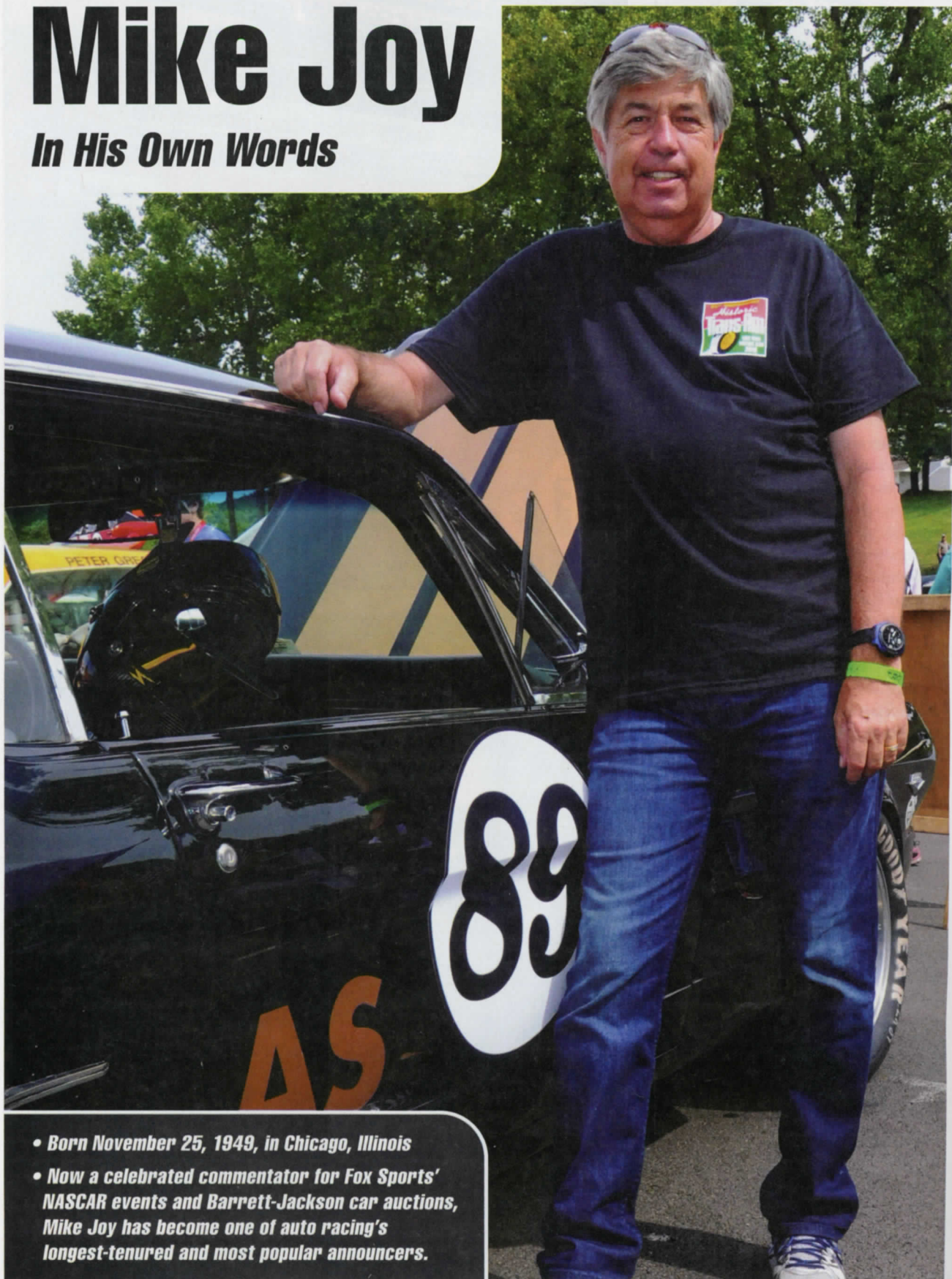


Mike Joy

In His Own Words



- *Born November 25, 1949, in Chicago, Illinois*
- *Now a celebrated commentator for Fox Sports' NASCAR events and Barrett-Jackson car auctions, Mike Joy has become one of auto racing's longest-tenured and most popular announcers.*

As told to **Lew Boyd**

I really wanted to be a racer for a living. That longing sure dies hard. But I had no funds, no tools, no garage, so I was autocrossing my Z28 at Riverside Park in Massachusetts. Mike Stefanik started that way too, calling it “pylon racing.”

Growing up, my eyes were glued to *Road & Track* and *Car and Driver*, and my ears to Sid Collins, Jim McKay, Chris Economaki, and Ken Squier. I was announcing games for college radio, so at Riverside they put me on the mic. One day, track owner Ed Carroll came by, listened, and offered me a job announcing his Saturday-night stock car show. It was lively and a lot of fun.

Soon I met Ken Squier, who came to announce the big events, and in 1975 I moved to Stafford, Connecticut, announcing with Jackie Arute and Bill Welch. PA announcing is so different from radio or TV. Job No. 1 is to make damn sure that every fan leaving the stands is committed to coming back the next week. When there’s a crash or a lead change, the first thing out of your mouth must be to tell them *where*. It’s a symphony you’re conducting. You want every head to swivel to see what you are seeing. That way they’ll remember it.

Ken Squier was so helpful to Jackie and me. Soon we were turn announcers for MRN Radio. We got a modest talent fee, a hotel room, a plane ticket, and an education.

National racing was growing strongly on TV, and that worked in favor of Jackie and me. Many general sports announcers had troubles with the intricacies of the sport—and some had trouble contemplating 43 balls on the court at the same time.

Maybe it was my passion, but I was able to retain so much I had read and heard. At dinner growing up, we’d always watch Walter Cronkite’s *CBS Evening News*. Watching so much TV made me begin to emulate how people put thoughts together and articulate them. When I wrote, I tried to write for the ear rather than the eye. Ken Squier and Barney Hall were both such plain speakers that I learned from them the art of the “easy listen.”

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VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

At the end of 1997, Squier moved to a host role, and CBS moved me to the booth with Ned Jarrett and Buddy Baker. In 2001, I moved over to Fox, where I've been ever since.

I spent a lot of time preparing so I could be right on point. I've always liked Mark Twain, especially his speeches more than his books. Twain said, "I never learned anything when I was talking."

At the end of 1997, Squier moved to a host role, and CBS moved me to the booth with Ned Jarrett and Buddy Baker. In 2001, I moved over to Fox, where I've been ever since.

I met a lot of people and kept my eyes open. When covering a race at Phoenix, Speed Channel's Rick Miner needed a talent for Barrett-Jackson. The next minute, it seems, Craig Jackson was asking what I could tell him about his gullwing Mercedes. My memory for sports cars chimed in, and I carried on. Jackson said, "He'll do." That's been great fun.

That same serendipity got me into lead announcing for Formula 1 coverage on Fox SportsNet and 14 other sports for CBS.

Of course, I still wanted to race, and jumped into a borrowed car every time I could. I remember racing Dick Berggren in a celebrity race at Franklin County in Virginia, and braking for turn three, beer bottles rolled out from under the seat. I did some testing in modifieds, but I didn't have the aggression for slamming into those turns and the bumping and banging. My skills and temperament are better suited to road racing.

In the early 2000s, I was doing TV for the Monterey Historic Trans Am races. How

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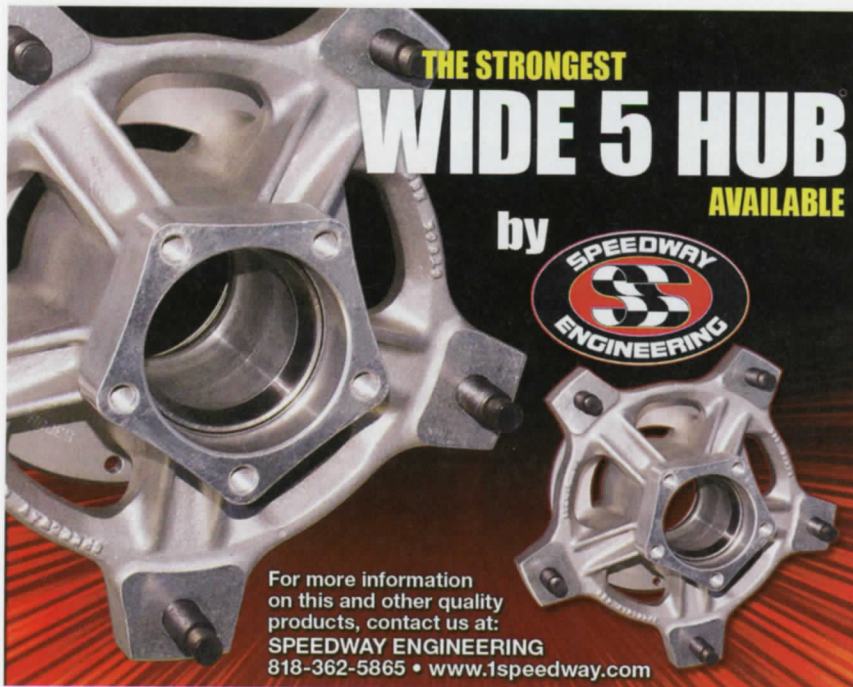
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VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

As the years have gone by, my traveling has only increased. My commute is to the airport rather than to an office. It has its challenges, but my wife Gaye is such a terrific mom, we've made it work.

 **Street Stock Help Source**



Question of the Month

QUESTION:

What are common mistakes when scaling your race car? – **Darren Ballentine**

ANSWER:

Chris Berg from Intercomp says the most frequent mistake is not making sure the pads are level. That's followed closely by relatively-similar consideration of consistency. Berg says many know the value of scaling the car the same way each time, but few recognize how precisely that must be done.

Berg says if you don't have a roll-on, roll-off dedicated leveling platform on a surface plate for scaling, consistent results can be attained by putting tape on the floor (so scales go back in the same spot) a marker (to identify which pad goes where on the car), and settling the chassis (by bouncing the suspension) before taking measurements.

Level the pads with a bubble and string or laser and tape measure by shimming from the lowest to the highest. Berg says racers also neglect to include the driver or don't realize how much as little as 10 pound weight affects weight distribution moving it around (try it!).

Every month Speedway Illustrated will take one question from the Street Stock Help Source Facebook page and have it answered by an industry expert. To ask a question, like the page and make a post.

I had grooved on that series back in 1970. It was bigger than NASCAR! Ken Epsman asked if I happened to have a suit and helmet. You can imagine what I said. A few years later, rounding Big Bend at Lime Rock, I glanced up to where I had sat watching as a college student, and I welled up. Bending the car to your will is such a thrill—a feeling, I believe, that is unique to downhill skiing and racing.

I had some success; wins at Lime Rock, Pocono, New Hampshire, and Watkins Glen. I asked questions, listened, paid attention. The more people you talk to about how they race, the more you can come to think you can do it yourself. I really wanted it.

As the years have gone by, my traveling has only increased. My commute is to the airport rather than to an office. It has its challenges, but my wife Gaye is such a terrific mom, we've made it work. Our kids, Scott and Kaitlyn, are doing great in college, and Scott is now racing BMWs.

Motorsports announcing is thrilling, challenging, and scary, all at the same time. To work through that, you need faith in your ability and trust in your co-workers. Your career always hinges on your next sentence. For all of us, this is so much fun to do, so enjoyable, that it is hard to know when to step aside. It's usually others who will make that decision. But, for me, as long as I have my health, you know where I would rather be than anywhere else on a Sunday afternoon. ☘