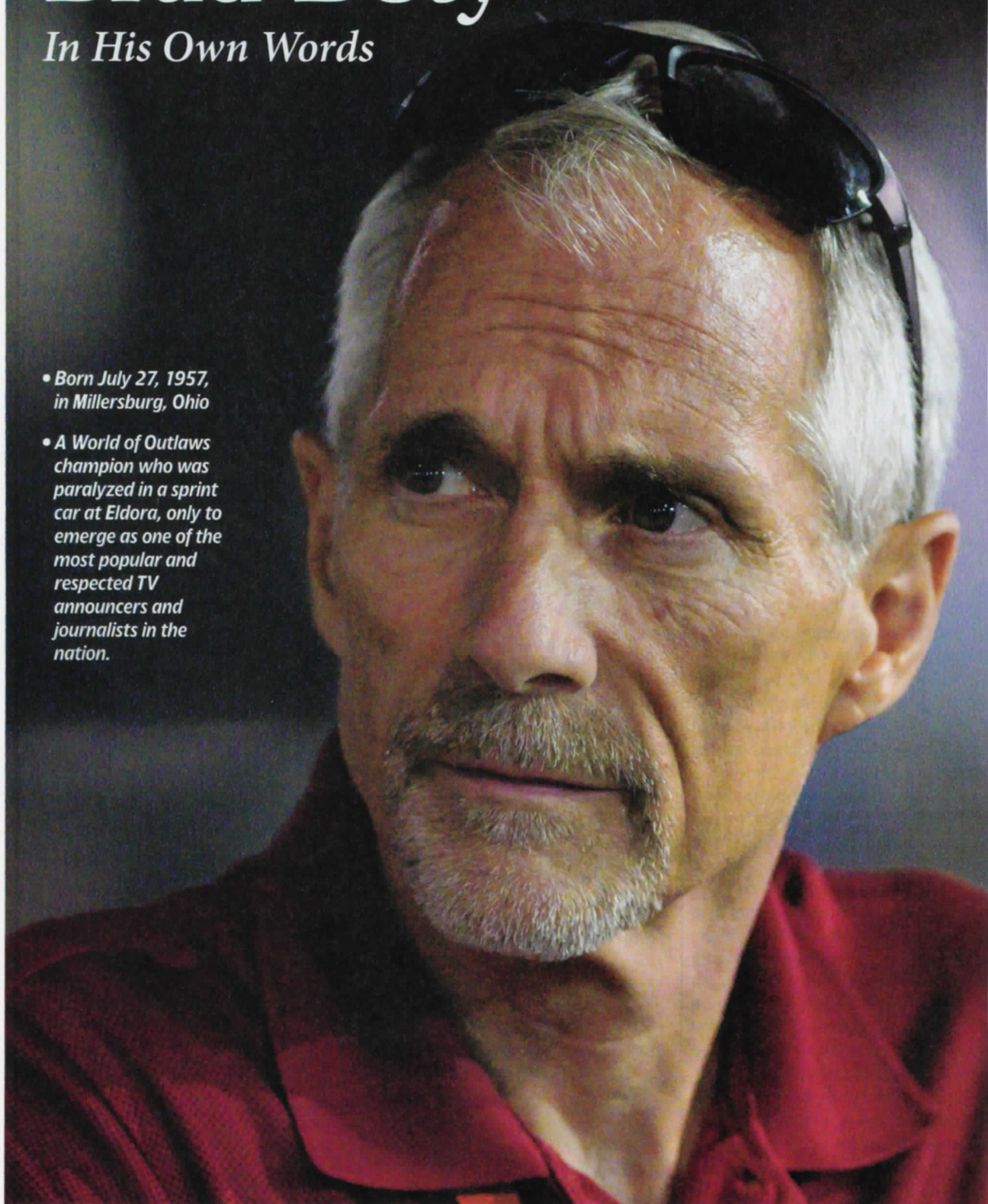


Brad Doty

In His Own Words

- *Born July 27, 1957, in Millersburg, Ohio*
- *A World of Outlaws champion who was paralyzed in a sprint car at Eldora, only to emerge as one of the most popular and respected TV announcers and journalists in the nation.*



TIM AYLWIN

As told to **Lew Boyd**

There's so much talk about how hard it is to enter our sport. I remember hearing AJ Foyt comment that he couldn't get started today. It's that tough.

All I can say is that if John Haudenschild had been a baseball player or in some other sport, that's what I might have been. He was an influence that got me interested in racing.

John Haudenschild was the original "Wild Child," the local dirt track hero in Millersburg. He and my dad were buddies, and we'd go watch him race. Like all kids, I'd play on little tracks I'd make under the stands.

Then John's kids, Ed and Jac, got started. Ed was first. He started in a modified, and didn't he win right off, doing a 360 along the way. That was about the coolest thing I had ever seen. I was 14. If he could do that, maybe I could, too.

I sold my dirt bike for \$450 and bought the modified from Ed, and went racing. Ed helped me a lot, and I did okay. Eventually I got to know some people and made the jump to sprint cars. I've tried to instill into my kids the importance of networking to get you where you want to go. There is little you can do alone.

It wasn't easy. My first time in a sprint car was on the half-mile in Mansfield in a car that didn't handle well, and I worried whether I could really do this. But, over time, I worked my way into a nice four-bar Nance owned by John Harmon, John Gantz, and Dave Pope. I ran second on my first night out, but I think I could have won if I really pushed it. Then I was kind of on my way.

Today there are other ways to move up the ladder, but expenses are greater than ever. If someone comes in without family money, it's much harder. Those that can might go from micros to 305 sprinters, but even that is a big leap.

I remember Lynn Paxton saying it takes five years to learn to go fast and five more to figure out why. I don't believe anyone

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is actually born with natural ability. It is more that most people never really progress. Guys like Kyle Larson and Jeff Gordon started so young. They'd been racing for 10 years by the time they were 16 and they were still brave. They had supportive families and perseverance—and they learned better than most.

Over the seasons, the speed of sprint cars has increased as much as the cost of campaigning one. Put in perspective, I was hurt at Eldora in 1988. Today a 360 is putting out as much horsepower as a 410 did back then. With engines now putting out 900 horsepower, lap times are way down, especially at places like Volusia, one of the fastest tracks. It's also the first race of the season down there in Florida, so everyone's a little green. Go from a couple of months off to going into the turn at 150 miles an hour, and it will wake you up.

Experienced drivers do tell me that with the new seats, neck restraints, and cages with added bars they are comfortable if the car is right and they feel well. You do have to wonder, though, what it will be like when the engines put out 1,000 or so horsepower!

No one expects to be hurt, and it sure was a shocker when it happened to me. The sport has become safer, and accidents such as Shane Hmiel's and Kevin Swindell's are rarer and rarer. But, when you slam right down on a track and the impact goes up your spine, realistically there will likely be trouble.

As I began to heal as best I could, I began to realize what it actually means to take one day at a time—and to look forward positively to what I'm going to accomplish tomorrow. For 32 years I've always done projects and stayed busy.

I'm still pretty handy in my daily life. My son says I should have been an engineer. I'm always building, welding things, working on cars. It really helps me. But some days suck. I might not be able to reach something I'm working on, and there is nothing I can do. I need to wait for help. It's hard, but I realize that no one has it completely easy. We all need help of some kind. I've trained myself to take a deep breath and wait for it.

In terms of outside of our home, I was so lucky that TV came along. It has kept me in the game, and I have stayed involved, met the new drivers, and have kept up with the sport. There's lots of stuff going on in TV, and I am thankful for that.

With my TV exposure, a lot of people have suggested I should become a motivational speaker. Somehow, I feel more comfortable with a mic at the track, though there's probably less money in it than speaking.

Something else that has kept me busy is the Brad Doty Classic, the annual World of Outlaws race. It was held first at Attica in 1989, and Steve Kinser won it. In 2005 I began co-promoting the event. Attica promoter John Bores partnered with me; Ohio Logistics, Racing Optics and our associate sponsors have helped a lot to make the promotion successful financially and from a credibility point of view. Needless to say, everyone's support has been heartwarming.

I have to say, though, that my sanity would not stay intact if I tried to promote more races. I suppose it's ironic for a former 410 driver, but my family worries that I worry too much. Promoting carries a lot of anxiety with it, and for me it's especially about the weather. You can be burned so easily financially with rain—whether at the track or even just in the area—after months and months of hard work. But so far, so good. We did all right in 2020, even with COVID restrictions.

There's an expression that you really don't know what you have until it's gone. Maybe that's what was going on in this strange year. When the races could be held, I saw folks coming out in record numbers.

It makes me feel good that both Ford and Toyota are now involved with sprint car engines. That Chevy 410 is, of course, based off a small block outfitted with after-market parts. Ford and Toyota are offering complete engines. These companies feel it is worth spending development money on sprint car racing. I think it elevates the sport, and there will be more eyeballs focused on what we do.

I think things look healthy right now, and the coming seasons look promising. 🍀