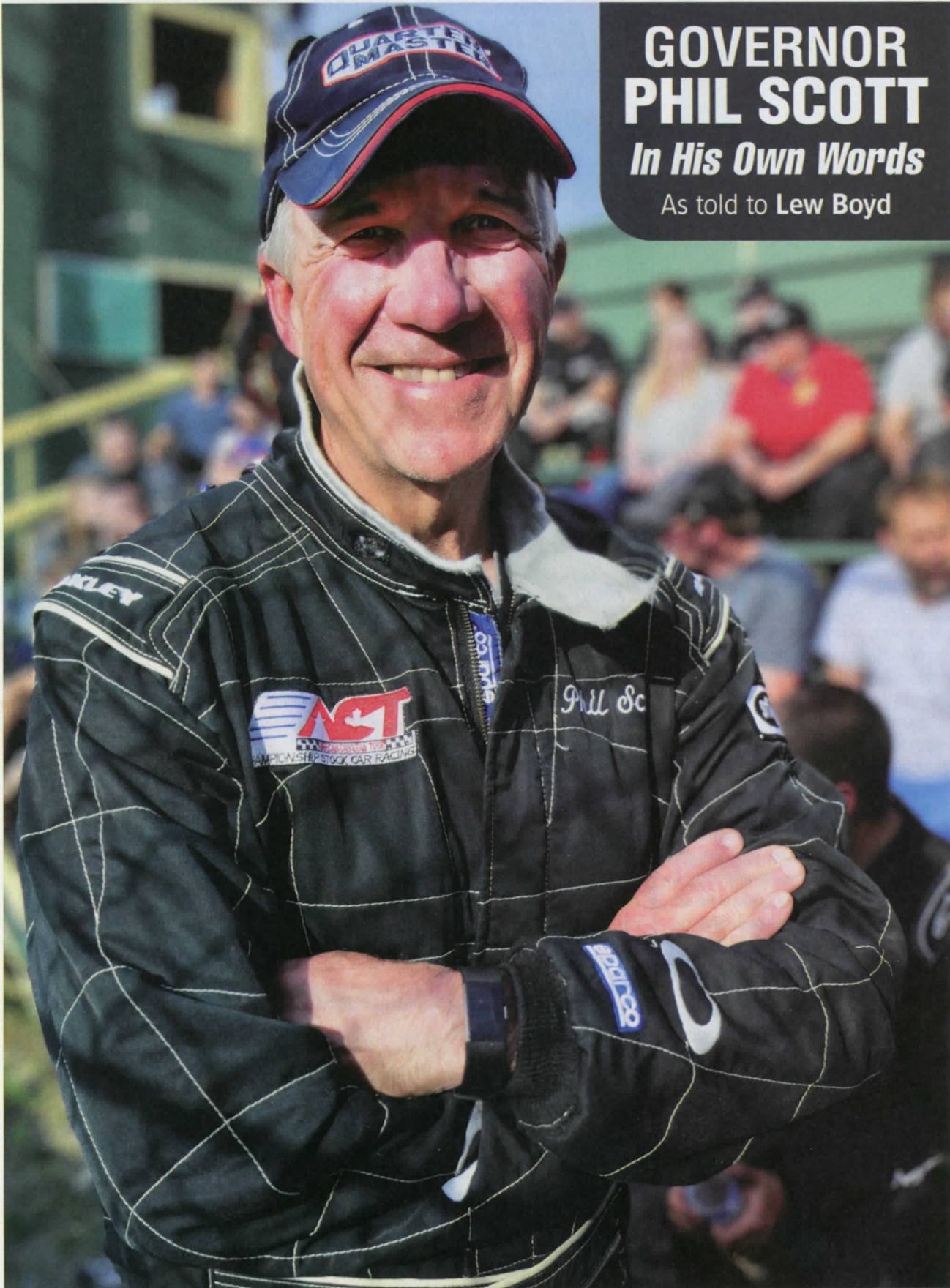


**GOVERNOR
PHIL SCOTT**

In His Own Words

As told to Lew Boyd



DICK BERGGREN

- ***Born on August 4, 1958, in Barre, Vermont***
- ***Vermont's Republican Phil Scott has polled as the most popular governor in the nation, winning a third term in 2020. He is also the winningest driver in history at the iconic Thunder Road Speedway in the Green Mountains.***

Growing up, I was always interested in anything with a motor, and racing. It was my mom who introduced me to the sport. My dad was a double amputee and WWII veteran and passed when I was 11. But it was my mom who took me and my brothers to Thunder Road in Barre at a very young age, and it's been a major part of my life ever since.

After high school, because I loved to build things and work with my hands, I thought I wanted to become a Tech Ed teacher. But after graduating from the University of Vermont with my teaching certificate, I decided to go into business instead, which started with opening my own motorcycle shop. I also wanted to race cars, but at this point in life, I couldn't afford it. So, I worked as a crew member for talented drivers like Robbie Crouch and Joey Kourafas and also raced snowmobiles all over the Northeast.

I was 25 years old when I decided to expand my motorcycle shop, so I went to work and was 90% complete with the new building when the state shut me down due to a lack of a state environmental permit (I had all my local permits) that no one told me I needed. What stuck with me was the state seemed more interested in enforcement than in helping people like me succeed. I moved on, and became co-owner of a construction company, which I had for over 30 years. Over time I found myself complaining about how difficult the state was making it to do business, and instead of just complaining, I decided to step up to be a part of the solution. Without a political bone in my body, I ran for the state

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Senate and was successful in the 2000 election.

I was still racing two to three times per week all over the Northeast, which I think helped with name recognition in my first campaign. In 2002, we won track championships at Airborne (New York) and Thunder Road (Vermont) and the American Canadian Tour.

For 10 years I juggled construction, racing, and serving in the Senate. After five terms, I thought that was enough public service for me, but was convinced by my good friend Sen. Dick Mazza—a Democrat (remember, I'm a Republican)—to run for Lieutenant Governor. I served in that role for six years before deciding to run for Governor in 2016.

Even though my job as Governor comes first, I've still tried to race, not only because of my love for the sport, but because it keeps me grounded and in touch with everyday people. I think I'm probably the only governor in history to win a stock car race, much less race while holding office!

When I'm at Thunder Road, it's a chance to just be "No. 14" not "Governor Scott." But I am—absolutely—the same Phil Scott in Nomex as I am in a tie. I try to be calm and levelheaded, rising above the fray, in both the political arena and on the track.

Pete Duto has been my crew chief for 23 or 24 years, and he's the one who gets excited when we have a "problem" with 10 to go. While I'm certainly competitive by nature, I'm the one who calmly says, "Don't worry...we've got this." It seems the same in politics; when my staff may take offense to things the media or special interest groups inaccurately say about me, I try to be more reflective.

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Racing at Thunder Road on Thursday nights has been such a big part of my life. It's right next door in my hometown of Barre and the shows are short-distance and run efficiently. I've even won a couple of times since becoming Governor. But as you age, you can lose skills a bit. This is especially true when you take a year off. Which I did in 2018, after signing some controversial gun legislation, after which

there were many threats and protests planned at the track I loved. So instead of injecting politics upon the many fans who pay good money to watch racing, I decided to sit the season out. When I came back the following spring, the cars seemed much quicker than in previous years—and the races seemed to last a little longer. And realistically, I needed to come to grips with the fact that I was running against kids a third my age.

This season has been tough. The way you run on a track can change, even on asphalt. I made my living racing and winning on the outside, it was where I felt most comfortable. But now at Thunder Road you have to run the bottom, even below the white line, the shortest way around the track to be successful. Admittedly, I've had a hard time adjusting but am getting more accustomed to this changed world now.

We also struggled with our car this year, finding a setup that works for me. But my team didn't give up, and toward the end of the season, we made it to the podium twice with two second-place finishes. Sometimes, experience can outweigh the enthusiasm and death-defying moves of youth. In my heart I think I can still win, but my brain tells me I may have already won my final race. While I don't know how long I'll continue to race, I do know this, I don't want to be the backmarker. I don't want to be that guy who spins in front of the whole field or takes out the point leader due to a lack of talent. When my time comes, I'll accept it. I've had a good run.

Through the years, from my seats at Thunder Road and in the Capitol, I have noticed the curious similarities in the worlds of racing and politics. Both, these days, seems to be racked with critical issues and differences of opinion. I've found success in both worlds by treating others the way I want to be treated, putting myself in their shoes, and practicing civility, empathy, and respect. Bipartisanship is a word so many folks like to use these days but typically they are only bipartisan when they want you to agree with them. I think we need to understand that bipartisanship means give and take, whether on the racetrack or at the State House. If we all stay separated in our own pit stalls, none of us will win. In fact, I would argue we all lose. ☹