

GARY BOCKMAN
NOVEMBER 4, 1953 – JANUARY 09, 2020



It's often said that people come to motorsports for the cars, but they stay because of the people. If you have been involved in motorsports at Portland International Raceway at any time in the last 48 years, chances are good you have encountered Gary Bockman. And if you ever got to know Gary at all, he's the first person you hope to see every time you come to the track.

Gary became part of the Portland motorsports scene in the early 1970s. He says he wandered through the front gate at PIR during a Cascade Sports Car Club track day. He stuck around and became one of the most successful racing drivers the city has produced. He has also been a leading advocate for Portland's racing community.

"This track is my home," Gary says. That might sound like an exaggeration, but it's true. Gary not only spends a lot of time at Portland's fastest city park, he has put in countless hours volunteering to improve the PIR facility. Gary has done everything from putting in flower beds to refurbishing the bridge that crosses the track on the front straight.

When PIR's future was questioned by Mayor Tom Potter in 2005, Gary took the lead in forming the racing community's response. He founded the Friends of PIR, a non-profit organization created to benefit the facility. Gary brought together civic and business leaders, along with

thousands of Portlanders, to prove that support for the track's mission runs deep in the community. PIR not only survived the controversy, the track has thrived because of Gary Bockman's efforts.

Gary's racing career is distinguished and enviable. Together with his friend Chuck Shafer, Gary set a world speed record in 2000 at the Silver State Classic. On a closed-off stretch of Nevada highway, Gary and Chuck took their car up to 207.780 MPH. At the time, that was the highest speed ever achieved on a public highway. Gary was also a versatile driver, and in 2008 he drove his team to a third-place finish in the Alcan 5000 Winter Rally, driving hundreds of miles north of the Arctic Circle and onto the ice of the Arctic Ocean in the dead of winter.

Gary's amateur and professional racing resumé includes many championships with both the Sports Car Club of America and his beloved Cascade Sports Car Club. In 1996, Gary finished in second place at the prestigious SCCA national championship Runoffs, and he almost won the same race in 2016. Gary served Cascade as club President numerous times, and also served as the club's Race Director.

Bringing new drivers into auto racing is a key part of Gary's contribution. Over nearly five decades, Gary has trained hundreds of new racing drivers and given complete novices their first turn on the track. As a teacher, Gary emphasizes car control. "When you're driving a race car at speed," he says, "you gain the ability to see into your future, and you get to control what that future's going to be." Gary always takes the time needed to give a student driver a successful experience. If you count the number of racing drivers Gary has coached and instructed over the years, you'll find that most Northwest racers owe some measure of their success to his teaching.

If you know Gary, you know he enjoys winning races, and when he wins you want to be near him to share his exuberant joy. But he is not a man to dwell on past victories for very long. With Gary, winning is a moment to celebrate with his friends before moving on to the next challenge. Passion, dedication, and community have always been Gary's hallmarks.

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