

HISTORICRACING

KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALIVE SINCE 1999

LARRY PHILLIPS

3/7/1942 - 21/9/2004

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Larry Phillips won the NASCAR Winston Racing Series National Championship in 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1996. He also won seven Regional NASCAR Championships. An uncompromising racer, who probably won more races than anyone else (an estimated 2500), passed away in 2004 from lung cancer. A legend.



Larry Phillips, a Southwest Missouri native, was an intense, hard-nosed racer with more determination than you are likely to see just about anywhere else.

Larry was involved with motor racing for more than 40 years. He drove his Number 75 race car to more than 2,500 wins at the Bolivar Speedway USA, Fairgrounds Speedway in Springfield, Lebanon 1-44 Speedway, and at asphalt race tracks all over the United States.

He won the inaugural NASCAR Winston Racing Series National Championship in 1989, then repeated in 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1996. He also won seven Regional NASCAR Championships.

He has served as a mentor for a number of successful racers including Rusty Wallace, Kenny Wallace, Mark Martin, Kenny Schrader, and countless others.

He took wins in a variety of different classes including NCRA Late Models, ARTGO, ASA, All-Star, Pros, Stars, USAC, World of Outlaws, and NASCAR Winston Series stock cars.

He was an airplane and flying enthusiast and co-owner of Midwest Aero, an aircraft refinishing and repair business.

In 1975 he was involved in a crash at Fort Smith, Arkansas. He ended up going underneath another car, both cars caught fire and Larry wound up with third-degree burns on 70% of his body. A lesser man might not have survived and many would have quit, Larry was told that he would be out of racing for at least two years. Larry went to work with physical therapy and a year later was back at the track, Winning races.

There are those who say Larry Phillips was the best who ever lived, the best to ever get behind the wheel of an American stock car.

How good was he? He was so good in the 1970s, that promoters in his hometown of Springfield brought in ringers to beat him. They brought in Donnie Allison once, and Phillips routed the man so completely that a somewhat shattered Allison reportedly said in exasperation, "The devil could not beat that man on this track."

"Larry didn't care much for trophies," said James Ince. "He wanted the checks." He threw out all the trophies, dumped them in landfills across Missouri.

Larry didn't leave much behind after 39 1/2 years of racing all over this country. A few yellowed newspaper clips his wife, Judy, hid away, a few famous disciples who learned how to drive by watching Larry Phillips and enough money to pay the bills, buy a nice motor home and bid on motorcycles on eBay.

One of the roughest, toughest, meanest, craziest and grouchiest men to climb into a race car was diagnosed with cancer in May 2000. He started chemotherapy in June and just a few days later went out and won the Friday-night feature race in Lebanon, Mo.

He won another race, and he got out of another car, and another pretty woman gave him another trophy to throw away while photographers snapped pictures. Everything seemed normal, only this time, he had something to say. He took the microphone.

"I'm going to fight this cancer like I race – wide open," he

Larry Phillips biography

announced to the crowd. His right lung had been eaten up by cancer. He could barely breathe. He did not say that doctors had given him six to eight weeks to live, he didn't put much stock in doctors.

Near the end he was talking to Joe Posnanski, columnist for Kansas City Star.

"You know," he said, "I never saved anything. Gave away all those trophies to kids or just threw them out. I never saved anything. I figured I already lived yesterday." He went into a coughing fit. When he stopped, his voice barely whispered. "It might be nice to have some of those old articles and trophies. You know. Just to remember."

Larry passed away on 21 Sep 2004 after a long battle with lung cancer. A legend.

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