



SPEEDWAY PRODUCTIONS
712 Cherry Blossom Court
Delmont, PA 15626
724-461-7135 (Office)
412-999-6625 (Cell)
don@speedwayproductions.biz

www.speedwayproductions.biz

Remember When: Jack Lentz - Life is a Challenge

Our story begins in 1960 when Jack Lentz and his girlfriend were on a double date with Donna Christy and her boyfriend. Jack took a liking to Donna but she could not stand him, she says that to this day she still cannot stand him at times. One evening after they met, Jack drove up at Donna's house and began honking the horn. Her father sent her down to the car to "get rid of the hoodlum" that was annoying the neighbors. Donna recalled, "He was three sheets to the wind and would not leave." In an attempt to get rid of him, she climbed into his car. As he drove away, Donna soon realized this was not a wise decision because she was in her slippers and he would not take her home. Fearing an accident, Donna convinced Jack to let her drive. During the journey home Jack, decide he wanted out of the car even though it was cold and snowing. Donna let him out, went up the road and turned around, and started for home. Jack was hitch hiking so Donna picked him up., He was complaining that his girlfriend left him off and drove away. Jack did not realize who she was, but asked her to drive him home. The next day Jack's father called Donna to find out where the car was. Donna said Jack was drinking Thunderbird wine and lots of it and had driven the car back to her house. Two month's later, on January 21st. Donna and Jack were married. Jack's friend Don Ball came home from Michigan to visit and he and Jack decided that there should be a wedding. Don made the plans and the couple did not object; they just glided along. Donna said, "It's like we belonged together".

Jack was a mechanic when they got married. He built a small garage on a one acre plot of land that his father gave him. His interest in cars began while he was in the service, Jack had a drag car. Early in their marriage, Jack and Donna had a 1940 Ford Coupe and a 1940 Willys. They used to drag race on the 62nd. Street Bridge in Pittsburgh.

In 1970, the man who owned the property adjacent to Jack's garage wanted to sell his property, Jack's father, Art told him that he better buy the land before the owner realized that part of Jack's garage was on the man's property. Jack and Donna were dirt poor, living in a 50-foot trailer with three kids and another on the way, and they needed \$4500 to buy fifty acres of land or lose the garage. Donna went to the bank to borrow money from their "guardian angel". After a short while, they began to receive \$50 checks every three months. Confused, they tried to return the checks but were surprised to learn that they owned the gas rights to the land they had just purchased.

In the early 1960's, Jack was determined to take his family to the Daytona 500 in their 1959 Pontiac. They had no money, no tickets, no room, and two kids. They really could not afford to go but Jack was creative so off they went. Whenever they needed to stop and sleep, he put the kids on the front seat, Donna slept on the back seat and Jack slept in the trunk. He kept some tools in the trunk with him so no one could lock him inside. Whenever it was time to eat Jack would open a can of soup, wire the can to the manifold of the engine, drive a few miles until it was warm enough, then pull over and eat. Talk about Yankee ingenuity!

In 1964, Jack raced a 1955 Chevy in the Novice Division at Blanket Hill Speedway. He built the car from scratch and did his own engine work. Three years later Mel Swartzlander invited Jack to go with him to Ed Lynch, Sr.'s garage in Apollo to work on his modified. Mel was a no-show that night but Jack became a part of the race team. The racing bug bit Jack and before long, he convinced Ed that they needed an Edmunds chassis sprint car.

In 1967, Jack and Ed had a falling out and Jack purchased his own sprint car. He only raced it for one year and finished 7th in the standings out of a field of 78 cars.

Some of the tracks he ran included Schmuckers, Jennerstown, Port Royal, and Buckeye. On one of the trips to Orrville Ohio, during a Halloween weekend, Jack and Donna were sitting at a stop sign and a young kid threw a tomato from the window of his car and hit Jack in the face while he was driving the car hauler. In a fit of road rage, Jack began chasing the punk in the car hauler with the sprint car on the back. Once the punk realized that Jack was in hot pursuit, the kid

drove into a cemetery. The only thing that saved the kid was that Jack could not get the hauler over the top of some of the tombstones. During their chase through the graveyard, Donna had the three kids tucked in under the dashboard of the truck so they would not get hurt. Donna was telling Jack "get him, get him". After the races at Buckeye, that night Donna and the kids slept in the truck and Jack slept under the truck.

In 1970, Jack and driver Blackie Watt teamed up to race late models. The car Jack built was the famous orange #93 Chevy Impala convertible that won over 28 feature races at Schmuckers, Ruffsdale, and Jennerstown.

The race team was together for four years and had over 100 feature victories. In 1970, Jack started to build a 20-unit trailer park for his retirement nest egg. He was a sewage enforcement officer and installed septic tanks for a living. When he discovered that his septic tank supplier was ripping him off, he made his own as part of his construction business. Along with his close friend and partner, Clair Bash, they purchased the molds and made their own tanks. This project lasted until 1974 when the mines started to get busy with contracts for them.

The family needed a bigger house but could not afford it so in 1971 Jack bought Donna a mini-van and got her a job driving school students to classes. She worked for four years, saved enough money, and bought a large mobile home. They still live in that home today. Donna always felt that one business always took care of the other. The secret if there is one according to Donna is good credit, good purpose, good parents and lots of hard work.

R & P Coal Co. tried to take ten acres of land away from Jack and Donna to mine it but not without a fight. After researching land records, they discovered that the coal company had leased the coal rights in 1906. Eventually R & P put a road in behind the Lentz home and offered Jack a job working for them. Jack and his partner Clair Bash bought a backhoe and began working for R & P Coal. The problem was that the backhoe was always breaking down.

They finally got a newer one but the payments were \$400 a month. The payments were scary but things got better as the work increased. When the backhoe was paid off, they purchased a

dump truck, bulldozer, 644 loader, coal trucks and a tractor-trailer. Everything was fine until 1980 when the mines slowed down, worked dropped off, and the crew found work elsewhere.

In 1979, Jack bought a farm. A woman in her sixties inherited the property and was anxious to sell it. Donna had no idea why Jack wanted to buy such a huge piece of land, she would of preferred 30 acres but off she went to the bank to borrow enough for the entire 153 acres.

Jack decided that he wanted to raise cows and pigs on his new farm so he took his bulldozer and put in some roads. After three years, he got tired of farming and his interests became hunting and fishing. One year, while Jack was in Daytona, Donna rounded up the animals and sold them at auction. It seems that a great deal of changes take place when Jack is off hunting, fishing, or racing.

Clarksburg Hose Company was started in 1982 and is a very successful operation today. In 1984, a friend of Jack returned to Clarksburg from Michigan in need of help or a job. Jack decided to buy him a concession trailer and a new truck to haul it. This friend was going to work the carnival circuit but the deal only lasted two weeks. He returned from Savanna, Georgia, parked the trailer in Jack's driveway and quit. Jack had a problem with paying off the truck and trailer and decided to go on the road himself to earn enough to make the payments. Donna was left behind at home raising four teenagers, running a construction company, trying to get Clarksburg Hose Company started, and run their 20-unit trailer park. Jack was on the road for ten weeks. On weekends, Donna would drive their motorhome and drop off one of the kids so they could help Jack run the concession trailer at the carnival. They sold funnel cakes, corn dogs, Italian sausage, and French fries. After one year, it became obvious that they could not handle this and all the other projects that Jack had started. During 1985 to 1987, they decided to use the trailer locally at the Hannastown Flea Market and Ligonier Days. Once the equipment was paid for, they parked the trailer until 1991 when they put it into operation at the racetrack. The trailer was used until the permanent concession stand was completed in 1993.

Jack started pushing dirt around on his farm for Moto Cross in 1985. He had a couple of pro riders come in to layout the track and they opened in 1986. On the first day and the first race at

the Moto Cross races Jack and Donna got into an argument while walking to the track for the opener when Jack said, "I don't know what I am supposed to do, how do we line up the bikes? What classes are what?" Donna was very upset and said, "what do you mean you don't know what to do, there are over 100 bikes here!" Fortunately, the American Motorcycle Association (AMA) was very organized and everything went well.

There is never a dull moment in the Lentz household. One evening in 1988, Jack came home from hunting at about 7:00 PM and said, "I am going to Florida to sell Christmas trees". He packed up and away he went. Jack would stay in Florida for about a month and Donna would go down with one of the kids and help him whenever possible. This project lasted for four years until the market place became saturated.

In 1990, Jack started developing Challenger Raceway. Donna named the track Challenger because like all his projects this was another challenge for Jack. Wayne Simmons, from Indiana, PA had a Micro Sprint, Jack liked it, and this was the beginning of circle track racing at the popular 1/2 mile dirt facility.

Their love of racing and the burning desire to make Challenger Raceway one of the best dirt tracks in the country forced Jack and Donna to sell off most of their construction equipment to invest in the racetrack. Space does not permit us to explain any of Jack's other projects. Donna said no matter what happens she could never leave Jack because she is afraid of missing another one of life's interesting experiences. It is a fact that this man clearly has never tackled a job where he could not handle a challenge but along with his wife Donna, they face the challenges together.