

MAX DOLDER

- PHOTOGRAPHER

By David Sink

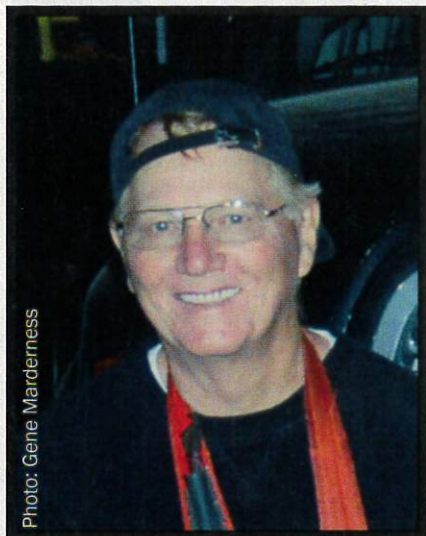


Photo: Gene Marderness

MAX DOLDER was born on November 28, 1950, to parents Bud and Corrine Dolder in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Dolder was one of five children. After moving to Newton, Iowa, at the age of seven, Dolder quickly caught racing fever after a trip to the local Newton Speedway.

"One day my father asked me if I wanted to go to the races," Dolder remembers. "I was thinking a track meet or something like that. He said 'no, auto races'. They used to have a quarter-mile dirt track on the north side of Newton that ran on Sunday nights. After that first night, I would beg my dad to take me to the races every Sunday night".

"I was fascinated how all the cars were different and all cut up. They had doors cut off and cut out. Watching these cars sliding around the corner, coming off turn four, is really what got me. They had two divisions. A late model and an early

model. They were stock cars basically."

A trip to the famed Knoxville Raceway a short time later, to see early versions of sprint cars, really caught Dolder's attention. "My mother told me one day 'wait until you see them at Knoxville. They really go down there.' So, we went and that was really cool. They were all home built modifieds. They all looked different, were built different, and all worked different." To Dolder, they were much more exciting than the stock cars he had been watching. "I liked the modifieds better, but I liked the smaller track at Newton a lot better than Knoxville."

Dolder continued to attend races locally until he left Iowa for college in 1969. Dolder headed to Denver to attend Western Technical College, a trade school. In 1973, Dolder headed to Florida with a friend on the spur of the moment. It is the place he has called home ever since. "I started running around with this guy who was from Clearwater but had been living in Iowa for a couple of years. One day he tells me 'I just can't take these winters anymore. I'm going home.' I asked him if I could go with him. I was only 22. I've been here ever since."

Once he got to Tampa, he continued to go to the races at tracks in Florida, particularly Tampa's Golden Gate Speedway and East Bay Raceway in Gibsonton, just south of Tampa. Dolder even got behind the wheel of an entry level stock car for a couple seasons. "It only lasted a couple years on and off. I didn't have the money to race. My girlfriend Janice had a camera and I started messing around with it. I always wanted to be a photographer. I thought it would be cool. In Junior High School, the library had all kinds of magazines and newspapers. I'd always go in there and read Sports Illustrated. I remember thinking how cool it would be to go to all these games and take pictures."

"I started going to East Bay to shoot the southern modifieds because they didn't have sprint cars back then. It was a learning curve, and it still is to this day. I didn't know what I was doing back then."

Dolder became the track photographer at East Bay Raceway in the early 1980s and eventually the Florida State Fairgrounds in 1984 until it closed for good in 1988. His East Bay tenure ended

after the 2003 season. During this period, Dolder was able to successfully make a living off his racing photography.

After the Florida Fairgrounds shut down racing activity after the 1988 season, Dolder used this opportunity to travel the country shooting sprint cars. "When the fairgrounds closed, I asked myself what I was going to do now. I took off and went racing, trying to sell pictures." He brought all his printing equipment and set up a mobile photo lab at hotels as he traveled the country, using the money made off his photo sells to get to the next race.

Along the way, his photos appeared in numerous open wheel print and digital media publications including *Open Wheel Magazine*, *National Speed Sport News*, *Circle Track Magazine*, *National Sprint Car Calendar*, and *Sprint Car & Midget Magazine* among others.

The Little 500 is the race Dolder claims as his favorite race of the year and has attended the vast majority of them since his first one in 1985. "If I could only attend one race a year, the Little 500 would be it." He was inducted into the Little 500 Hall of Fame in 2015.

Dolder credits long-time girlfriend Janice Reeves for supporting him and allowing him the chance to chase his dreams, shooting sprint cars all over the country. "There is no way I could have done this all these years without her. Racing photography is my fishing. I enjoy trying to get a good wheels-up shot or three-wide shot." ■

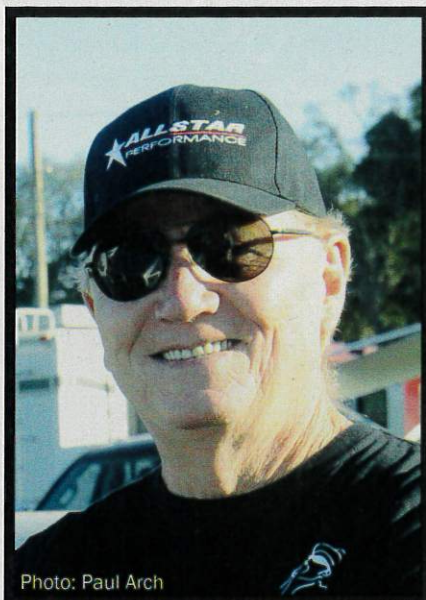


Photo: Paul Arch

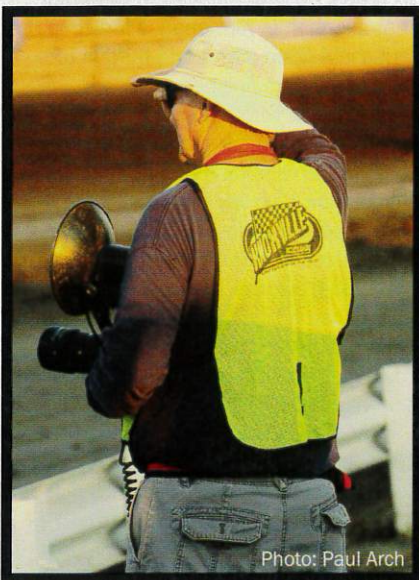


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