

## Member Profile: Al Smith

Al “Skinner” Smith, born and raised in Tifton, Georgia, has been racing since 1951 – and still is racing at age 73. Al pilots the #16 Modified Open '34 Chevy coach and won three features last season. He finished second in a tight seasons points race. The most memorable win was at Lanier National Speedway.



Al at speed at South Georgia Motorsports Park

Al's first ride was a '36 Ford coupe he owned along with William Pender. His first race was at Motor Bowl in Macon. It didn't take too long before Al was racing the oval at Palmer Speedway in Warner Robins and racing Crazy 8s at a track in Gray (Jones County Speedway and two tracks in Warner Robins (Dunbar Rd, Speedway and Oval 8)).

At right: Al in early '60s with Roy Moulder  
“Sinner’s” ride was a '34 Ford

“Skinner” was also a regular at Middle Georgia Raceway. There were other tracks in Georgia as well and then there was the Permatex 300 at Daytona in 1963, a NASCAR Late Model Sportsman (the precursor to the NASCAR Busch series) race. Driving a car owned by Speedy Morelock and Fred Clark, Al finished 6<sup>th</sup>.

Al's a great story teller and there are two favorites he likes to tell. Al says he never made much money racing and remembers the time he won the heat and came in third in the feature at Waycross, a track that sat beside a pecan orchard. His prize – a ham and a sack of pecans.



Al in Lanier's Winner Circle. “I'm only 72.”

Following a close race with some incredible driving by “Skinner” (I am not at liberty to tell the story behind Al's nickname), he was interviewed in the winners circle. The gal doing the interview said, “Al, I hear your 73 years old” to which Al replied, “No, I'm only 72.” Over seven hundred people in the stands stood applauding and cheering. It was



Al before the start of the Permatex race at Daytona

Al was winning at the Macon and Warner Robins tracks and ventured to Zebalon Speedway. "Skinner" won the heat and went on and won the feature. Next challenge was the figure 8. Al was leading the field when a yellow flag came out for a wreck behind him. "We stopped and a fella with a long sleeve white shirt and blue jeans and a big ole pot belly holding a gun three yards long came up to me ," recalls Al, "and said, 'If you keep runnin' I'm goin' ta blow a hole in your motor.'" Al says they loaded up and he hid on the floor board in the back seat of a friend's car as they hurriedly left the track. Later in his career Al had success driving a '55 Ford named "Sweet 16" for Buddy Green. Bob Moore inherited that ride.



Al with the '55 Ford 'Sweet 16' - "won every race I finished"

Bob Moore, former competitor to Al and NVRA Senior Advisor, says of Al Smith, "He's one of the finest men I've known...a quality human being." Al is married and has three grown kids, two boys and a girl, plus four grandkids. He worked for the railroad for "48 years and nine months." And Al's still chuggin' along.

**"Skinner's" first vintage ride with the NVRA  
Al is president of the NVRA Georgia Chapter**

