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*Karters gather at Dorothy farm south of Rock Island to race in 1950s.*

# Vintage racers get a boost at 25<sup>th</sup> annual Xtream Rock Island Grand Prix powered by Mediacom

## Yamaha Heavy purse gets increased

ROCK ISLAND, Ill. – In 1956 Art Ingeles is credited with building the first go kart in his garage in California and testing it in the parking lot of the Rose Bowl. Soon after, the seeds of kart racing were planted just south of Rock Island. Kart racing was introduced to the Quad-Cities area in 1958 on a dirt track on the Ward Dorothy farm in Mercer County.

That early karting history will pay big dividends for vintage kart racers at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Xtream Rock Island Grand Prix powered by Mediacom, the world's largest professional kart race, to be held August 31-September 1 through the downtown streets of Rock Island.

Before moving to Davenport, Iowa in 1964, Ward and Evelyn Dorothy lived on a farm with their three children, Mike, Debbie and Becky. In 1954, Ward and his friends built a kart track on the Dorothy property and built their own go karts to race on this track and, later, on a paved track at Bush Farms east of Andalusia, Ill. Mrs. Dorothy had previously raced at the local stock car track. Go karts attempted to race at that track as well. Mrs. Dorothy recalled, which gave her husband the idea of building a kart track on his farm.

For his seventh birthday, Ward and his friends built son Mike a go kart so he raced also. The Dorothy's daughters who were younger, worked the concession stand. They continue to be involved in kart racing through the Xtream Rock Island Grand Prix powered by Mediacom where Debbie Duffy is the treasurer and handles registration and

Becky Rasmussen is secretary and chief corner marshal. The family still shares fond memories of those early days of karting.



*Ward Dorothy in his 1950s era kart.*

Mrs. Dorothy remembers going into town each Sunday after church to buy ice for the concession stand, which the daughters helped staff. On any given Sunday 10 to 15 karts would show up to race.

The teams kept building bigger engines each year and eventually the asphalt track became more popular. As the paved Bush Farms track prospered, the dirt track became extinct around 1960 and was turned back into farm land.

“I remember one day dad let me drive a go-kart and he drove his kart next to me. Going down the straight-away, I looked over at him. Next thing I knew my kart flipped,” said daughter Becky. “Dad got out of his kart, looked at me and said ‘quit crying, get back in and drive. You’re fine.’ Maybe that solidified my love for working on track to this day. Deb (sister) is an off-track worker and it works well for both of us. Maybe history does have a way of forming who we are and what we do in our lives.”

Mike passed away in 2007 and Ward in November 2018. In their memory, the family has created a memorial to help celebrate the Grand Prix’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The memorial will contribute \$25 to reducing each vintage entry in this year’s event, making the entry fee for vintage classes just \$75. It is their hope that this will encourage more vintage drivers to enter and honor those original go kart builders and drivers. For the first time this year, Rock Island will offer a Vintage Yamaha class, along with Vintage Mac and Open classes. Class sponsors include Johannes Bus Service, Mediacom and CBS4. Hiland Toyota is the trophy sponsor for each class.

In addition, Quad City Gearheads auto club has contributed \$600 to the purse of the Yamaha Heavy Final 1 race – one of the few classes to be run at all 24 previous Rock Island street races. The contribution will add \$375 for first, \$125 for second and \$100 to third-place payouts – the base of which is determined by the number of entries in the class. They are also sponsoring the Rock trophy for that class.

Sponsors for this year’s event include: Mediacom, Jumer’s Casino & Hotel, Hoosier Tires, LeCont Tires, Gett Industries, Briggs & Stratton Racing, Modern Woodman Financial/ Joe Schurr agent, CBS

TV4 / Fox 18 and CW, Schurr Power Racing Engines, Sunbelt Rentals, AMT Ambulance, Johannes Bus Service, The Dispatch-Rock Island Argus-QC Online.com, Holiday Inn Rock Island, eKartingnews.com, Courtesy Car City, Gas & Electric Credit Union, Rogan Scale, QC Gearheads, Quad City Camaro Cub, Triple E Sales, Curry’s Transportation, Miller Trucking and Excavating, Brenny’s Motorcycle Center and the local radio stations Q106, Fox Sports QC, WOC and WLLR and Hiland Toyota.

More information can be found at [rockislangrandprix.com](http://rockislangrandprix.com) .