

**Our 2021 Honoree, Lyn St. James, Reflects on Her Time at The Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance**

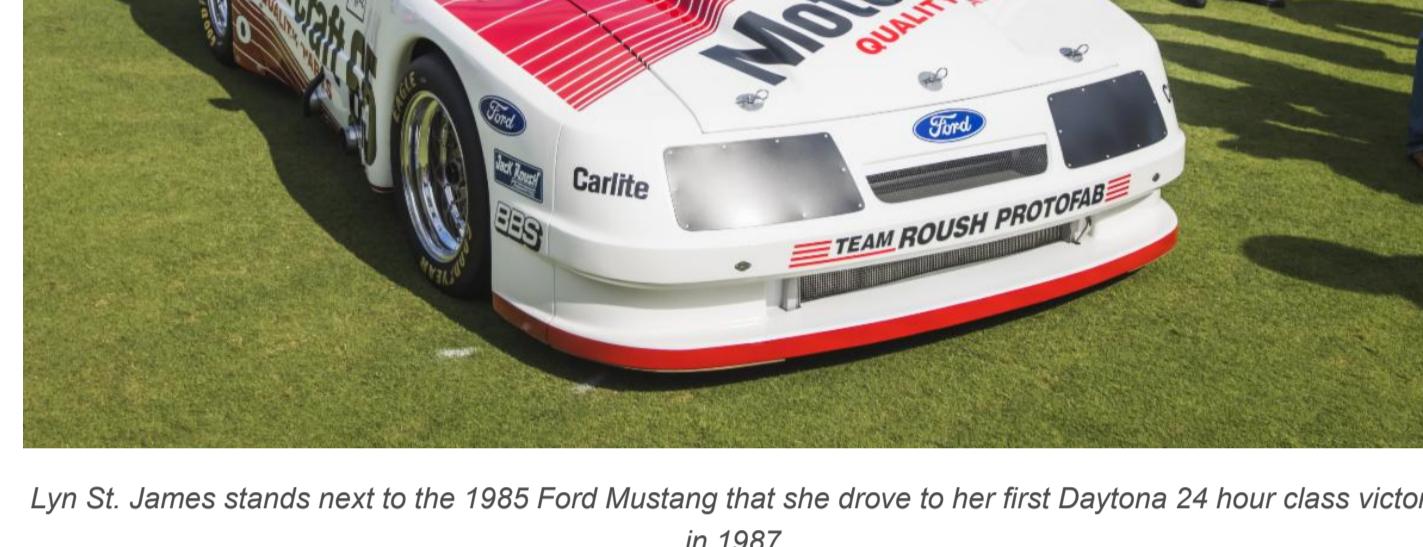
Lyn St. James stands with a group of the cars she raced in at the 2021 Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance.

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I've been fortunate to attend the Amelia Island Concours events over the years, mainly as an invited judge. I've known Bill Warner, founder of the event, for decades as a sponsor car racer from Jacksonville, FL. One of the things that makes Amelia unique is that Bill has incorporated auto racing into the fold. First, by selecting a legendary racing driver as the event honoree. Second, by including several classes for racing cars of all types and eras. It's like going to a racing reunion every year, which sets the Amelia Island Concours apart from other Concours.

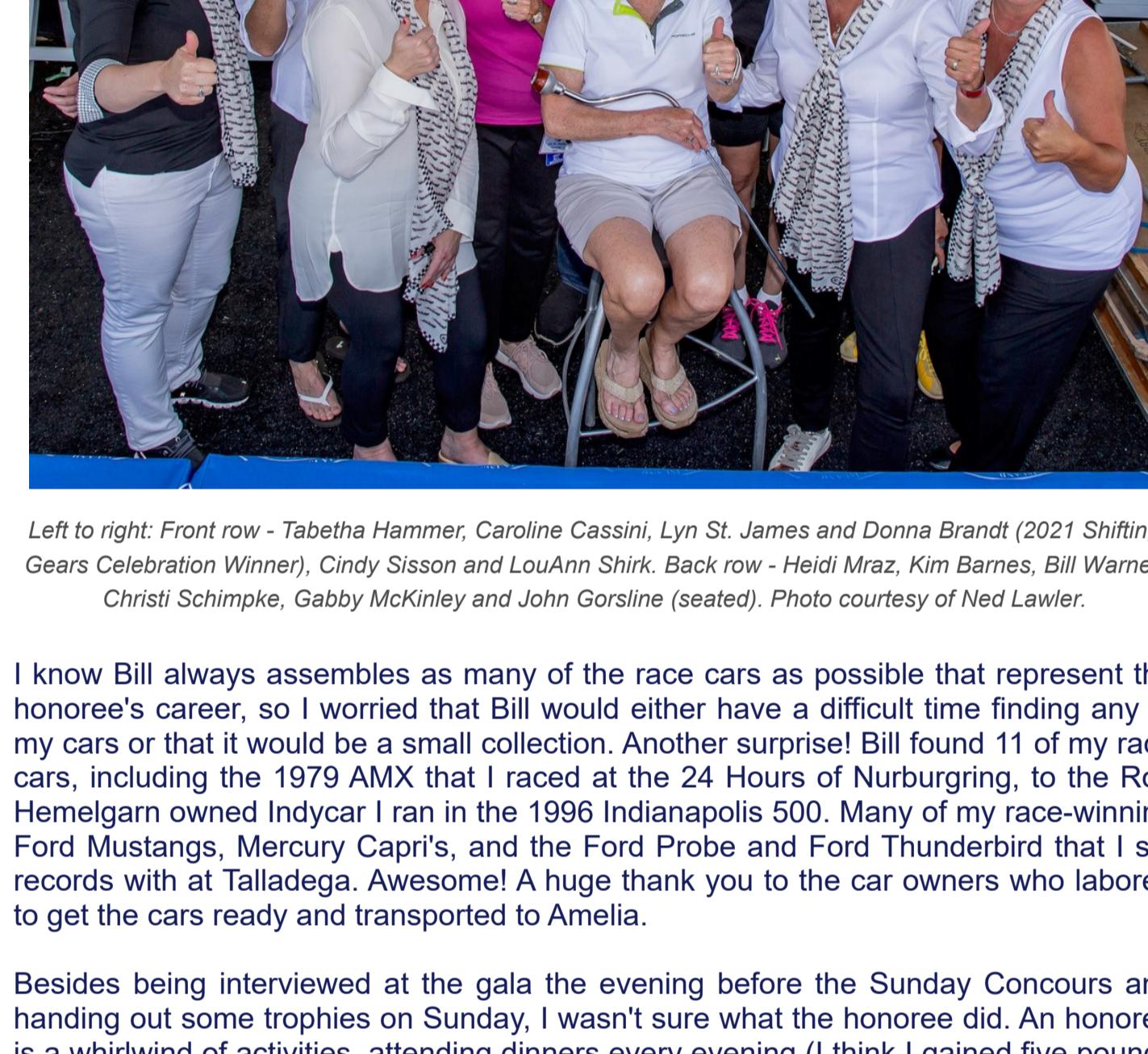
When Bill phoned me in July of 2020 to tell me I was selected to be the 2021 Honoree, I was floored and speechless! Former honorees, such as Stirling Moss, Phil Hill, Parnelli Jones, Dan Gurney, Brian Redman, Johnny Rutherford, Derek Bell and Jochen Mass, are legends and my heroes. I thought there is no way I am someone who should be an honoree. But Bill immediately started rattling off my accomplishments. Still in shock, I accepted.

We were deep into COVID at that time, having no idea how long it would last, and expectations were high that the event would occur in March of 2021. As we approached the end of 2020, we were still very much into the pandemic. I feared Amelia would be canceled; so when Bill phoned in early January 2021, my heart stopped. I was hoping for a postponement, we were sorry if we would have to cancel it. Instead, he explained that he was able to secure the Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island for May 18-23, 2021. Postponed sure sounded better than canceled. I can't imagine the work that Bill and his staff had to endure during those months with all the political, medical, and corporate changes regarding COVID protocols. State, federal, local and corporate initiatives were not only in place, but inconsistent and constantly changing.



Lyn St. James stands next to the 1985 Ford Mustang that she drove to her first Daytona 24 hour class victory in 1987.

During those months of planning, my dear friend, Cindy Sisson, offered to help me assemble necessary photos, documents, etc., and work with the Amelia staff. That turned out to be invaluable. If you know Cindy, she always goes above and beyond and is the most creative person on the planet. She not only helped me with guests, itinerary, and other details but decided to design some exquisite memorabilia to sell. She created a lovely lady's scarf designed with my logo and the autograph slogan "Go for it," one of my IndyCars, and the Amelia Island logo bordered with checkered flags from NK Collections. She worked with Christi Schimpke of CRASH Jewelry and designed a unique cuff bracelet with my speed record numbers on it. Plus, some hats and shirts for the Amelia staff. All of these items are in limited edition quantities, and a few are still available. If anyone is interested in buying them, you can contact Cindy at cindy@gsevents.live



Left to right: Front row - Tabetha Hammer, Caroline Cassini, Lyn St. James and Donna Brant (2021 Shifting Gears Celebration Winner), Cindy Sisson and LouAnn Shirv. Back row - Heidi Mroz, Kim Barnes, Bill Warner, Christi Schimpke, Gabby McKinley and John Gorsline (seated). Photo courtesy of Ned Lawler.

I know Bill always assembles as many of the race cars as possible that represent the honoree's career, so I worried that Bill would either have a difficult time finding any of my cars or that it would be a small collection. Another surprise! Bill found 11 of my race cars, including the 1979 AMX I raced at the 24 Hours of Nurburgring, to the Ron Hemelgarn owned Indycar I ran in the 1996 Indianapolis 500. Many of my race-winning Ford Mustangs, Mercury Capris, and the Ford Probe and Ford Thunderbird that I set records with at Talladega. Awesome! A huge thank you to the car owners who labored to get the cars ready and transported to Amelia.

Besides being interviewed at the gala the evening before the Sunday Concours and handing out some trophies on Sunday, I wasn't sure what the honoree did. An honoree is a whirlwind of activities, attending dinners every evening (I think I gained five pounds over the weekend), autographing the event poster (for over three hours – never signed that many at one time before), going to lunches and handing out some awards at the Concours on Sunday. I didn't grasp how many gifts the honoree receives, original artwork from Kelly Telfer and Lyn Hinr, and seeing my face on so many posters in so many places. But the most significant gift of all was the love and respect everyone continued to express to me everywhere I went. Another amazing gift was being able to spend time with Bill and Jane Warner. Bill is usually so busy you hardly ever get to see him, but as an honoree, I was able to see more of Bill and Jane. I really enjoyed that!



Erin Crocker Everham interviews Lyn St. James at the Saturday evening gala.

The piece de resistance was the gala on Saturday evening. I knew that former sprint car winner Erin Crocker Everham would interview me. Erin and I go way back, so I knew that was going to be fun. I told her in advance some of the things I wanted to share. Most importantly, my career would never have happened without the people who helped me along the way – I mean, really helped me, with many of them in the room. Giving a big shout out to John Gorsline (for all the introductions over the years, such as helping with my 1989 LeMans effort with Gordon Spice) and Dick Simon (my Indycar team owner for five of my seven Indycar races and who gave me the opportunity that I know no other team owner would have done).

I wanted to share my appreciation for Ford, who I raced for and worked with between 1981-1994, especially people who were often the voice in the room when I wasn't there (such as Walter Hayes and David Scott) and who I knew overruled those at Ford Racing who did not want me on the team. Also, recognizing the gals who helped me create my driver development program in 1994, and who were there from the beginning and who have been with me ever since (Michelle Marquis, Renee Dupuis, and Sara Senske Abel).



The Chief Executive Officer of Ford Motor Company, Jim Farley, presents Lyn with the Spirit of Ford Award at the 2021 Gala.

Just when I thought the evening was done, I was asked to wait on the stage. Ford CEO Jim Farley came to the podium and after saying a few lovely comments about me, he presented me with the Spirit of Ford Award, a special award given to a select number of people who have made outstanding contributions to the sport. I was completely shell-shocked. I knew Jim was there – he's a racer and told me earlier that this was his first Amelia Island Concours (hopefully not his last) but I had no idea this was coming. Bill then presented me with a framed official FIA document from my records at Talladega and a lovely race car mounted on a plaque.

I've lived my life chasing my dreams, following my instincts, and reaching out to find a way to make my dreams become reality, then reality. Along the way, I realized how fortunate I was, and if I could leverage my knowledge and relationships to help others, that became my mission. I believe our time here is to be beacons for others. I am blessed to have people like Billie Jean King help shape and influence my thoughts and actions.

As I reflect on the extraordinary experience at this year's Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, it seems so much of the focus was on my past accomplishments, which I genuinely appreciate. But I want to be relevant and focus on how to help make the future better. That's something for me to work on!



Lyn St. James stands with a half dozen of the cars she competitively drove in at the 2021 Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance.

About The Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

THE AMELIA will be held March 3-6, 2022 at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island and The Golf Club of Amelia Island. For the Amelia's full events schedule, including Saturday's Cars & Coffee at the Concours and Sunday's premier Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, visit www.amelialconcours.org. The show's Foundation has donated over \$3.75 million to Community Hospice & Palliative Care, Spina Bifida of Jacksonville and other charities on Florida's First Coast since its inception in 1996.

The Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance| 904-636-0027 | [E-mail](#) | [Website](#)



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