

The Earl Gaerte-Blacktop Cruisers Scholarship Fund

In 1969 Earl Gaerte opened Gaerte Engines in his two car garage, and his reputation and business began to grow exponentially. He was soon known as one of the most successful engine builders worldwide.

Over the years, Earl built engines for almost every type of motor sport. He was most well known for building sprint car engines; however, he also built engines that powered speedboats, pulled tractors, accomplished record speeds, and powered dragsters that set numerous world records and won championships. The list of drivers who have driven Gaerte powered cars include some of the biggest names in racing, such as NASCAR drivers Jeff Gordon, Ryan Newman, and Tony Stewart, along with World of Outlaw racers Steve Kinser, Sammy Swindell, Donny Schatz, and countless others. In recognition of his impact on the sport, Earl was inducted into the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame in 2007.

One of Earl's favorite hobbies was building custom cars. When he wasn't at the engine shop, he could often be found working on one of his many projects. Ranging from sprint and drag cars to custom street cars and hot rods, he was always looking to put a new twist on his projects. One of his most recent creations was a 1964 Plymouth Fury retrofit with a Dodge V10 engine.

Earl deeply enjoyed sharing his love of cars with fellow enthusiasts. It was a common site to see him enjoying a weekend car show with friends. The Blacktop Cruisers Car Club was formed in 1998, following the success of the Red Hot Car Show and Round Barn Cruise-In. As a founding member of the club, Earl regularly hosted club meetings at his shop and "Gasoline Alley" garage.

Before his passing, he encouraged fellow club members to create a scholarship that would reward those interested in the automotive field. Chris Peterson, President of the Blacktop Cruisers "Earl understood what it was like to start with nothing. It was important to him to make sure that anyone who had an interest in the automotive field, regardless of their economic background, had the opportunity to pursue their dream." said Chris Peterson, President of the Blacktop Cruisers Peterson. "Many times Earl would provide parts and support to encourage young people in their automotive endeavors."

The Earl Gaerte-Blacktop Cruisers Scholarship Fund was established through the Community Foundation to benefit those who are passionate about automotives and want to get started in this field. The fund provides assistance to students who are pursuing an education within the automotive field with a preference given to students specializing in engine building.

Peterson said, "With the creation of this scholarship, we are bringing Earl's vision to fruition, while keeping his memory and passion for cars alive. We are looking to build this scholarship to one that matches Earl's reputation and contribution to the community."



*Earl Gaerte one of racing's
greatest engine builders (photo
courtesy of The Rochester Sentinel/
Mike Kenny)*