

This is an interview with Mr. Ned Jarrett on September 14, 1998 in his office in Hickory, North Carolina and this is Dan Pierce doing the interview.

DP: What I would like to do Mr. Jarrett is kind of go back and kind of start at the beginning and just kind of walk through your career and I will stop you on the way to get the highlights along the way.

DP: First, could you tell me a little bit about your ...I've seen different accounts....some say you grew up in Conover and some say Newton. Uh, just tell me a little bit about your early days growing up in this area.

NJ: I grew up of course in Catawba County, North Carolina and it was a Newton address. We were about ten miles out of Newton but I grew up on a farm. My dad had a sawmill so I worked on the farm and at the sawmill and when the Hickory Speedway was being built in the early fifties, it created a lot of interest around in this area because we did not have a major entertainment facility in the area and you'd go down to the county store those farmers and sawmillers were talking about it. "Man, I could drive one of those things. Just wait until they get that track built, I'll go up there and just show those guys how to do it". So, my dad had taken me to some races in Charlotte and North Wilkesboro and made a race fan out of me and of course, I was nineteen at the time when they started building the track and was twenty by the time they got it built and so I was able to work out a situation where I got half interest in a car and was the driver so the first race ever run at Hickory Speedway was the first race that I ever drove in and so that has really been important over the years because my sons and my grandson all started their driving careers at the Hickory Speedway and that's something they are pretty proud of. But, when we started you didn't really look at it as being a profession, it was just something to, a

challenge, something to do on the weekend. Having grown up on the farm and worked at the sawmill, you didn't get to participate too much in other sports. I played a little baseball and basketball in high school but I was not good enough at either of those two to excel in it. I thought I had some athletic ability but being around the farm and sawmill, I had opportunities to drive trucks. In fact, the first vehicle that I ever drove was a truck. So, I learned to drive at a very early age, in fact, when I was like nine years old, my dad let me drive to Sunday school and I don't know that that was uncommon back then. But naturally had a love for automobiles and thought I had some athletic ability and so, put that together maybe racing would be something that I could use those abilities and after I drove the first race I did so without talking it over with my dad. Our lumber business by that time, had grown to where it was a little more than a sawmill. We had a planing mill and we were buying lumber from other saw-millers and finishing the lumber and hauling it up to Ohio and West Virginia. We got a pretty good business going and I was a pretty good part of it and so he set me down after that first race and uh, said "I know that you have interest in it and that's okay, I'd just rather that you didn't drive". He said, "You know, the people who participate in racing are either considered to be bootleggers or just a bunch of fools that don't have any better sense than to get out there and risk their necks." My dad worked very hard to try to build a good image for the family in the community and one thing that he worked very hard on was to try to build as much respect as he could for his fellow man and he tried to instill that into his children as well. He couldn't see where my participating in the rough and rugged sport of auto racing could do much to add to the image that he tried to build and so I saw where he was coming from and he pointed out that I had a bright future in the family business there that maybe I should just maybe work on the car and he knew how interested I was and let somebody else drive it. So we did that. My partner had been a former motorcycle racer and so he started driving the car but one night he got sick a few months later and didn't feel like driving so we didn't look too hard for another driver and said, "Okay, we got one right here."

And so I got in the car. It was pretty dark out in the infield and those short tracks on a Saturday night.

DP: Your dad was at the race?

NJ: But no my dad was not at the race because we didn't want the word to get out that we had changed drivers. So, anyway, I put his shirt on and once his shirt on and once we got the helmet on, we both had big noses so we figured nobody would know the difference and sure enough they didn't and so I finished second in the race that night. He hadn't done that well so we figured that I must be the best race driver so we continued to do that for a while 'til we lucked up and won a race and then word began to get out in the community and my dad came to me one day and said, "You are so determined to drive one of those things that you might as well use your own name and get credit for any accomplishments that you may have along the way." But even at that time we did not look at it as a profession. It was just a challenge, something to do on the weekends. As time went by, we started racing as a few more years we started racing other tracks and branching out to other states and finally got to run for the National Championship in 1956 and Ralph Earnhardt, Dale Earnhardt's dad won the championship that year and I came in second and so next year we put a concentrated effort into it in 1957 and we did win the National Championship in what is now the Busch Series, it was called Sportsman back then. Then we repeated as Champion in 1958. So we decided well, we've accomplished what this part of the sport has to offer. We'll look at the big part of it was called Grand National back then and what is now NASCAR Winston Cup. We moved into that series in the later part of 1959 and did it full time in 1960 through 1965, managed to win the championship in 1961 and again in 1965. Won a total of fifty races during that period of time and in '66 was on the Ford Factory Team and they decided they were having some problems with NASCAR in getting some parts approved

that they wanted to get approved and so they decided to take their toys and go home so that left me without a ride and I got to looking at the security or lack of security really that this sport offered and I wanted to spend more time with the family, the kids were growing up and so I made my decision to retire then at the end of the 1966 season. So actually, I only raced about six and a half years in what is now the NASCAR Winston Cup Series.

DP: Let's go back to 1959. I've heard a little bit about the story about your first good car, I guess you could say, about that writing a check or something. Could you tell us about that?

NJ: Well after winning the championship in the Sportsman Division in '58, I just quit that division and started trying to pursue a career in the Grand National Division and I thought that my credentials would open a lot of doors but it didn't really work that way and so I started knocking on a lot of doors trying to find a ride and I found one that ... A guy in Kannapolis, North Carolina had a 1957 Chevrolet, R.C. McDaniels and it was a good car, it would run fast but it had a durability problem and we would run up near the front, that thing would break and it was pretty disgusting period. I did not think I was doing myself or my career any good and so I had gone to Greenville, South Carolina on a Friday night in August, or actually it was the end of July, and I think it was like July 31 but anyway, raced on a Friday night in Greenville and sure enough we ran up near the front and the thing broke and a friend of mine named John Tate, one of my brothers, Jim Jarrett went with me that night as we were coming back from Greenville. It was about a two hour drive and I told them, well I got to make some changes in my career, just I am worried about my reputation and they said what are you going to do? Well, there was a '57 Ford that was being maintained in my hometown, Newton, North Carolina that I knew very well that car, Junior Johnson was driving/junior Johnson was winning a lot of races. Bud Almon, his crew chief. Bud had worked for me in prior years in the Sportsman Division and they were

wanting to sell this '57 Ford because they were building Junior a new Dodge to run in the Southern 500 in Darlington on Labor Day, which was about a month later. So, I went down, I told my brother and my friend, I am going to go down and buy that car and I'll take it to Myrtle Beach, there is a race there on Saturday night and it paid \$950 to win. Then there was a race on Saturday afternoon at Charlotte at a half a mile fairgrounds racetrack and that race also paid \$950. I said, "That's 1,900. They want \$2,000 for this car and I can win that \$1,900. I can scrape up, they knew I didn't have any money; I can scrape up that other hundred before the bank opens on Monday morning. They just laughed at me. They thought I was crazy. Anyway, I couldn't sleep when I got home and I went down there early the next morning and bargained for the car and got them to agree to give me an extra set of wheels and tires and a little bit of pit equipment and got 'em to let the crew chief go with me on those two races and use their truck and their trailer to haul it on. I didn't have anything but the desire and so we got all of that figured out and I said, well I will let you know. The bank stayed open back then until noon on Saturdays and said, I'll let you know, but I was just waiting for the bank to close. I had already made my mind up but I knew their bank account was in the same bank I had mine in and so right after the bank closed at twelve o'clock I rushed down there with that check... I said, "I've decided to buy that thing. Let's go to Myrtle Beach" and so we took off went to Myrtle Beach. We got there too late to practice but, we did qualify 8th. After I got used to the car and the track dried out a little bit, those dirt tracks were always slick, I got there racing near the front. There were holes that came in the track as big as the desk you're sitting here beside of and that was common back then too. I was bouncing all over the place and anyway, one of the ways that we, that they I should say, back then would take the steering wheel, if you look at race car steering wheels today, they are bigger, the grip is bigger on them than passenger cars and back then, the passenger car grip on the steering wheel was very, very small. Well, they would build that grip up by putting foam rubber around the steering wheel and wrapping it with electricians tape and so that would give

you a better grip and a softer grip and also it didn't crimp your fingers as much, sitting there for a couple of hours and so it served a couple of purposes. The only problem was they had just done this to that steering wheel on that '57 Ford and whoever wrapped electrician's tape around had wrapped it backwards and so as I was turning the wheel to the left, the edges of that tape was sawing on my hands and I knew after that race started but there wasn't anything I could do about it then. I didn't detect it in the qualifying and it was too late then and as I started bouncing through those holes and everything, well then it started just tearing the meat from my hands. But, anyway, we got all we were real competitive and the last probably fifty laps, Bob Welborn, who was one of the best short track drivers ever, in NASCAR, in my opinion, he was driving a '57 Chevrolet and we were swapping the lead, sometimes one or two times a lap, we were just having a tremendous battle. Anyway, fortunately for me, as we came off of the fourth turn to get a white flag, I was in the lead. I knew he was going to pass me on that last lap and I was hoping I was going to be able to pass him back. But, anyway, I looked up in the rear view mirror and he was headed for the pits. He had broken a wheel down and so I was home free and went on and won the race and they had to put a tourniquet on my right arm to stop the blood flow so they could do the post race ceremonies and then we left the track and came to Conway, South Carolina, there was a hospital and went in and got it dressed properly and bandaged up and went on to Charlotte and worked the rest of the night on the race car. I was a total wreck and in no condition to drive that race car but, we had a job to do so anyway we started to race on Sunday afternoon. I was comfortably running along in fourth place, right there with the leaders. Fortunately, Junior Johnson was driving the Wood Brothers car that day and he blew an engine and fell out of the race. And so, I came in and got him in the car and went on and won the race. Well, I got the credit for it because I had started the car. Of course word got around in the pits that I had given them a bad check and anyway, we won both races and was able to cover that check on Monday morning.

DP: What would have happened if you hadn't won those races?

NJ: We would have come up with the money to cover the check. I would have had to borrow the money or something to cover it. Junior wouldn't take anything for driving because he knew the story. But, we went on to win. We ran that car in five races. We won three and finished second in one and third in one. So, I had a little money in my pocket and I got him to take \$100 for helping me out by driving. So, that really launched my career into what is now Winston Cup Racing.

DP: In 1960 you were driving. You started in '45 and won five races, won about \$25,000. It was Courtesy Ford. Was there factory sponsorship there?

NP: No, actually I had been promised some help from a Ford dealer up there in Spruce Pine and that didn't work out but I was already too deep into it and so we did run Aldridge Motor Company on the side of the car on our short track, because he would allow us to buy parts at cost. Then I worked out a deal... I only had one race car going into the season and I worked out a deal. Courtesy Ford had a car, in fact they had a couple of cars, one being driven by Joe Weatherly and one by Curtis Turner so they decided they were not going to race those cars, both of them at least and so we talked and worked out a deal where I took one of their cars just to run on the super speedways and I would give them 25% of what we took in and we'd maintain the car and all of that and so that's where the Courtesy Ford came from so we ran that on the superspeedways. But, we really only two cars during the year. One on short tracks, whether it was dirt or asphalt or whatever. Had two people work on the cars. That was it.

DP: Was that in your back yard?

NJ: No, we had a... We rented a place that you paid; I think it was \$30 a month for in Newton. It was just an old tin building that you could throw a dog through the cracks in the building. We think the building might have had a cement floor but, nobody ever swept it so the dirt got built up so it had a dirt floor. So that's what we raced out of.

DP: In 1961 was a big year for you, Let me ask you before we get to the end results of that year. In August of 1961, I guess one of the first major controversy's in the history of NASCAR when Curtis Turner and Fireball Roberts, I guess, went to the Teamsters Union and formed the Federation of Professional Athletes.

NJ: They had aligned themselves with the Teamsters Union and were trying to sign race drivers up as union members because they felt that drivers needed a little more say in what was going on and that the purses needed to be bigger and whatever other things that a union might be able to help the drivers to get and they got a lot of drivers that were really interested and I was one of them that was interested in it and we had a meeting and a ... we had several meetings along the way.

DP: Bill France new these meetings were going on?

NJ: France, I don't know that he knew they were going to happen at that time but, certainly he learned about them and then he came to Winston Salem, we were racing at Bowman Grey Stadium and got all of us together in the field house and he laid the word on us that there would not be a union. Nobody that belonged to a union could drive in NASCAR. He said we'll plow up

every race track we got and plant it in corn and he said this is not going to happen. If you are going to race in NASCAR... I doubt if you could do that today the way things are. But he put the "Fear of God" in most of us and we decided we had better stick to NASCAR.

DP: Somewhere along the way wasn't there talk of a pistol...?

NJ: I remember hearing about that, I personally did not see a pistol. I don't remember if it was used in his speech to us but, I do remember hearing about that.

DP: But, no uncertain terms....

NJ: No uncertain terms that NASCAR would not cater to union members as race drivers.

DP: On the heels of that, you were appointed to a committee for NASCAR by Bill France?

NJ: Yes. They...He a...

DP: I haven't seen things about what happened with that.

NJ: He appointed a committee that would really be a liaison between the competitors and car owners, whatever it might be. Drivers, car owners and if my memory serves me correct, I think there was members on the committee, there were like seven or eight committee members and you know the tire company or some of the manufacturers might have been represented on there as well. In fact, I am sure they were. I think that I was the only driver that was representative.

DP: I've seen Lee Petty's name mentioned.

NJ: Okay, I would have been on it too, it could have been. But, anyway, we would have meetings and address problems that had been pointed out in the talks from the union and things that needed to be changed or be better and so we had meetings for I guess, off and on, for a couple of years and then it just sort of died out.

DP: Did anything change in terms of prize money or pensions; was there anything like that ...insurance or all that was left to the driver?

NJ: I would...Yeah, all of that was left to the driver. It was determined and one of the things that France pointed out in his meeting was "You are all independent contractors". You are not employees of NASCAR, not employees of any part of racing other than if you were hired by a car owner then you were his employee and so it was not a situation and never has been really. The concept of the sport has not been so that it could lend itself to pensions and that kind of thing. Because when you have literally thousands of race drivers, uh, now certainly there are only a small percentage of that that ever gets to NASCAR Winston Cup Racing but, still they've still been race drivers and they have been members of NASCAR, many of them have been, over the years. Well, where do you draw that line as to who gets a part of a pension and I think that would be a very difficult thing to work out. I mean, there is still talk today of the possibility of doing something like that but, I think it would be very difficult thing to do, maybe it could, but, anyway we didn't...once we looked into that through that committee, we did not dwell too much on that after that because knew it would be a difficult thing to do but, we discussed things about prize money and it did start increasing after that. We addressed even the conditions of some of the race tracks. Uh, the promoters made very little effort towards the care of the tracks, the way

they should have been so we addressed some of those kind of things. And, insurance was certainly a big thing and the insurance program was definitely increased and NASCAR has done so a number of times since then. So hopefully, the committee and the meetings that we had set the standard for things that were to come in the sport as time went by.

DP: So it really was the first time that there was drivers' input at all.

NJ: Yeah, really. Certainly, each of us, individually, would go to NASCAR but, most of the time when we would go to them about some concern or beef that we had, it was at a time when it was not the right time to really talk about it because we were not in the right frame of mind to talk about it. It would be when we were frustrated or mad about something and that is not the proper time to talk about things and try to iron out the problems. So sitting down in an atmosphere either away from the race track or certainly away from the competition that was a better time to talk about it.

DP: Let's talk about your championship in 1961. \$41,000 in prize money. How much of that came to Ned Jarrett?

NJ: Not much!

DP: Were you factory sponsored that year? In 1961?

NJ: Sort of. After we went through the year of 1960 on my own, I borrowed money to make it through that year, thinking I had some support going in but, it did not work out but I was committed so I went on and anyway, I think I took in like \$29,000 or something in 1960, won

those five races and we spent about \$31,000 and of course I had to live so, I borrowed \$10,000 from a friend of mine, J. W. Abernathy who had never been to a race in his life and never went to a race until the time of his death. But, I had met him in a hospital when I had an accident, shot one of my fingers off and he was across the hall from me and we just seemed to hit it off and he told me, if I can ever help you in any way (he was the richest man in this community) and if I can help you in any way, let me know. So, we became good friends and anyway, he loaned me the money to go through that year. Well, then towards the end of that year, Chevrolet...see, the factories were not participating in 1960 and they had made a truce in 1957 that they would not support race teams. Well, Chevrolet started doing some things under the table in 1960 and Rex White was their number one guy and Rex won the championship that year in 1960. Rex came to me, I don't know, August or September of 1960 and said Chevrolet is interested in adding on another team and they want a young guy that has potential. Well, I had run that first year and won five races and so they thought I had potential and so, said they would like to talk to me. Anyway, we worked out a deal that, if they had a front men, Len and B.G. Holloway were just race fans basically, good friends with Bill France and B.G. Holloway was an heir of the Grace Steamship line and so, Chevrolet would go through them. They would be the owners of the car and everything would be funneled through Jim Chevrolet in Melbourne, Florida. In fact that is where I had to go to pick up the car. In fact, they made race cars out of cars right off the showroom floor and so I went down there and picked up the car and so we did get help that year from Chevrolet and it was not a lot of help but, it was better than....my deal with the Holloway was that I would drive the car, I would get a \$100 a week salary for managing the team and driving the car, against 40% of what we won. So, I think I did get a little bit extra money. Not much at the end of the year because we didn't win that much but anyway, that was my deal. I didn't get to pay any of that \$10,000 back that year and then in '62, the Holloways decided that they were going to get out of it and so I dealt directly with Chevrolet myself and...

DP: Still under the table?

NJ: Yeah, under the table, definitely under the table. They gave me \$15,000 in cash during the year and all the parts that they would manufacture the parts and cars and so, I made it through the year. Didn't make any money but, we made it. Won six races. Then, in September of 1962, first we won the championship in '61. We just lucked out; we were just more consistent than anybody else.

DP: A Terry Labonte won the championship?

NJ: Yeah, exactly. Then in September of '62, Ford came to Darlington for the Labor Day Weekend race and started talking to people and announced publicly that they were going to start they know what Chevrolet was doing under the table and that we are going to support four teams in 1963. They came to me and I was fortunate to be one of those four teams that they would support, along with the Wood Brothers, Holman-Moody and Junior Johnson, I guess.

DP: Okay, the Ford sponsorship.

NJ: So, that was a major step in my career to be able to become associated with Ford because they had a better deal, honestly. Uh, they would give us \$2,000 per race of every race that was 250 miles or longer and there were 17 of those on the schedule, so that meant we got \$34,000, which was more than double what I had been getting from Chevrolet and they also had more to offer from the technical side, support and as far as the parts that they could furnish us with, because Holman-Moody was a marketing arm of theirs or performance arm and they...what Ford

didn't make, Holman-Moody did and so we did not have to buy many parts for the cars.

DP: Were you building cars or Holman-Moody building cars?

NJ: Holman-Moody built the cars primarily built the chases and put the roll bars in them and we would take them and tailor them to our own desires and so after that I still wasn't sure if I could make it and honestly, I didn't have the money to build the cars. We were going to hire another person or two and I didn't have the money to do that during the winter. So, I met a guy named Bob Robinson from Fairfax, Virginia who was in the cement construction business there and he was a big fan and said if we can ever do anything together and so give me a call. Well, there was an opportunity and so I made him a deal that if he would put up the money to get us through the winter with the team, that you know, I would drive the car and I would draw \$200 a week salary, because living expenses had gone up by that time and then at the end of the year, whatever he had invested, we would give him back and then we would split whatever was above that if we had anything to split and there was that possibility that he could lose whatever he put up. But, fortunately he didn't have to put up but about \$10,000. We were able to get through the year, that's all he had to put up. So, we went on and we won eight races that year and I...and so we had a pretty good year and were able to give him his \$10,000 back and a little bit to split at the end of the year. I still haven't paid Mr. Abernathy yet. Then towards the end of 1963, John Holman called me and said how would you like to move to Camden, South Carolina? I don't know, what's the deal? Well, I had heard a little bit about it but, see...in 1963, Bondy Long had become interested in racing. He had been doing a lot of drag racing and Leland Colman who was a brother of Bob Colman, who was president of Darlington Raceway, lived in Camden, Leland did, and so he kept talking to Bondy and said you need to get involved in NASCAR, not in drag racing. So, finally he convinced him and they bought a Plymouth from Richard Petty. Petty

Enterprises had been winning with those cars but, that was a '62 Plymouth but they were going to be totally outdated in 1963. Because when Ford came in with their fastback cars and Chevrolet came along with a semi-heavy engine and a different body design and all that, I mean things really changed right then as far as competition goes. That '62 Plymouth was not going to be competitive and sure enough it wasn't. He went to Daytona with it and didn't make the field and they came to me. Bobby Isaac was their driver and Bobby and I were good friends because he grew up in this area and he came to me and said, "What do they need to do?" I said, "Bobby, I would advise them to go to Holman-Moody. Holman-Moody offers a turnkey job. You can buy a racecar ready to race for \$4995. A '63 Ford" and I said, "I would advise them to go over there and that way they will have a good race car, a current and up-to-date car". So they did that. They got that car in April or sometime and so they were going to take it to Richmond, Virginia. Bobby was (this is sort of a side story that might be of interest). Bobby was going to ride up there with me and there was just one of those deals you go up there and practice to qualify and race that afternoon and go on back home. So, Bobby and I left early that morning and drove to Richmond and got up there and his race car did not show up. Never did show up. He kept calling down there and they said, oh yeah, they left here about three o'clock this morning. They should have been there but, they never did get there because ...it had rained very hard and they spun the thing out down through a field and a driver named John Henry Reynolds was driving it and it hydroplaned with it and they lost it. They were not used to towing a car and that was what they were doing, just towing it. So, they had to get a wrecker to come out. Cost them \$20 to get it pulled out and they were about 15-20 miles out of town, out of Pillion, South Carolina and so when they got it pulled out, it was headed back south and so they...Bondy Long said let me drive, you can't drive this thing so, he got back in the same place and did the same thing. There was water standing in the road. Anyway, they had to call the wrecker back out. They still was headed south so they just went on south. But, anyway, they went on through that year, things

were not just...they just didn't happen. Management that they needed there but, they had a lawyer and banker from Delaware that was looking after things for Mr. Dupont. Mr. Dupont was Bondy's stepfather. That is how he became involved with things to start with but, his mother married a Dupont. So, they just were not getting anywhere, they were spending a lot of money. Anyway, they went to Ford and tried to get help and Ford could see what was going on and they were not just going to help an organization that was not doing the right things. They went to Chrysler, they went to Chevrolet and they circled back to Ford. And said is there a possibility that you could put one of your drivers in the car and let them manage it and so that's how it came about that I would go down there, so John Holman, who represented Ford called me and he and I flew down there in a little single engine airplane and talked to them and worked a deal out that day. So, I went to Camden and had a great deal, best deal in racing back then because they paid me a salary. They paid me plus the 40% driving fee. 40% was the standard driving fee back then and they paid me a salary to manage the team. \$15,000 plus a \$5,000 signing bonus, so that's what allowed me to make a down payment on the house and so, that was big for me then to get that kind of a deal. We won fifteen races that year but, we didn't win the championship but, anyway, that was when I finally got to pay Mr. Abernathy back his \$10,000.

DP: Finally.

NJ: Plus interest, that's how long it took me but I stayed in contact with him. At least once a month I would always contact him with what was happening and said, "we are going to get there, we are going to get there". And he said, "I know you are, just keep trying." We finally managed to pay him back then we managed to win the championship in 1965 with the Bondy Long organization. Still had the same deal with Ford, exactly the same deal. I took that deal with them. Of course, that was one of the reasons they paid me because they didn't have a deal and it

was good financially for them and it worked out good for everybody.

DP: If we could back up a little bit, go back to a story I heard about 1961, I guess it was after you won the championship. You decided to take a Dale Carnegie course, a public speaking course. What was your thinking there and...?

NJ: Well, I had won the National Sportsman Championships in 57-58 but there was not too much publicity involved with that and you just - were not required to make talks or stand up to meet people or anything like that but, then after I won the Grand National Championship, that was a little different deal and I just, I honestly shouldn't have won the championship that year, I didn't have that good of a year but, everybody else had a worse year so we did manage to win it and I was not prepared for it. I didn't know how to represent myself or my sport the way that I wanted to and I felt that I needed to improve myself. Then, I guess the crowning blow was I was a charter member of the Newton Elks Lodge and had gone through the chairs, the office chairs on the way up and had gotten to the Esteemed Leading Knight, which is the next office to the Exalted Ruler and would have been. Eligible, would have been elected as Exalted Ruler but I chose not to because I was full time racing and didn't think I could do the office justice. Anyway, they chose me to be a Grand Lodge officer for induction ceremonies and it is a beautiful ceremony. The induction was to be on a Sunday afternoon in Newton, all the dignitaries of the community would be invited out there; the mayors of the local towns and the county commissioners and the leaders of various sorts would be invited to it. Well here is an opportunity for me to really show this community that race drivers can be upstanding citizens and can fall right in line with other people, we had lawyers and doctors, the mayor of the city was one of the officers of the club so, I wanted to prove to them that you could be an upstanding type citizen. Well, I practiced that speech; I could say it forward and backwards. I practiced it in

front of the mirrors in front of my family and just did everything. They said, we are going to put a prompter beside of you in case you get lost or something along the way, I said, "You don't need to do that man, I got this thing down pat." Well, they came around to my station and I stood up and couldn't say the first word. Could not think of the first word that I was supposed say, I was so scared and thank God, the prompter was there. He got me started and I stumbled through, embarrassed, just totally embarrassed and I said this won't ever happen to me again. I had seen an ad that morning in the Charlotte paper that they were having a demonstration on Monday night for a Dale Carnegie course, of course it had all these things about self confidence and learning to speak on all other things so, man I went down there. They started putting the sale on me when I walked in the door. I said, you don't need to do that, just show me where to sign. So, I signed up for the Dale Carnegie course and took it. It is the best thing I ever did in my life. Not only improving myself and my career, it helped me a lot of ways in dealing with my family, with obligations that I would have as the champion and as a person who was in the forefront to a great degree in the sport back then. It was a real Godsend for me and I will add one little side note here, which has nothing to do with what you are here about but, this coming December, I have been a great supporter of Dale Carnegie all over the years and probably have been their best spokesperson and they don't pay me anything and I have never solicited anything from them but, they are going to give me an award at their international meeting in Dallas in December of this year and I'll be the keynote speaker at their banquet at the international organization.

DP: Do you think that helped you in terms of your career?

NJ: Oh, I don't think I would ever have gotten involved in broadcasting if I hadn't.

DP: I mean, back to racing.

NJ: Yeah, picking up with Ford. It helped me to deal better with the people that I had to deal with like Ford, NASCAR, the media and I think that also, they didn't know anything about driving a race car and it also put me in a better frame of mind, made me more confident and I think that helped me as a race driver on the race track too. Certainly, I would never have been doing what I am doing now, in the broadcasting field, had I not taken that Dale Carnegie course.

DP: Do you see yourself as a pioneer in that respect because it is almost an expectation now, I guess, for drivers to not only be able to drive a car but also to be able to represent the sponsors.

NJ: I guess you could say that it was a pioneering effort because as far as we know, I was the first one that did anything to try to improve themselves in public speaking/public relations standpoint. I don't really care to take credit for that but, I guess when you look at it, that's the way it was.

DP: Let's take the other side of that coin. You were quoted at one point after a race I think at Randleman when you and David Pearson had gotten into bumping incident and there were accusations that you ran him into the wall and you were quoted as saying "I think this nice guy label has been carried too far. It seems some of the drivers are getting the idea they can drive over me. That is not the case. I can be just as mean as anybody and I will if I have to."

NJ: Well, that was an incident that, when you look back on it, sometimes you wished you hadn't done it although, the fact that I had that label as being a nice guy - they called me Gentleman Ned - sometimes it maybe did give drivers liberties that they shouldn't have had because they thought, I'll bump old Ned and everything will be okay but, that night, and it was

the first race that I was going to drive for Ford, that was in the Fall of 1962 and they gave me a car that Nelson Stacey had been driving to run in that race because, back then the season would end on October 31st. The new season would start on November 1st, so this would be a points race for the following year. Qualified pretty good and was running good and I thought David Pearson ran all over him and popped me into the wall and I thought it could have been helped and I was mad about it and had to go into the pits lost a few laps and got the car where it was running again and went back out. Came out right in front of him but, I didn't wait on him. The car was good enough that I went all the way around the race track and caught back up to him and when I caught him, I didn't turn left. I hit him hard and knocked him into the wall, much harder than I anticipated. I was just going to spin him out but, I hit him very hard. That's the part that I really hated about it, that it was so hard that he hit the wall pretty hard, It was so hard he could have got hurt, even though it was just a quarter of a mile race track, you don't think in terms of getting hurt on those, but I hit him hard enough that he could have gotten hurt. When he came out of the car, he had the steering wheel in his hand,. That was back in the days when you didn't take the steering wheel off to get in and out of the car. That thing was bolted on there but, he had that thing in his hand, He threw that thing at me as we came around the track, I guess I made some statements too to the people after that, I don't know the exact words but that sounds reasonable what you just said there.

DP: Should I make a note on the tape that you turned red? ...requires some kind of toughness, I guess?

NJ: Well, itI think that it points up the competitiveness of the athletes who drive race cars and when you have something to go wrong, you know, I have said a lot of times, that athletes have a one-track mind and when you have something to go wrong, it diverts you from that one

track mind then, you get upset, you get mad. That is why I think we see as many fights, arguments in sports as we see today, is because you've taken them off of that train of thought that they have and then most of the time after they cool off and think about it a little bit, well, I wish I hadn't said that or I wish I wouldn't have done that but, that's just the way, that's the nature of the people and so I think that my incident with Pearson just points out the competitive edge that we seem to have when something went wrong even though we do things that weren't out of the ordinary and it served a good purpose I think I don't know how good a purpose it served with other race drivers, it maybe opened their eyes that we can't pop old Ned around every time we want to but, as far as David Pearson and I were concerned, we raced together hundreds of times after that and never had any problems whatsoever and we talked about it later and came to an understanding and I think that it served a good purpose in that respect for both of us.

DP: Let me ask you another side of that issue. One, I guess, unique aspect of NASCAR, Grand National Winston Cup and almost everyone there is a tragedy or something that is almost part of...I know in 1964, an important incident in your life, an accident that involved Fireball Roberts at Charlotte...

NJ: Yeah, that was a tragic weekend really for the sport of auto racing and started with the wreck with Junior Johnson, Fireball and myself in Charlotte. It was early in the 600 and we had a full load of fuel. Of course the gas tanks back then, that's what they were, were gas tanks, conventional type metal tanks and Junior and I went into turn one side by side. He was on the inside and I was on the outside and there was a bump between turns one and two that could get your car upset, depending on how you hit it. A couple of cars, side by side and you didn't have your car in the position you really needed for it to be in, and of course you would have some air

turbulence as well and so it was a combination of the air turbulence and the bump that Junior's car, he lost control momentarily and hit me and spun me and we both spun and I spun to the inside of the track, he spun to the outside and Fireball was behind us and tried to maneuver by us and either he got hit by somebody that hadn't slowed down or whatever but, anyway he spun to the inside too. My car hit the inside retaining wall and when it did, it hit backwards and when it did it burst the gas tank and skidded down the wall and created sparks and caught it on fire and Fireball hit the inside retaining wall also and hit my car, burst his fuel tank. His car caught on fire as well. Mine bounced back out on the racetrack just a little bit and his continued to slide down the wall and there was an opening in the wall about two thirds of the way down the back stretch where they allowed traffic into the infield. It didn't have a gate or any kind of protection there at all, it was just an opening there. His car slid backwards into that and when it did it flipped upside down and it burst the firewall in the car and that allowed gasoline to run inside the car so naturally the fire followed it and so his car was burning inside. My car remained upright and even though it was burning still, I had plenty of time to get out of it. It was probably two or three minutes before my car caught fire inside, but his caught fire immediately and so our cars landed about thirty feet apart and I went over to try to help him out. He was in the process of coming out of the car but, his foot had gotten caught on something. They didn't pay a lot of attention back then to the welding of the spurs, there might have been little bars in the roofs of cars and so he had gotten his right foot caught on something and I just grabbed him around the shoulders and yanked him out and it ripped the top of his suede loafers and it just ripped the top of his shoe as I yanked him out of the car. We stood on the track and literally tore the uniform off of him. Fireball was a classy guy, he, in my opinion was the first superstar this sport had and he had a custom made uniform that had zippers on the sleeves and zippers up the sides and on the legs and when you started taking this thing off, those things were a hindrance and it took a long time to get them off but, everywhere there was an opening around the arm or neck or the

legs, that is where it started burning first and—

DP: It was not a fireproof suit?

NJ: It was not flameproof suit because, at that time, there were no known fabrics on the market that were flameproof but, what NASCAR did require us to do on race day, whatever clothes we were going to wear on race day, they had a solution, a boiling solution of boric acid and other ingredients that we could dip those clothes and it would flame proof them. You could put a blow torch to it and it would not catch on them fire but, Fireball was allergic to the solution. He had a letter from his doctor to that effect and so he was allowed to drive without this flame-proofing material on his uniform. I still believe today had he been wearing flameproof uniform, that he would still be here, at least as far as that wreck was concerned. He was not injured in the wreck but of course the burns. Finally he contracted blood poisoning and pneumonia and it finally took his life. I think that if they would have had the technology back then in treating burns he would still be here, but that was in 1964, more than thirty years ago so, a lot of things have happened. Immediately after that, Dupont went to work and came up with a flameproof cloth and of course now, you know, you got babies clothes that are flameproof and lots of things on the market that are flameproof but, it all started from that and the wreck the next day at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. That was back when the Indy 500 was run on Memorial Day, whatever day it fell on and that year it happened to fall on Monday and Dave McDonald and Eddie Sacks were both killed in a very fiery accident at Indianapolis and so the combination of those events, caused people to go to work, Firestone went to work and started building fuel cells and so that was two major things that came out of that weekend of racing. There have been great safety features for this sport and...

DP: I guess over the years though, you could of kind of call the roll of people that you have known well who actually I guess in recent years not so much through race accidents but through air accidents and things like that but, it dawned on me thinking about your role as broadcaster, I was thinking about this past race, how can you look down as a broadcaster and here is your son driving this car and it is spinning down the track?

NJ: Well, it presents a special challenge to work races that he is in and most of the races that I work, he is in but, I have a lot of confidence in him and the cars that he drives. Certainly, the safety features of the cars have been improved dramatically since I drove race cars. Even though the speeds are higher, which higher speeds will create additional dangers but, I think the things that have been, the technology that has come along and improved the safety has more than outweighed the extra danger from the extra speed and so, you know certainly I am concerned about Dale when something goes wrong on the racetrack but I do again, have a lot of confidence in him and the cars that he drives and I know, you know, it is his chosen sport, his chosen way to make a living and I respect that, sort of expected it and we put things in God's hands and let Him handle it. What is meant to be will be and that is the way we look at it, that is the way we deal with things. The tragic things that have happened to other people certainly are sad to see but we all have to go sometime and in some way. We don't know when that time is or in what way we are going to go but, we feel that is in God's hands and He has led us to be involved in this sport where there is danger involved and has given us the talents to do that well, then we feel comfortable in doing it and if something should happen, we feel that it is His will.

DP: While we are on the issue of family, NASCAR in comparison to practically any other professional sport has a more of a family orientation. Look around and you see all the family connections, of course with both sons being drivers and now a grandson, I believe that is starting

to drive, why do you think you have that family...?

NJ: I think there are a number of reasons why we see so many families in the sport of auto racing. I think it started with the France family. Bill France and then his family, his son or both his sons and their children fall, run, walk in the sport and it is the type of business and the type of sport where once you get involved in it you are hooked for some reason or another and it is hard to get away from it and one reason it is hard to get away is because of the people in it. They're just basically good people that are involved in the sport. Certainly, there have been some people over the years that have come along that didn't fit and they haven't stayed very long. I think the fact that there are good people, God-fearing people, that's why you see as many families involved and once you are around it, and you know, you just participate and it becomes a part of you and you want to continue on that way and certainly, you know, the Petty's, the Allison's, the Jarrett's, Baker's and whatever family names that you think of in the sport, those that are participating now, certainly grew up in it became a way of life for them and I think too, maybe having the one common denominator that other sports don't have, the automobile, I think maybe that is one thing that helps to keep it somewhat of a family sport.

DP: What connection?

NJ: Well, we all drive cars and I think that is one....

DP: So, it is a skill you could learn as opposed to having to be born with tremendous natural ability or something?

NJ: You gotta have some competitive juices within you before you can even learn to drive a

race car. And, certainly, I think those who were born with God-given talents as an athlete have a better chance at the sport but, you can, if you have a desire for competition, the love for automobiles, you can become a race car driver, if you work hard enough at it and that it not necessarily true of other sports. I think that is one of the things that...

DP: So you weren't disturbed when Glenn and Dale came to you and said I want to drive?

NJ: No, not disturbed. I think it is pretty well documented that we tried to steer Dale into a golfing career. He was a good athlete in school and we thought he had potential to maybe make it on the PGA Tour and we were not the only ones, family, other people thought that he had that kind of talent and I still believe to this day, had he worked as hard at it, golf, as he has racing, that he could have made it. But, at that time, it was one of those situations, you know, the grass was greener on the other side of the fence. We didn't know how tough it was to make it in golf. I knew how tough it was to make it in racing and I didn't want to see him make the sacrifices he would have to make and go through all the frustrations and years of really getting there, if he ever did get there. I just didn't want to see him have to go through that and thought golf would be easier. But, we have learned since then, that golf is taxing. He has a friend, lives in this community that has been trying for twenty years to make it on the pro tour and hasn't made it yet. And, he was almost as good as Dale. They play a lot of golf together, just plays on some of the junior tours, Hooters and some of the others but, he has just never made it. So we know now that it is very, very tough there. He would have to go through similar type situations. But, once he made the decision to go racing, I didn't have any objections at all. Glenn fortunately, he graduated from The University of North Carolina before he ever showed any interest in it. At that time, if you had any problems getting involved in it.

DP: In February 1993, at the Daytona 500, I have seen that clip so many times and I don't know if I will ever...to me one of the most moving moments in all of sports history. Can you kind of walk us through that?

NJ: Well, it has been the highlights of my career. Whether it is racing, broadcasting or whatever the case might be. It certainly a very special moment for the Jarrett family to have a member of the family win the Daytona 500 and I was privileged to be working in the broadcast booth when he was doing that and it took...really at the presence of mind that the producer and director had to pull it all together in a short period of time to capture that unique human-interest story. I didn't realize what they were doing. To me, it was recording another race. See, the producer has the ability to talk to each individual announcer through their headset and the other announcers not hear what they are saying. So, I didn't know Bob Skinner was the producer and Bob Fishman was the director. Skinner talked to Neil Bonnett who was the one to do color in the broadcast and told him, we are going to have you and Squier to back off on this last lap and Ned call his son home. He told Squier who was the anchor person the same thing. He said now back off, if it works out, we are going to put Ned on and let him call Dale home. You see, I didn't know all of this was going on. In the meantime, Martha, she was sitting in the van just behind pit road and she never, to this day, never likes to get in a position where she can see the whole race track. She is invited to VIP suites and all of that but, she won't go. She just wants to sit where she can see him come by one time and she listens to the radio broadcast and that's the way when she's at the racetrack and so she was sitting in that van and they found her and positioned the camera behind her. She didn't know that they were there. They were shooting through the side view mirror to get her reaction so, anyway they pulled all of that together and he was taking the lead as they got the white flag. He was up beside Earnhardt going into turn one and the producer came on my headset then and said, "Okay Ned, call your son home and be a Dad." That's when I

went totally from being an announcer to being a daddy and whatever came out, that's the way it was. It certainly wasn't rehearsed and that's what they wanted, just spontaneous reaction to what was going on and it turned out, it has become probably, as far as talked about events in the sport. I know, as far as I am concerned, as we travel around the country and talk to fans and other people, that is the first thing that is always brought up. It is brought up more than all other things put together and it's still special and I enjoy pulling the thing out and hearing it every once in a while. You know, I have a script of it up there, the words that I said. A sportswriter's wife did that for me and sent it to me. And CBS did win Emmy's on that—

DP: I was going to ask if there had been awards on the segment....

NJ: Yeah, they won production Emmy. It was a unique situation.

DP: Wind things down a little bit and ask you a couple more questions. One, I believe it was 1997 at Lenoir-Rhyne College, an honorary doctorate; which took me by total surprise...

NJ: You know, I did not quite finish high school. I was just a teenager who thought he knew a lot and I was lead to believe that I knew a lot by the principal of the school. He had a Chevrolet dealership. I went to Blackburn High School which is about three miles from where we are sitting right here and he needed to go to his Chevrolet dealership every day and so he would come in during our math class and say, "Take over Jarrett, I will be back in a few minutes." Well, I knew he wasn't going to be back that day, I mean not for that class and so I literally taught math in high school. You know, a teenager thinks, what am I doing here? If I can do this, I don't need to be here wasting my time. I need to be doing something else if I am good enough to be teaching math. Of course, that was my best subject, I will have to admit. The others were

not that good. But, anyway, as a teenager, it gives you that feeling. As a result, I did not finish the last year in high school and then to be given an honorary degree by a major college, Lenoir-Rhyne College was very, very...it was certainly the biggest honor that I could expect from that kind of a standpoint and very humbling, I guess to some degree. I would never have considered myself to be a candidate for; of course the honor was a Doctorate in Humane Letters. I have appreciated that so much because there are so many big names in our community in particular and in this whole area that had deserved and gotten those honors and I never thought I would be one of those people to be involved in something like that.

DP: They call you Dr. Jarrett?

NJ: Some people do. After all the communication, naturally I am on their mailing list, Lenoir-Rhyne College, because we have been a supporter of the college because we are Lutherans. We grew up a Lutheran family, both Martha and I and so we have been supporters of the college and we have been on their mailing list it seems like we have got everything that is sent out from up there now but, anyway they address it as Dr. Jarrett. Some people, as we travel around, even in racing, call me Dr. Jarrett. That is okay.. I don't deserve it but I do appreciate it.

DP: Let me ask this question. One of the things I'm looking at is Grand/National Winston Cup racing is a southern phenomenon, is there anything southern still about Winston Cup or was there ever?

NJ: Oh yeah, there definitely was, in the beginning. The first race that was ever run, was run in Charlotte, North Carolina and the majority of the races were run in the southeast for many, many years and now, it has branched out to other parts of the country and television, has certainly helped to make it a national sport because they take it everywhere. As far as if there are

things that are southern about it, I think , certainly this is not meant to belittle people from other parts of the country, but it seems to be sort of standard that the people in the South are more down-to-earth, doing things not just talk about going racing. That is true but still, I think the way that things are handled many times in the sport are still southern bred, just the way that people do things. Many of the contracts are not contracts at all, they are handshakes.

DP: I read that about Richard Petty yesterday.

NJ: So, I think those kinds of things still have a southern tradition to them, and I guess as a result of so many of the teams being located, the majority of them, in or around Charlotte, North Carolina which gives them a southern accent.

DP: Let me ask you one final question. You have been associated with upper levels of NASCAR racing for 40 years, I think. I know its probably hard for you to believe but, and as a close observer of all that, what has changed for the better, what has changed like to say, we need to look back to the past, this was a better way of doing it.

NJ: Well, I have been involved for about 45 years now and certainly seen a lot of things happen over the years. I think things that have changed for the better, first of all, are the safety features that have been built into the cars. NASCAR, that is one thing that they have always been very good at, is detecting, looking for ways of making cars safer and they'll implement those ideas and they also listen to drivers, to crew chiefs, to others in the sport in ways that can help to make those race cars safer and the race tracks and everything that they're dealing with. I really respected them over the years for that and maybe even more so because I have sons out there participating, I have grandsons and that kind of thing, and also I think we all wanted to see our

sport grow and be recognized nationally and to see the participants as national heroes and we are seeing that now. That is good. It makes me feel good inside to see that happen. To see the corporate dollars that are flowing through the sport and the fact that these corporations are getting their money's worth too. I would hate to see them involved if it was not a good investment for them and I think they have found that it is that is why there have been so many of them to follow. To see television as involved in the sport as it is today, which helps to bring it to more people, helps to make those sponsors more interested in being involved. All of those things have been very, very good for the sport over the years. I would say that the one major thing along that line that has helped open all of those doors and has contributed to the growth of the sport is when R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company came in as the series sponsor back in the early 70's. I think that was a major, major step towards taking this sport to the level that it is today. So, those things, that's all good. You know, some people will say well, "It's not like it used to be" and it isn't. They would like to go back to the good old days. I am not one of those people. I like progress. I like to see things change. I like to see technology, although when talking about technology, I think that NASCAR has done a good job of keeping some technology out of the cars that would have just make it so expensive to run. They are trying to keep those costs down and I think that is good and I think the fact that they kept those cars looking so that you can determine whether it's a Chevrolet, Ford or Pontiac, beyond the insides of the cars, there's not that much difference in them that at least you can identify them and I think that has been an important aspect in the growth of the sport over the years, is keeping them at least, looking stock where you can identify them. As far as things that have been done wrong over the years. You know, we talk about and I am a critic of some of the ways that rules have been either made or the way that they have been administered over the years. I think a little better job could have been done sometimes and the consistency of the way the rules have been handled but, when you look at the complexity of the whole deal, well then they probably, in fact no doubt in my mind as to

what NASCAR is doing a better job than anyone else or all other's put together as far as sanctioning bodies are concerned. So, it is hard to be critical of them, when you see all the good things that have been involved in the sport.

DP: Can NASCAR survive if R. J. Reynolds is no longer

NJ: Oh yeah! NASCAR can survive if R. J. Reynolds is taken away because they will be another sponsor that will come along. I can think of any number of major corporations that would like to be in that position, so certainly the work that R. J. Reynolds has done over the years and the money they have spent has paid the way to make it easy for someone else to come in and so, I hope it doesn't happen anytime in the future because they really have done a good job. I think they have done a responsible type, as a reporter, I am not a smoker, in fact I am allergic to it but, for those who choose to smoke, that's okay. That is their business. What R. J. Reynolds has tried to do, if you are a smoker, is to use our brand and I don't see anything wrong with that. It is a legal product and I don't see anything wrong with that at all. I appreciate what they have done for the sport because, what has happened with the sport has certainly changed the lives and enhanced the lives of a lot of people, including myself. I appreciate that.

DP: I guess I have to ask one other question. I lied a little bit; you always have to ask these days. Jeff Gordon. Has he changed the sport?

NJ: Jeff Gordon has been a very positive thing for the sport of auto racing. There have been a lot of things that have come along over the years that have seemed to take our sport to another level. I mentioned earlier about R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., coming in. That was one thing I think was a major step for us. In 1979, CBS televised the first Daytona 500 live. That was

another major step for the sport. Other things have happened along the way. You know, ESPN coming in. All of this being televised. There is something else had to be good to bring it out. Bill Elliott winning the million dollars in 1985 or whenever it was, and then the Brickyard. Going to Indianapolis was another major step for this sport and has taken it to another level. Before the brickyard, Jeff Gordon came along and then he won that first race at the Brickyard and those were major, major things in taking our sport to another level. He still is taking our sport up with what he is doing on the race track and the way he handles it off the race track. I mean, how could you script a situation that could be better than a Jeff Gordon? You have a good looking guy that's a God-loving, God-fearing type of an individual, has a beautiful wife and can drive a race car. You know, he's got it all. I don't know what ingredient that you can add to an individual that could make it better than what Jeff Gordon is right now. He is definitely been good for the sport of auto racing.

DP: Thank you very much.