

# HISTORY IN THE sand

*Racing's North Turn serves up racing history with a side of food, views*

STORY BY KELLIE ABERNETHY

Long before the sugary sand of Ponce Inlet was dotted with lavish beachfront condos and homes, it was the birthplace to a much faster pace of life – beach racing. From 1936 to 1958 daredevil race car and motorcycle drivers would gather at the 4.1 mile beach track to test their limits on the hard packed sand and road course, risking everything for a chance to claim first place, and the respect that comes with it.

In the shadow of the north turn of the track a quaint beach restaurant bore witness to these primitive days of racing before technology – and money – ruled the game. The modest restaurant was the perfect companion to the track, serving boxed lunches to drivers and cool drinks to fans after exhilarating days watching the races that would eventually form NASCAR.





The lobby of Racing's North Turn doubles as a museum showcasing historic racing memorabilia. The top right photo shows an aerial view of the track and the north turn where the restaurant is located. [KELLIE ABERNETHY]

"The speedway and general public came forward and donated a lot more stuff," said Rhonda of the community's support in donating memorabilia to rebuild the collection after the fire, noting that they still receive donations today which allows them to rotate the collections in their displays.

While the expansive collection of historic racing memorabilia might be the reason many guests come to the restaurant, the view from the back deck keeps them coming back.

After purchasing the restaurant, the Glasnaks added on a 5,000 square foot deck overlooking the wide beige shore and rolling waves. Seven nights a week live music on the deck serenades guests as they take in the ocean breeze, a cool drink and savory meal.

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**ABOVE:** Guests enjoy dinner with a view at the Racing's North Turn in Ponce Inlet. [LOLA GOMEZ]

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** From left, General Manager Lars Bienemann, Owner Rhonda Glasnak, Marketing Manager Julia Bienemann, and Owner Walter Glasnak holding The Extravaganza seafood dish at Racing's North Turn. [NIGEL COOK]

But until 1998, the restaurant remained a humble beach hangout with no tribute to the piece of history it played a part of, so when Daytona Beach residents Rhonda and Walter Glasnak saw the opportunity to purchase the restaurant they jumped at the chance.

"We had looked at that restaurant for many, many years and suddenly the opportunity arose to get it in 1998," said Rhonda. "It was called Ocean Dock at the time. Within seven months we changed it to Racing's North Turn and turned it more into a sports bar geared toward racing."

Twenty years later, the restaurant is a time machine to an era that could have been erased with the disappearance of the track and the appearance of high-end condos. Black and

white photos of former beach race car and motorcycle drivers form a quilt of race car legends lining the walls, pieces of the original track and garages are stored in glass display cases in the lobby and vintage race cars are on display. The menu features categories of food broken down into racing terms such as "Start Your Engines" and "Victory Lane."

"We are a restaurant with a museum inside," explained Rhonda.

Sitting on the cusp of the ocean, the restaurant has been through several hurricanes and a fire in 2014 that almost wiped out the building, destroying the kitchen and several pieces of memorabilia. But like the tenacious sport it witnessed, the restaurant prevailed and reopened.