



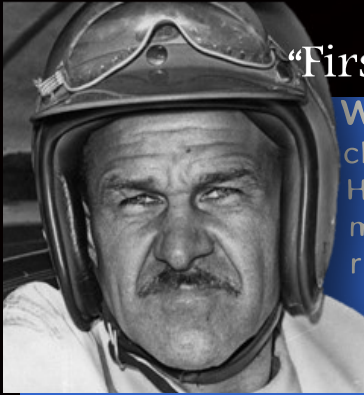
The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County Wendell Oliver Scott



(August 29, 1921 – December 23, 1990)

“First African-American to be Inducted in NASCAR Hall of Fame”



Wendell Oliver Scott was born August 29, 1921 in Danville, Virginia. As a child, Wendell loved speed and raced everything from bicycles to roller skates. He began learning auto mechanics from his father, who worked as a driver and mechanic for two well-to-do white families. He dropped out of high school, got married and drove taxis until he joined the segregated Army, during WWII.

After serving three years in the military as a mechanic in the motor pool, Wendell returned home and opened an auto-repair shop. He took side jobs running moonshine and honed his “racing” skills, running from the police. The police caught Wendell only once in 1949 and he was sentenced to three years probation.

On the weekends, Wendell attended stock car races in Danville. He wanted to drive for NASCAR, but was repeatedly denied, because of his race. He then started racing in the Dixie Circuit and won his first race just 12 days later.

Wendell competed in up to five races a week, facing constant harassment and racial discrimination. Although he was a quiet man, some of the other drivers would wreck his car on purpose - knowing he wouldn't retaliate. However, his calm demeanor and superior driving skills soon won over spectators and other drivers who saw Wendell as just another hard-working, blue-collar man, who loved the sport of race car driving.

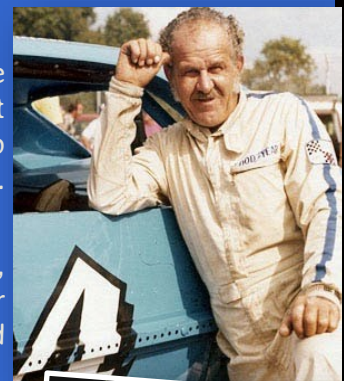


Even though he was successful in the Dixie Circuit, Wendell knew the only way to earn real racing credibility was by entering the all-white ranks of NASCAR. He towed his car to the next NASCAR event at old Richmond Speedway. There, he approached the race steward and asked him face-to-face for a NASCAR race license. The race steward was hesitant and warned Wendell that some people might retaliate, but issued the license anyway. Wendell was in. He was officially licensed for a NASCAR event.

Wendell went on to win dozens of races and earned the admiration of white fans and fellow racers. In 1959 he won two championships and in 1961, he moved up to the Grand National Series.

On December 1, 1963, at Speedway Park in Jacksonville, Florida, driving a baby blue #34 Chevrolet Bel Air, Wendell Scott won his first Grand National event - the first ever won by an African-American.

Unfortunately, Wendell was not announced as the winner at the time. The second-place driver was initially declared the winner, but race officials discovered two hours later that Wendell had not only won, but was two laps in front of the rest of the field, in the 100-lap event. By the time they corrected the error, the crowd was gone as well as the trophy. Wendell left with only the winning check of \$1000.



Wendell Scott competed in 495 Grand National races, with 147 top -10 finishes before he retired in 1973 after an accident in Talladega, Alabama. He continued working on race cars until his death on December 23, 1990.

In 2010, Wendell's family finally received the 1963 Grand National trophy he had earned 47 years earlier. Twenty years after his death.

Wendell Oliver Scott was Inducted into the NASCAR Hall of Fame on January 30, 2015.

