



the  
**Henry  
Ford**®



### Lyn St. James (born Evelyn Gene Cornwall)

March 13, 1947 – Present

Nationality: American

Started racing in 1974

**Origins:** The only child of Alfred and Maxine Cornwall, Lyn was really not expected to be born. Her mother contracted polio as a child and was told she would probably not ever be able to have any children because her body wouldn't be able to carry full term. Fearful that what she had was hereditary, when Lyn was born, Maxine had to be convinced that Lyn was "normal" and had normal legs and feet. When it was time for Lyn to learn to drive it was her mother who taught her to not only drive, but to learn and understand how a car worked. Lyn attended and graduated from Andrews School for Girls, which was a vocational school and based their education on teaching girls to become self-sufficient, independent young ladies. She also took piano lessons from the age of six until eighteen, and attended St. Louis School of Music to get her teaching certificate. So her background was anything but what one would expect to prepare her to become a professional race car driver.

**Influences:** Lyn's fascination with cars may have begun with her mother, but it was her guy friends who took her to her first drag race that really began her love of speed and competition. She won her first drag race in her friend's Pontiac GTO, and her first car was a Pontiac Catalina 2+2 (much to the surprise of the local Pontiac dealer). While drag racing was the beginning of her fascination with racing, it was the Indianapolis 500, which she attended for the first time in 1966 and again in 1970 with her soon to become husband John Carusso, which captured her heart. After moving to Florida with John she attended her first sports car endurance race, the 24 Hours of Daytona, and together they became members of the Sports Car Club of America and started amateur racing; John in a B Production Corvette and Lyn in a Showroom Stock Pinto. In her first race at Palm Beach International Raceway she lost control of her Pinto and ended up in a lake, which earned her the alligator of the year award from the Florida Region of SCCA; but she went on to become the Florida Regional Champion in

Showroom Stock. In 1979 a new series was announced, the IMSA Kelly American Challenge, which provided an award for the Top Woman Driver in each race and a year end championship, along with extra prize money and points fund. Lyn raced to 2<sup>nd</sup> place, .079 seconds behind winner Gene Felton at the inaugural race at Road Atlanta and validated the Kelly Services Top Woman Driver Championship. In 1981 she was signed by the Ford Motor Company as a factory driver in the IMSA Kelly American Challenge series and continued to race for Ford in the Kelly Series, GTO, and GTP divisions of IMSA, as well as the SCCA Trans Am Series. Her crash at Riverside in 1985 racing the Ford Probe GTP car is remembered by many as one of the worst crashes in the history of Riverside. In 1992 she was successful in securing J C Penney sponsorship and was signed to compete in the Indianapolis 500 with Dick Simon Racing and was the top finishing rookie and named Rookie of the Year. She went on to compete in seven Indianapolis 500's over nine years, along with seven other Indy car races, and holds the record for being the oldest rookie in the history of the Indianapolis 500. She continues to race at historic events like Goodwood in the U.K. as well as enjoys invitations and opportunities to compete around the globe.

#### **Racing Accomplishments:**

- 1992 Indianapolis 500 Rookie of The Year (first woman to win)
- Raced in 15 Indy races including CART Championship and Indy Racing League. Scored 2 Top-10 qualifying spots; 1 Top-10 Finish
- Set women's closed course speed record at **225.722 mph** during the 1995 Indy 500 qualification weekend. Held 31 national and international closed course speed records over a 20 year period.
- Raced twice ('89, '91) in the Biggest Endurance race in the World; The 24 Hours of Le Mans (France)
- Two wins in the 24 Hours of Daytona (winning GTO Team Driver in '87 & '90).
- Raced (9 times) in the famous 12 Hours of Sebring Endurance race (winning GTO Team driver in '90).
- Raced in 53 SCCA Trans-Am races with 7 Top-5 finishes and raced in 62 IMSA GT races with 6 wins and 17 Top-5 and 37 Top-10 finishes.
- Only woman to win an IMSA GT race driving solo ('85 Watkins Glen)
- Raced in the legendary Goodwood Motor Circuit Revival & Festival Meetings in England in 2001, 2005, 2006, and 2007.

#### **Awards & Achievements:**

- Invited to the White House to meet with Presidents Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and William Clinton.
- "Sports Illustrated for Women" Top-100 Women Athletes of the Century
- Consumer Adviser for Ford Motor Company between 1981 and 1996.
- "Working Woman Magazine" one of "The 350 Women who changed the world between 1976-1996".
- 2008 Automotive Hall of Fame Distinguished Service Award
- 2006 Northwood University Distinguished Woman of the Year
- 2002 Office Depot Visionary Sportswoman of the Year
- 2001 Guiding Woman in Sports Award from the National Association for Girls & Women in Sports
- Sports Commentator for ESPN / ESPN2, Indy Car Racing Analyst for ABC, Pit Reporter for ABC/ESPN/ESPN2, Sports Video for ESPN, Showtime (nominated for Ace award).
- President of the Women's Sports Foundation (1990-93).
- Active on the following Boards: Kettering University Board of Trustees, co-founder of Human Performance International, O'varComing Together Ovarian Cancer Advisory Board, Indiana Fever Advisory Board, the *Indianapolis Woman Magazine* Board of Advisors, NASCAR's Diversity Council and Race Commission, Vice Chair of Indiana Governor's Council on Physical Fitness & Sport, founding member of Indiana Motorsports Association.

**Interesting Facts:** In 1994 Lyn founded the Women in the Winner's Circle Foundation (formerly the Lyn St. James Foundation), a 501c3, as a way to respond to all the fan mail she received asking for advice. The core activity of the foundation is the Driver Development Academy, which has graduated over 250 women drivers from 38 states and 5 countries, including Danica Patrick, Sarah Fisher, Melanie Troxel, and many of the young drivers out racing today. In 2007 with an initial \$10,000 grant from Paul Newman's Own, she announced Project Podium, a scholarship grant fund for young, up and coming women drivers, supported by motorsports industry partners.

**Research and biography written by Hilary Resteck and Casey Schuster, graduate students at Indiana University/Purdue University Public History Department.**