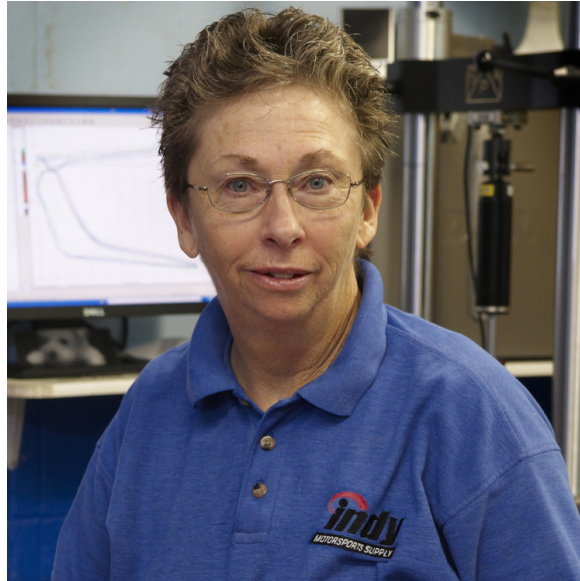




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Anita Millican

Nationality: American

Involved in racing since the late 1960s

Origins: Born and raised in Portland, Oregon, Anita Millican left home at the age of fifteen and made her way to California. She finished one year of high school there, living briefly with her sister and then in a studio apartment in the San Fernando Valley, and soon after met her future husband and the love of her life, Howard Millican at Ascot sprint car track. Like most Indy racing teams during the 60's, Howard's team spent the winter months in California before returning to Indianapolis for the beginning of the season. He was working on Bobby Unser's car, running the nuts and bolts check around the time he met Anita, and the two quickly hit it off. They married in 1966 and by 1969 they purchased a home in Danville, Indiana, a place Anita refers to as "Frontierland," and set up two shops equipped with fabricating machinery.

Early Influences: Anita credits her involvement in the motorsports world to Howard, his skill, his trust, and his patience while teaching her how to work with machinery. As Anita states, he was a genius at what he did, with an inherent knowledge of cars and technology that was hard to match. Howard was her inspiration and the reason she was to become so successful in the field. Determined to be together and stay together, he started teaching her what he knew. It was the beginning of a partnership that lasted thirty years. Anita did not let him down, continually learning everything she could and persevering despite any obstacles that confronted her.

Education: At a time when few women were found in the garages and most were excluded from taking classes like shop or auto mechanics in school, Anita devoted herself to the technology behind racecars. She did not train in a specific program or study at a specific school. Instead, she learned through hands-on experience, studying what Howard did and listening to his advice on how she could improve. She developed a passion and aptitude for the mechanical aspects of the race car and loved the amount of time and detail that went into making each piece on the race car function perfectly. It is a passion that still motivates her as she continues to work in the business today.

Career Path: Things evolved rapidly for Anita once Howard began teaching her how to operate particular machinery and she spent her time alongside him in their shops doing machine work. She was eventually discovered working in front of a lathe one day while Howard was outside the shop. In 1981 and 1982, she worked with Howard as part of the over-the-wall crew at the Indy 500, and was the first woman to do so. Anita was in charge of holding the air hose for Larry Dickson's car.

After Rick Galles formed Galles Racing in 1981, Howard began working for him and he and Anita relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to run the team's Research & Development Department. While at Galles Racing, Howard helped design and develop a shock dynamometer that became a piece of equipment in demand by many race teams, and a four-way adjustable shock. The two remained in New Mexico working alongside one another until 1991 when they returned to Indiana. After Howard passed away in 1995, Jeff Ryan, an old friend who was vice president at Penske Shocks, asked Anita to go to Reading, Pennsylvania and join his crew. She declined the offer for two years, but in November of 1997 she was ready to leave Indiana and made the move to Reading, where she remained for five years before returning to Indiana in February 2003. Anita returned to Indianapolis and continues to work on shocks at Earl's Indy Service Shop located on Gasoline Alley.

Major Responsibilities: Anita is often recognized for her long career working on shocks, though her talents stretch in many directions and among several divisions of racing. She did machine work with her husband throughout much of her early career, and while working over-the-wall at the Indy 500 in the early 1980s, she was responsible for holding the air hose for Larry Dickson's car. During her time at Penske Shocks, Anita worked in the prototype room with design engineers, flushing out products and doing builds. She later evolved into troubleshooting and helped answer questions, working hard to make sure customers were happy. Anita continues to remain dedicated to customer satisfaction today and does everything she can to be perfect in her craft and ensure safety with her products.

Becoming Established in the Field: Beginning in motorsports at a time when most women were discouraged from taking part in "masculine" activities, it took a long time before Anita was acknowledged for her skills. Howard was confident in his own talent and confident in her skills, never wavering in his belief in her and it helped Anita begin to be respected for her abilities. He brought her along wherever he was working and she joined in, slowly becoming one of the guys. Dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, she always kept her hair up and tied back in a bandana. Anita spent years working for no pay, despite all of the hours she put in, but she was happy to be working with Howard. It was not easy making a name for herself, but Anita cared less about that than about doing the best she could and showing that she belonged.

Advice to Others: Throughout her career, Anita has learned the importance of teamwork and remaining dedicated to one's craft. She is driven by her passion for the field and continues to focus on safety as her number one priority. She says that anyone working in the technology side of motorsports has to be perfect. One mistake might not only be the difference between a win or a loss, but life and death as well. In Anita's eyes, you cannot make a star out of one team member because it takes away from the cohesiveness of the rest of the team. She says that everyone needs to work together and function as a singular unit. Anita also adds that besides hands-on experience, women wanting to get involved in motorsports can help themselves and improve their chances by pursuing degrees in engineering and improving their math skills.

Life off the Track: When Anita and Howard were not busy working on cars and designing parts, they spent much of their time taking long trips south to Costa Rica. They made their first trip there in 1976 and fell in love with the country, returning several times in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. Hoping to eventually retire there, the two even began building a home in the country. These dreams faded as Howard's health failed him in the early 1990s and since his passing in 1995, Anita has traveled little outside of Indianapolis, with the exception of the five years she spent working in Reading, Pennsylvania. When she is not working, she enjoys being outside and occasionally plays golf with friends.

Interesting Fact: A member of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, a union coordinated in part by Andrew Kenopensky, Anita and Howard were required to attend occasional dinners on behalf of the organization. At one of these events, Anita showed up with Howard with her hair down, wearing a pants suit and jewelry. Accustomed to her appearance in the shop, Kenopensky did not recognize her at first and even yelled at Howard, thinking that he had brought someone other than his wife to the dinner. The couple laughed it off, sticking together at the event in much the same way they stuck together on the job and throughout life.

Awards and Achievements:

- Recognized as the first woman to hold an over-the-wall position at the Indy 500, when she held the air hose for Larry Dickson in 1981 and again in 1982.