

Shelly Beegle Living in the Fast Lane

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FOR MOST OF US, MIDLIFE IS A TIME TO SLOW DOWN A BIT AND REASSESS OUR LIVES. We ponder things like retirement, the spiraling costs of prescriptions and long term health care insurance.

But not Shelly Beegle. At age 54, she decided to take up stock car racing. “I’ve always been an aggressive person,” she said. “I started riding Harleys 20 years ago when not many women rode motorcycles.”

She now drives a 1986 Monte Carlo, appropriately red, in the Pure Hobby Stock division, as #17. She found sponsorship support, a necessity for this costly sport and often a challenge for female drivers, from Bedford Valley Petroleum and Kyners Auto Sales.

According to NASCAR statistics, women are big race fans these day, making up almost half the audience. Others are heading to the pits for jobs as crew members and drivers, but Shelly is one of only a few to date. Consequently she has been unable to find racing suits and fireproof clothing designed for a woman’s frame and has to make do with what’s available for the guys. (Attention, entrepreneurs: This could be a great business opportunity.)

Since “starting her engine” in April 2007, Shelly has raced 16 times, most often at the Allegany County Speedway known as The Rock. During her first time out, she came in at No. 8. Next week, she was No. 6. Two races later, she was up to the No. 3 position in points. And this ranking included two races that she couldn’t finish because of mechanical problems.

“I’d never been to a race until I met my husband Shane,” she said. Shelly recently married Shane Beegle, a veteran driver with 12 years’ experience in Late Model dirt track racing. “While watching a race with him, I thought to myself, ‘I could do that.’”

So she did, competing against 30 other drivers. She said that Shane wasn’t sure how long she would race, but changed his mind when he saw her talent and potential. To accommodate her petite stature, Shane retrofitted her car with a youth seat and platform to elevate the gas pedal. He told her to “drive your line,” always watching the competition to check on their positions and figure out how to pass safely. “When you drive,” she said, “you must make the right choice at the right time.”





Shelly learned that lesson quickly, after her first accident. When her car was hit from behind, she went into a spin that resulted in extensive damage to her car. Shane, a skilled mechanic, put it back together in a week and she was back on the track.

“But the second accident was *ugly*,” she said thoughtfully. “I was coming around turn 3 and then into 4 when I started to pass another driver, but his back end hit me and I spun in front of him and then went over his car towards the wall. I thought, ‘Here comes that wall,’ while my car rose about 30 feet and went spinning into trees that knocked the car upside down on an angle atop the barrier, and then flipped back onto the track. There was lots of smoke and the car was smashed. Shane was right there. It took 45 minutes to cut me out. I had tests and

x-rays, but suffered only a mild concussion. Shane said, ‘We’re going to buy a car.’ I agreed and we bought another car the next Monday.”

Shelly believes that her resolve to keep racing helped her gain recognition from her male cohorts. “Shane told me, ‘You need to gain their respect and then you’ll do fine,’” she said. She noticed other drivers watching as she was cut out of her car. “One came over and said, ‘We want to make sure you’re okay because we’re all family.’ Later a veteran driver called to check on me and asked, ‘Are you coming back on the track?’ I said I wasn’t sure they wanted me back, but he said they did.”

Now she feels like one of the gang and credits support from her “wonderful crew chief,” a go-kart champion who helps her to stay calm and focused before starting out, her stepdaughter (“a heaven-send”) and, of course, Shane.



Levi, one of Shelly and Shane’s eight dachshunds.



Shelly’s Crew Chief, John Flick, helps keep her calm and focused.



Shelly’s stepdaughter, Heather Morris, is also part of the racing team.

On Saturday, June 23, 2007, Shelly’s major accident involved hitting the wall, spinning into trees, flipping, and coming back to rest onto the track. It took 45 minutes to cut her from the car, but miraculously she only suffered a mild concussion, but the car was in bad shape (*photos below*).

Photo below right: Shelly in action in the RE/MAX number 17 car.





Shelly (first year racer) and husband, Shane Beegle, a 12 year veteran of Late Model dirt track racing.

Shelly Beegle has another life as Shelly Ott, when working as an associate broker for RE/MAX Realty Agency, Inc. in Chambersburg, Pa., where she has sold real estate for the past 20 years. Her real estate connections led her to Shane.

“A banker hooked me up with Shane to buy timber off 400 acres I own near Hyndman and we started dating eight months after meeting,” she recalled. Shane, “a bit of a rebel,” is a logger and excavator, and also owns property. The couple combined their talents and have been selling wooded lots in a development named Little Ridge Estates.

Shelly and Shane share their Everett home with her eight dachshunds – another hobby. “Before Shane, real estate and dogs were my life,” she said. She belongs to

a dachshund rescue group. And she enjoys hunting. “I can enjoy a personal life now,” she said, “now that I’ve established my business.”

Art is another passion she indulges, with a collection that began about 20 years ago, thanks to guidance from an art collector she met in Kalispell, Montana.

Jackson Hole, Wyoming, is where Shelly and Shane were married—on April 9, 2006—and Montana is where they hope to retire. They own property near Lewistown and have broken ground for a new home.

For now, though, racing satisfies her adventurous spirit. “I’ve always been an aggressive person. I’m scared to death before starting out but I’m okay once I start driving.” It appears that Shelly won’t be slowing down any time soon.

