

Highline Autos®

YOUR LOCAL SOURCE FOR DISTINGUISHED AUTOMOBILES
CALIFORNIA EDITION



VOLUME XIII, NUMBER 11

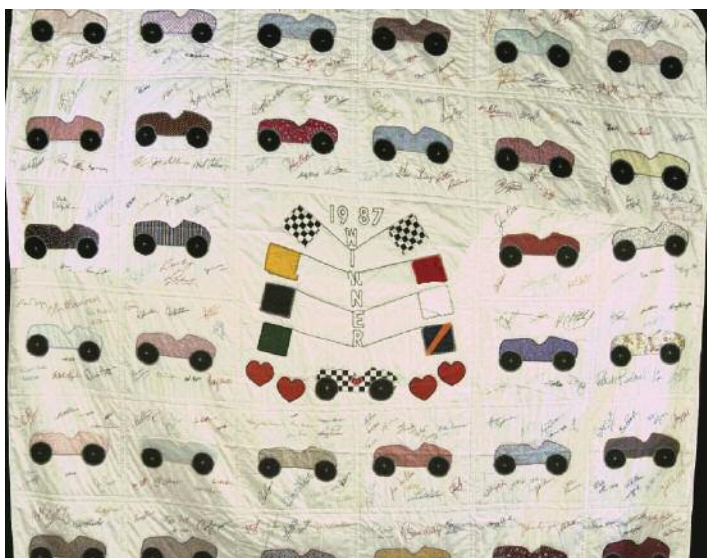


\$4.99 U.S./\$6.99 CANADA

THE LAMBORGHINI HURACÁN REAR-WHEEL DRIVE SPYDER

Plus: 100s of California's Finest Automobiles

GreatGarages- Jeanetta Holder: 'The Quilt Lady' | Noteworthy | Post SEMA Photo Coverage



1987 Winner- photo Unser Racing Museum



1992 Winner- photo Unser Racing Museum



Dario Franchitti 2012 with Jeanetta Holder - photo Jeanetta Holder



Juan Pablo Montoya 2000- photo Jeanetta Holder

Great Garages

JEANETTA HOLDER: 'THE QUILT LADY'

by David M. Brown

You just took the checkered flag at the Indy 500. The bricks were kissed, you kissed the models and you've been photoed, Facebooked, Tweeted and interviewed in Victory Circle. You'll also smooch the Borg-Warner Trophy, presented for winning America's great race.

As part of the Memorial Day weekend celebration, a custom quilt will also come from Jeanetta Holder, 84, a Kentucky resident who's been gifting them for four decades to the winners of Indy, The Allstate 400 and other races.

May's Indy 500 winner, rookie Alexander Rossi, received one from her on May 29; he gave her his autograph, then she took it home, incorporated the autograph and gave the quilt to him May 30 at the track.

Rossi immediately lent it to the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Kentucky, for display. "The Corvette Museum has been wonderful to me," Jeanetta says, adding that the Rossi quilt has the signature of every Indy 500 winner.

Mario Andretti of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, received one 40 years ago after his 1978 Formula 1 title. The quilt also commemorated his spectacular 1969 Indy 500 win in the STP car built by Andy Granatelli in Scottsdale.

The Unser family, Al Sr. and Jr. and Bobby, winners of a fabulous nine Indy's, have a collection in Albuquerque, including Al Sr., who won in 1970, repeated in 1971, 1978, and 1987, and Al Jr., a 1992 and 1994 winner.

"Jeanetta's trophy quilts are beautiful treasures that represent some of my most successful career wins," says Bobby,

who won Indy three times, 1968, 1975 and 1981 and displays the quilts in his home. He has six quilts: three for the Indy 500 wins; one for a Pocono 500 win; and two for the Ontario 500 wins (he won four times).

"She has always been a close family friend for 50 years, including babysitting my children," he adds. "Thanks, Jeanetta, for being part of what makes the Indianapolis 500 and open wheel racing great!"

Roger Penske, the transportation industry giant and race promoter, has some, as does Arie Luyendyk, the Valley resident who won in 1990 and 1997 at The Brickyard. And four-timer A.J. Foyt has two or three. Another four-time winner, Rick Mears, has four. She's even made them for past winners, such as for Jim Rathmann, 1960, and Parnelli Jones, 1963.

Other celebrities have also been honored, such as an American flag-motif version to General Norman Schwartzkopf, both actor John Ritter and his son, Jonathan; and, country music singer/songwriter Lee Greenwood ("God Bless the USA"). Former President Jimmy Carter prizes his. Holder also gave one to his brother Billy Carter. Henry 'Fonzie' Winkler bought that quilt at auction in April 2013, she says.

Typically 10x10 feet, her quilts are also in the Henry Ford Museum, The Norton Museum, Hendrix Museum (Jeff Gordon's quilt), The Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, and three hang in the Open Wheel Museum in Phoenix. Other heirloom-quality quilts she donates to charity, where bids as much as \$18,000 have been offered, funding programs such



Alexander Rossi 2016- photo Jeanetta Holder



Emerson Fittipaldi 1993- photo Jeanetta Holder



Arie Luyendyk 1990- photo Arie Luyendyk

as scholarships.

“We were excited to have Jeanetta’s quilt be a part of our exhibit,” says Wendell Strode, executive director of The National Corvette Museum. “It’s great when a local person can participate in our displays, and Jeanetta’s story is very unique.”

Racing and Quilting: All Sewed Up

Jeanetta Holder was born in 1932 on the family farm near Bowling Green, Kentucky, in Alvaton, an unincorporated town where she attended school.

She met her husband, Clarence, in Indianapolis, and then they moved to the town of Avon, Indiana, five miles west of the city, in 1962.

“Clarence went to the races for years — Pocono, Ontario and Indy and others — but he got tired of it and stopped,” Jeanetta recalls. “But I’ve kept up as much as I am able.” He died in 1999.

At about 10 or 11, she made her first miniature racecars from tobacco sticks and lard can lids for the body sheathing. “A nail was my shifter,” she recalls, with a laugh.

Later, to take her driver’s license test, she borrowed a taxicab. Within a few years, she was guiding a 1950 Hudson around oval dirt tracks and securing a reputation for determined driving. She also drove a 1935 Chevy with a 1950 Mercury motor in 1951 and 1952 at Beach Bend Park in Kentucky. “I was the first lady to flip a car,” she says, smiling. “I was the second one, too.”

She’s loved the Indy 500 since childhood. She knows that Fred Frame won the race the year she was born, 1932, and can tell you the other winners, too. The first race she saw was in 1950, won by Johnnie Parsons.

As a child, 11 or 12, she picked her first cotton seed, combed the wool and placed it in a cotton bath to prepare. Years later, she taught herself the art of quilting in 1976. That year, she presented her first quilt to Johnny Rutherford, a

red, white and blue star-motif version. Rutherford, who had won two years earlier in 1974, repeated in 1980: one of just seven triple winners in Indy history. She gave him a quilt in 1980, too.

Still, it wasn’t easy for her to get into even the garage area at Indy for autographs at that time.

“I loved the Indy 500, but they wouldn’t let women in to the garage until Janet Guthrie, the driver, who drove in the race in 1977,” she recalls. “I was told there were no ladies rest rooms. And, I wasn’t allowed into Victory Circle either until 1994.”

So, until she was able to get there, she went on days after the race to meet with the drivers. She says, “I’ve always dreamed of being the official quilt lady for the Indy 500.”

That first year in 1976, Elmer George, the race car driver and then Indy 500 official, took Rutherford around the track in a convertible and, when they returned to the garage area, she gave him the quilt at the garage area with a note: “Here’s a quilt I made for you.”

Each spring, she arrives at Indianapolis and collects the signatures on squares of white fabric which will become that year’s quilt. During her 40 years, she’s collected those of Andretti, Foyt, the Unsers and many others.

Each of the signatures is embroidered, the cotton blocks sewn together, batting added and backing material. She acquires her materials from stores such as Walmart and Joanne Fabrics. Next, she bastes the layers together and sews them working from the middle to the edges. She adds a border, signs it, then gets an autograph from the winner and presents the quilt the next day in Victory Circle.

Quilts can take up to a 1,000 hours of work. She’s made enough over the years to fill three football fields. Some are displayed in trophy rooms, homes and offices. The late car owner Jim Gilmore even raised the roof in his office to display his. Many plan to pass them to their children as heirlooms.



Mario Andretti, Indy 1969 - AP photo



Helio Castroneves Team Penske - photo Jeanetta Holder



photo Unser Racing Museum



photo Unser Racing Museum



photo Unser Racing Museum

Mario, Arie and Roger

"I am most fortunate to have one of Jeanetta's famous quilts," says racing legend Mario Andretti who won the 1969 Indy 500 in an eleventh-hour back-up car. He retired from racing in 1994 but continues to drive his Honda two-seater and gives rides, allowing passengers to sit behind the driver and experience the speed and pressure of open-wheel racing.

The quilt hangs in one of the rooms in his Pocono Mountains property. The Pocono 500 is run annually nearby. "One of our cabins has a racing theme, and that is where it is displayed," says the 76-year-old Andretti, who today works with Bridgestone, Firestone, MagnaFlow Performance Exhaust and Honda, among other companies.

The theme of the quilt is Mario as World Champion. He won the Formula 1 World Championship in 1978, fulfilling his life dream: "Jeanetta was kind enough to commemorate the occasion in this one-of-a-kind artistic masterpiece."

The winner of the 1990 and 1997 races, Arie Luyendyk, received two from Jeanetta, although only one remains after a small house flood damaged the other beyond repair.

"I always loved the fact that Jeanetta put so much effort and passion into the quilts," he says from his home in Fountain Hills, outside Scottsdale. "It's an unusual 'prize' to receive but nonetheless a wonderful memento from another Indy tradition."

The family used the 1990 quilt as a bedcover for their

daughter Maida for many years. "It's one of those items that will always be part of our lives," he says.

And Roger Penske, founder and chairman of Bloomington Hills, Michigan-based Penske Automotive Group Inc., recalls that Jeanetta has a great passion for racing. "She enjoyed attending events, and races really seemed to give her inspiration for her work. So we helped make sure she was able to have access at the races she could make it to, and it was always good to see her at the track," he says.

She has provided many quilts to Team Penske, whose cars have produced 442 major race wins, 506 pole positions and 29 national championships.

"They are all very special, and usually they commemorate an important win or moment in our history, like our 16 victories in the Indianapolis 500. Those are special moments for our team, and Jeanetta's quilts help preserve those memories.

"We know that Jeanetta pours her heart into each one of those quilts. They take a lot of work to create, and she takes great pride in what she does — much like our teams do when they prepare a car for a race," Penske adds. We appreciate that kind of commitment and effort, so we treasure each of the quilts she has shared with us over the years."

If you or someone you know has a GreatGarages and would like it to be considered for an upcoming issue, please e-mail us at info@highline-autos.com.



Scott Dixon 2008 - photo Jeanetta Holder