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The Spirit of 76

Union racer represents Local 701 on the speedway

By Don McIntosh

When Cory Garrison was a kid growing up in McMinnville, he dreamed of becoming a Marine, running freight trains, and operating cranes. At 31, he's done all three, and added another to the list: race car driver.

After 50-hour work weeks operating a tower crane for NessCampbell Crane and Rigging, Garrison spends his Saturdays at Sunset Speedway Park in Banks, Oregon, racing a 1970 Monte Carlo that he bought race-ready this April.

Spectators notice the car: It's the one with the three-foot-wide decal of Operating Engineers Training Center on the hood. Garrison is proud to promote his union, Operating Engineers Local 701, and its training center: They gave him the job he loves, and on the racetrack their support is keeping him safe.

The idea of sponsorship came up when Garrison told Local 701 President Darren Glebe about his new passion. Soon after, Garrison heard from Local 701 Business Manager Jimbo Anderson, who also serves as a trustee of the training center.



Every Saturday, April to September, Operating Engineers Local 701 member Cory Garrison races his red 1970 Monte Carlo at Sunset Speedway.

"I got a phone call from Jimbo [Anderson] asking what I needed," Garrison recalls. "I was pretty set, except I needed safety gear."

A contribution from the Training Center helped Garrison

purchase a five-point harness, a HANS (Head and Neck Support) device, and head-to-toe fire resistant clothing. Now, every Saturday, Garrison's red Car #76 puts the operators' logo in front of 500 to 1,500 fans.

Garrison sits behind the wheel in a blue fire-rated jumpsuit and a helmet decked out in the stars and stripes. "Cory Garrison," in blue cursive, runs along above the door. Seventy-six, the car number, runs in big white letters on the roof and the side.

"Being a former Marine, I went with a red white and blue theme," Garrison said.

Garrison spent four years in the U.S. Marine Corps as a maintenance manager and turret gunner running convoys in Iraq, and later operated a yard locomotive at an Iowa sand mine. But he found a career high up in the cab of a crane after he joined Local 701 in 2016.

"I love what I do," Garrison told the Labor Press. "My number one job is to make sure it's done safely and there are no injuries. Every time we pick something up, there's always a risk in our job that somebody could get hurt or not go home."

After the stress of moving tons of material safely and efficiently, auto racing is a kind of

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