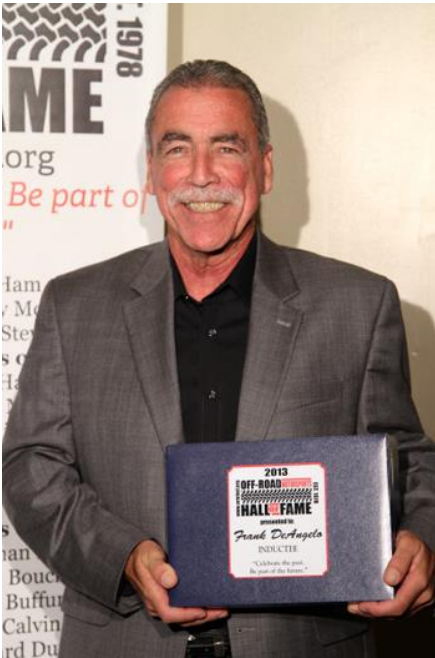


CHECKERS OFF ROAD RACING TEAM HONORS FRANK DE ANGELO WITH VIC VAN ELLA AWARD



Congratulations to ORMHOF inductee and board member Frank DeAngelo, on receiving the prestigious Vic Van Ella award from The Checkers Off Road Racing Team.

For the past 39 years (40 this year) Frank has been working for BFGoodrich Tires as either an employee or motorsports agency representative supporting, planning, and implementing many of their marketing and motorsports activities.

The Checkers Off Road Racing Team has a long history with the BFGoodrich Pit Team, going all the way back to 1975 when the Checkers were formed and BFGoodrich was invited by Sal Fish to attend its first Baja race. BFGoodrich liked what it saw and felt the Baja races would be a perfect real-life testing ground for its new Radial All-Terrain tires.

BFGoodrich sponsored two-time Mint Winner Fritz Kroyer (also a CHECKERS member) in a Class 6 Oldsmobile Starfire in the 1975 Baja 1000. Fritz was a DNF, but BFGoodrich was hooked from that point on and has used Baja as its own personal test track ever since. By the time 1982 rolled around, BFGoodrich was sponsoring several super-fast drivers, such as Scoop Vessels, Bob Gordon, Bill Stroppe, Malcolm Smith, Rod Hall, and Ivan Stewart. It was at this time that the BFGoodrich Marketing Manager decided he really needed to keep track of all the cars using BFGoodrich tires, so he tasked Bob Bower (who was the 2010 recipient of the Vic Van Ella Award) with assembling a professional pit team for the 1982 Baja 1000.

The first person recruited by Bob Bower was a young BFGoodrich truck driver named Frank DeAngelo. Frank's job was to drive the big BFGoodrich tractor-trailer rig to Baja, where it joined up with some of the other race teams to furnish a network of pits all the way from Ensenada to La Paz. Frank fell in love with Baja, and the next year was put in complete charge of the BFGoodrich Baja Pits program.

Frank gladly stuck with the program and made it a big part of his life. Although retired from BFGoodrich, he is still involved with it today, as Executive Director for the Jackson Motorsports Group, which currently handles the marketing and coordinates the pits for BFGoodrich at all the Baja races. A far cry from the 2- and 3-person 1982 pits, each modern BFGoodrich pit has about 20 workers in it, and most of them are volunteers. Like the Checkers, the pit people spend their vacations in Baja, or simply take off from work to be able to help out the racers whenever and wherever they can.

Frank has received about every award in the off-road world. He helped develop the BFGoodrich-Ford Rough Riders Off-Road Race Team in 1991, and the Trophy Truck racing class in 1994. In 2013 he was inducted into the Off-Road Motorsports Hall of Fame, and in 2016 was honored as SCORE's Person of the Year (for the second time). He serves on the ORMHOF Board of Directors with CHECKER Bob Ham, and along with CHECKER Chad Hall was part of the Rod Hall Hummer Team that won their class 16 minutes ahead of the second-place truck in the 2017 Baja 1000. The finish time was 37 hours and 5 minutes, marking Rod Hall's historic 50th consecutive Baja 1000.

A personal note to Frank from his Checkers friends reads, "But no matter how many other awards he has received, we know deep in our hearts that the Vic Van Ella trophy will take the top spot on Frank's fireplace mantle for the next 12 months. Frank, please accept our thanks for all the work you have done for 35 years, just so the rest of us could all have fun in the desert!"

HISTORY OF THE VIC VAN ELLA AWARD

(written in 2004 by Checker George R. Thompson)



Vic Van Ella was a Checker who had just purchased a new Class 2 RACECO (manufactured by Checker Dave Kreisler) back in 1985. At a HDRA event, shortly after taking delivery of the rocket, Vic found himself running in the lead with one of his sons in the second seat. While charging across a dry lake at full throttle, about midway into the race, he suffered a massive heart attack which instantly took his life at over 100 mph. Although his son was able to guide the buggy safely to an upright stop, there was nothing to be done for Vic. In retrospect, Vic had to be very surprised to start a race in Las Vegas only to take the checkered flag on the "the other side."

After the event, Checker "Uncle" Max Norris had a discussion with HDRA's Walt Lott, a Hall of Fame inductee, about doing something to commemorate Van Ella's supreme sacrifice to our sport. After giving the matter some thought, Lott offered to donate an impressive Perennial Trophy to the cause if the Checkers would award it yearly to an organization or individual who "had made a significant contribution to the sport over the years." Thus, the Vic Van Ella Trophy was born.

Other ORMHOF inductees who have received the Vic Van Ella award include:

- Michael Gaughan
- Bob Steinberger
- Ed Pearlman
- Sal Fish
- Corky McMillin
- Casey Folks
- Bob Ham