

North Seattle HERALD-OUTLOOK

SERVING THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF NORTH SEATTLE SINCE 1922

Friday, October 02, 2009

High-speed racing on Lake City Way? OK!

By [Mike Wood](#)

Friday, October 02, 2009



Gerry 'Pop' Brott of Red Devil Raceway Club & Slotcar Parlor ... just a retired Boeing guy gone wrong.

Seattle hobby shop. In that long-vanished monument to American leisure time, Brott saw a brand new slot car set shipped over from England. He knew he had found his passion, to the exclusion of all other hobbies popular at the time: "No trains, no boats, no planes - I've been a slot car racer ever since."

Fast forward a few decades. Retirement from Boeing provided Brott with the time and means to run a successful slot car racing track in Kirkland. Five years later, he was delivering slot car parts to a customer who was also a "full size" vintage car racer and a commercial property owner in Lake City. "He showed me this space, offered reasonable rent and I said, 'Where do I sign?'"

A FAMILY THING

Brott's right-hand man Craig Rieland, also a lifetime slot car racing enthusiast, noted that this is a "truly interactive" hobby the whole family can enjoy.

"We are doing the Friday night, Saturday and Sunday racing program now, with all different kinds of cars, for all skill levels," Rieland says. "We see a lot of fathers and sons, but a grandma comes in with all of her grandkids, and they race all the time!"

"If you have your own car and controller, we charge \$5 for running all day. We have a club membership available for \$10, and then all of your running time is free."

Most enthusiasts decide to invest in owning and modifying their own cars. A stock 1/32nd-scale race car retails for around \$50.

Brott would like to bring new racers to the Lake City track by partnering with local junior high schools. He hopes to make community connections that could lead to a program in which students would earn free track time for achieving good grades.

Also on his wish list are plans to establish new slot car racing programs, at no cost for youngsters receiving care at nearby Children's

From Friday nights through Sundays, at the bottom of the long hill on Lake City Way, specialized cars have been spotted driving at more than 200 m.p.h. Now, this isn't a public safety problem but a venerable American tradition: the hobby of 1/32 scale slot car racing and competition.

Slot car racing is no Mario Kart video game. These are real, miniature electric racing cars, 5 to 6 inches long, running at scaled-down speeds exceeding those of the fastest full-sized racers.

Their home track is the Red Devil Raceway Club & Slotcar Parlor at 10000 Lake City Way. Master spirits of the Friday night, Saturday and Sunday racing program for all ages and skill levels are Gerry Brott - affectionately known to racers as "Pop" - and right-hand man Craig Rieland. Established last December with a four-lane, 110-foot "speedway." Road Course-style track, this family-oriented business is off and running.

How did a hobby from the past come zipping back to life in North Seattle? The answer lies in the dedication of shop proprietor and lifetime enthusiast "Pop" Brott.

Back in 1957, Brott was a Seattle boy fresh out of high school and working in Bob Hale's downtown

Hospital. Having raised a son who became a high achiever in spite of disabilities, Brott makes a point of supporting people facing such challenges, and ensures that his slot car track is a welcoming place for them.

As an alternative to video games, Brott and Rieland see slot car racing as an exciting and fun way for individuals and families, of all ages, to build friendships through relaxed competition in a "real world" community of racers.

Brott recently attended an informal summit meeting of local enthusiasts with an agenda to discuss what they could do together to nurture this hobby. Slot car racing has seen ups and down over the years, but stubbornly refuses to die. In fact, "Pop" Brott sees signs of new growth in the Seattle area.

"In the middle '60s, the Vietnam War put the brakes on slot car racing, with many young slot car racers shipped overseas," he recalls, "but there have been a few minor resurgences in the hobby since then. Now we have two new 1/24th-scale places coming into being in the area. One in Lynnwood is a club; one in Edgewood is a formal slot car shop with three eight-lane, 1/24th-scale tracks. And as far as I'm concerned, the more the merrier in this hobby!"

Asked about the future of slot car shops in our climate of recession, Brott spoke thoughtfully.

"One thing I will say about the slot car business as a commercial venture - you are going to do it for the love of the hobby. You are never going to make huge money at it; it is not that kind of business. I'm a retired Boeing guy. I wouldn't be in this business if it wasn't for the love of slot car racing. As long as I can keep the lights on, keep the fun going on - it's fine."

For information, contact Gerry Brott, 206-729-2235 (shop phone) or 425-246-2525 (cell).