

New Hampshire Troopers Help Fulfill A Dream



Trooper Sean Faberty stands with Grady Johnson before heading to New Hampshire International Speedway.

By Tpr. Andrew Player

It has been over two years since Sgt. Michael Johnson of the Vermont State Police was killed in the line of duty. Sgt. Johnson attempted to deploy a spike mat in order to stop a subject who was being pursued along Interstate 91 in Vermont. Tragically the subject lost control of his vehicle and struck Sgt. Johnson killing him. The subject fled from the scene and crossed the Connecticut River into Hanover. Troopers from across the state of New Hampshire converged on the Upper Valley, drawn by the bond of brotherhood, to assist in the search for the man that had killed a fellow trooper.

Although separated by the Connecticut River the bond shared by the Vermont and New Hampshire troopers is still just as strong today as it was then. This was shown when New Hampshire Troopers assisted Sgt. Bruce

Melendy of the Vermont State Police in making a little boy's dream come true.

Grady Johnson, son of Sgt. Michael Johnson loved to watch Nascar. Every Sunday Grady would cheer for Dale Earnhardt, Jr. Grady felt a connection to the man that was simply known as Dale Jr. The son of Nascar legend Dale Earnhardt, Sr., Dale Jr. was thrust into the spotlight after his

father was killed in a crash during the final lap of the 2001 Daytona 500. The strength and courage that Dale Jr. exhibited after losing his father was an inspiration to many. It is not hard to imagine

why Grady would cheer for Dale Jr. after tragically losing his own father.

Last year, with the help of Sgt Melendy, Grady was able to enjoy watching Dale Earnhardt, Jr. in action at the New Hampshire International Speedway. Grady thoroughly enjoyed the day and dreamed of someday being able to meet his hero. Hoping to make the little boy's dream come true Sgt. Melendy put a plan into action.

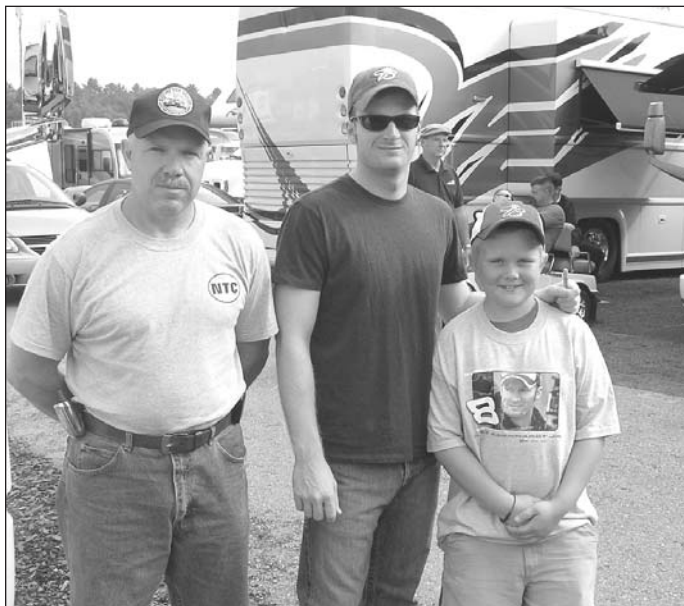
After much work, the plan came to fruition on September 18, 2005, as members of the New Hampshire State Police were able to assist in making Grady's dream come true. Much of the credit however goes to New Hampshire International Speedway and Ken Squire. Many may remember Ken Squire from the decades that he spent announcing the Daytona 500, while others may know of him as the owner of Thunder Road, a racetrack situated in Barre, >



From left to right: Trooper Sean Faberty, Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Grady Johnson, and Trooper Andrew Player pose for a photograph.



Dale Earnhardt, Jr. admires the teddy bear inspired by his father that Grady brought him.



Sgt. Bruce Melendy gets his picture taken with Dale Earnhardt, Jr. and Grady.

Vermont. When Mr. Squire heard about Grady and his desire to meet Dale, Jr., he took the matter to heart. Mr. Squire worked with Bob Bahre, owner of the New Hampshire International Speedway, in order to contact Dale, Jr.'s representatives. The New Hampshire State Police was also contacted to make sure that Grady and Sgt. Melendy would be treated well while visiting.

Trooper Sean Faherty and Trooper Andrew Player were assigned to assist

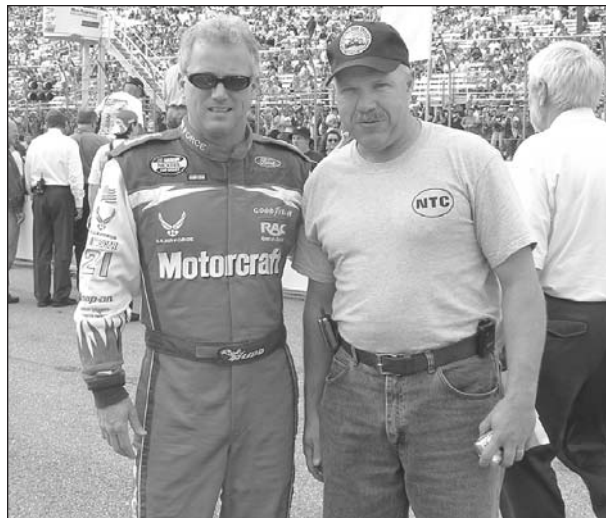
Grady in meeting Dale, Jr. Despite his busy schedule, Dale Jr. graciously spent time with Grady before attending a question and answer event. Grady presented Dale, Jr. with gifts that he had brought, including maple syrup, a Vermont State Police jacket, and a teddy bear with a racing uniform designed to resemble Dale Earnhardt, Sr.'s. Grady was truly excited to spend a few minutes talking with Dale Earnhardt Jr. as well as get an autograph and a few pictures.

Grady continued to enjoy the day, as he was able to visit pit road and watch pre-race festivities. Nascar racing is known for its family friendly environment and close connection to its fans. The Sylvania 300 held at New Hampshire International Speedway that day was no different. Many of the drivers were more than happy to take a moment out of their busy day in order to sign an autograph or take a photo with Grady.

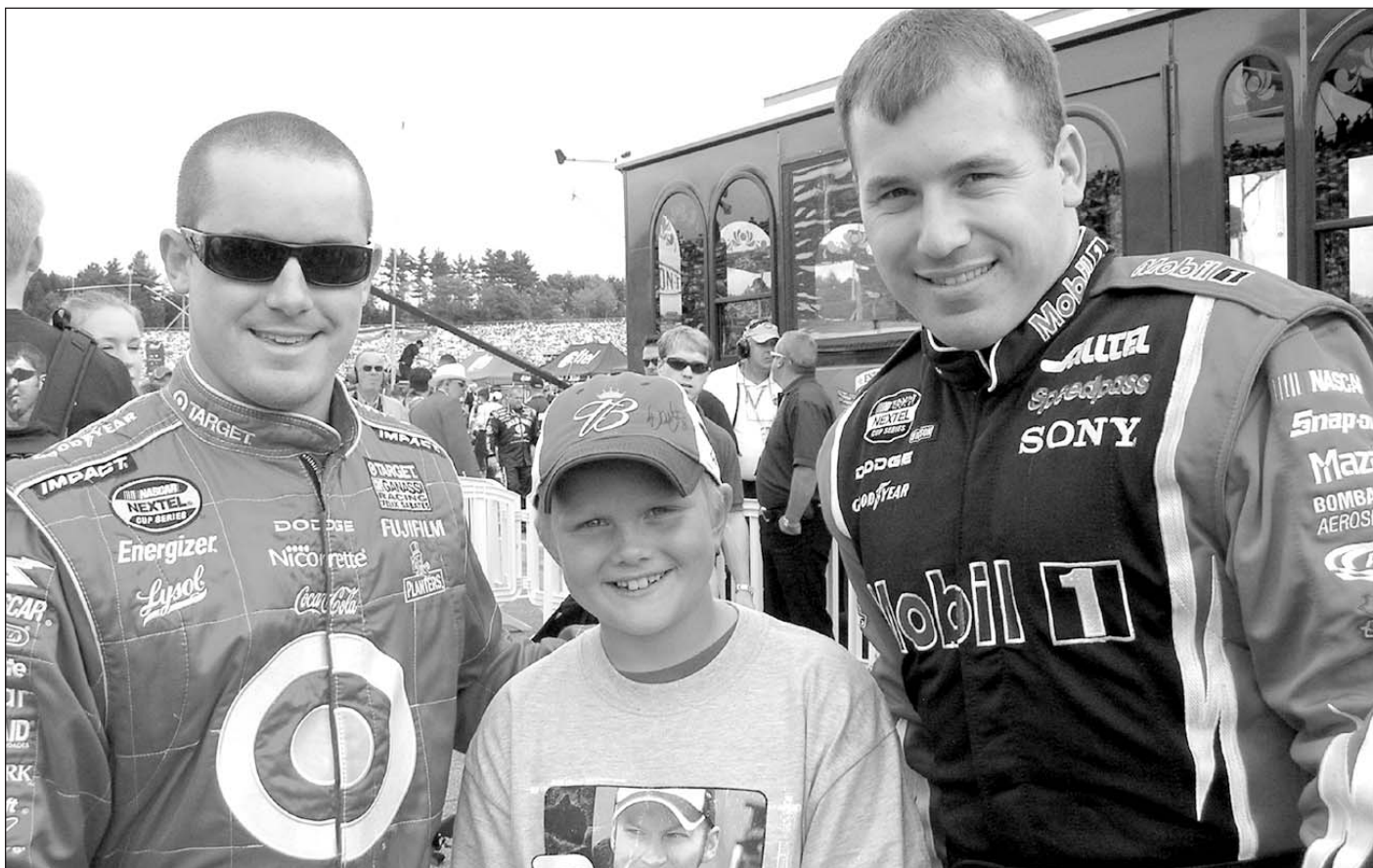
On behalf of Grady a heartfelt thanks



Mark Martin takes a moment to get his picture taken with Grady before going to a public relations event.



Sgt. Bruce Melendy stands next to driver Ricky Rudd near the Start/Finish line at NHIS.

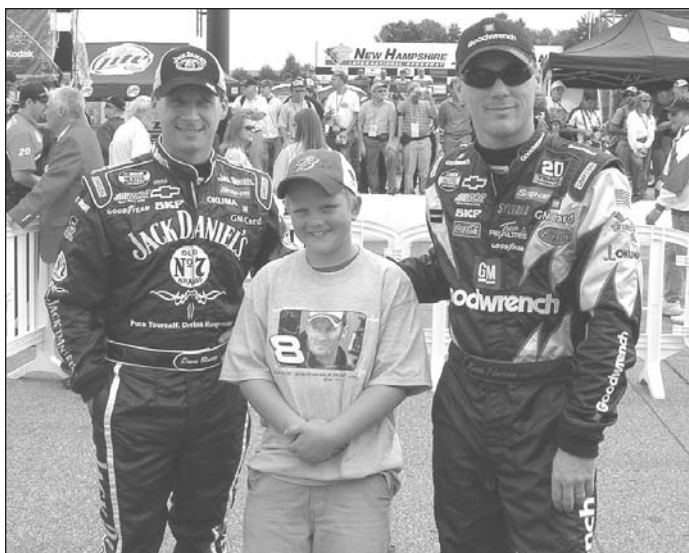


Drivers Casey Mears (left) and Ryan Newman (right) take a moment before driver introductions to pose with Grady.

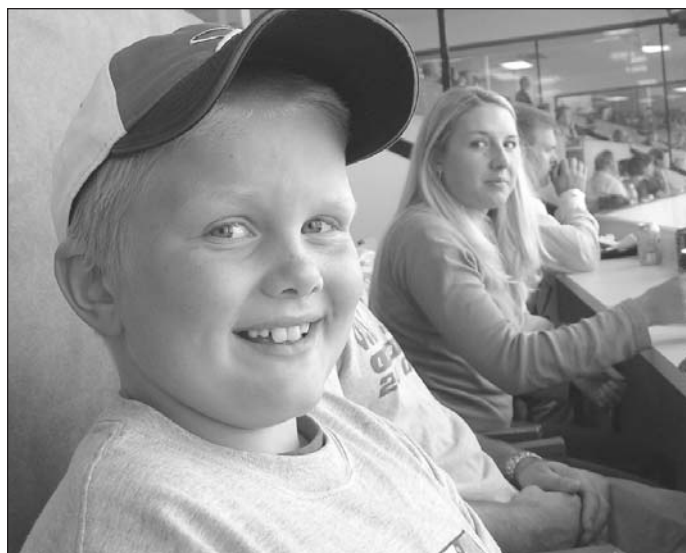
goes out to Ken Squire, Bob Bahre, the staff of New Hampshire International Speedway, the New Hampshire State

Police, Vermont State Police Sgt. Bruce Melendy, and especially Dale Earnhardt, Jr. Although Dale, Jr. may not have won

the race that day, he certainly finished first in the hearts of many, including a little boy named Grady Johnson. □



Grady gets his photo with drivers Dave Blaney (left) and Kevin Harvick (right) prior to driver introductions.



The smile on Grady's face shows his appreciation for everyone's hard work in making the day possible.