



Proclamation

WHEREAS, Donald “Don” Glenn Garlits was born on January 14, 1932 in Tampa, Florida. In 1950, Don married his high school sweetheart, Pat. Growing up, Don improved his mechanical skills by repairing bicycles, farm equipment, and any other mechanical apparatus that he could get his hands on. Don was captivated with drag racing when his high school teacher introduced him to a new publication called Hot Rod Magazine. Don began racing in 1950 and scored his first major victory in 1955; and

WHEREAS, By the late ‘50s, Don, a fan favorite, was making a name for himself with a car nicknamed “Swamp Rat,” one of a series of his 34 black Swamp Rat racecars and one of which now resides in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Don achieved 144 national event wins and 17 World Championship titles. He was the first driver ever to surpass 170, 180, 200, 240, 250, 260 and 270 miles per hour from a standing start in the quarter mile; he was also the first to top 200 mph in the 1/8 mi.; and

WHEREAS, with over five decades of wins, speed records, his automotive engineering skills, and innovative ideas for the evolution of the sport, Don has won popularity with spectators all around the world. Don’s well-known name is “Big Daddy” and has been dubbed the “King of the Dragsters,” and could be considered the patriarch of Top Fuel Drag Racing. However, it has not always been easy for Don. In his career, Don had a few incidents which involved an engine and a transmission that exploded causing near fatal burns. These setbacks only gave Don the motivation to advocate and work on innovative safety improvements: he was the first driver to wear a full-body, fire resistant suit and was the first to engineer a dragster with the engine mounted behind the driver; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, at the age of 72, he took Swamp Rat 34 out of his museum a final time and drove it to a career best: 323.04 mph. In May 2014 at age 82, Don set a 184-mph speed record with Swamp Rat 37, a 2,000 hp battery-powered EV dragster. In July 2019 at age 87, he set a new quarter-mile record of 189.03 mph with Swamp Rat 38, a 1,500 lb. dragster with a battery-powered 800 hp electric motor; and

WHEREAS, adding to Don’s marvelous racing accomplishments is a Florida Tourist complex called the **Don Garlits Museum of Drag Racing** on the grounds of his home in Ocala, Florida. He has been inducted into several Halls of Fame and has won many awards during his career. The driving force of his success has been hard work, dedication, and a passion for the sport.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Kent Guinn, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Ocala, Florida, do hereby acknowledge Donald Glenn Garlits for his remarkable achievement and publicly recognize the **45th Anniversary of the Don Garlits Museum of Drag Racing** for its widespread contributions in our community.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Ocala, Florida, to be affixed this 10th day of December 2021.

Kent Guinn, Mayor
City of Ocala

