

# Mechanic gets shot at the big time

■ Fremont Lexus technician chosen to lend hand at Monterey race

By Aaron Morrison  
STAFF WRITER

After working almost 26 years as a technician for Toyota, Hayward resident Mike Rippy probably deserves the opportunity to be a crew member at Race of the Legends, in which he participated this weekend in Monterey.

The Monterey Historics Automobile Races attracts an estimated 40,000 visitors annually.

Rippy, 55, was chosen by a Toyota field product engineer to be part of a four-member pit crew, which handled race car preparation and maintenance on specially tuned Scion tC performance vehicles, said Michael Dorbin, a field relations agent for Toyota.

"I've been to a lot of races in my life and I enjoy watching," Rippy said Thursday from Monterey.

Rippy, a former motorcycle racer, not only watched the races but also rubbed shoulders with motor racing stars Parnelli Jones, Johnny Rutherford and Bobby Unser.

"I was excited to meet all of them," Rippy said. "The one that impressed me the most is Bobby Unser."

Unser has won the Indianapolis 500 three times, in 1968, 1975 and 1981.

Rippy worked in a pit crew for races on Thursday and Saturday, tuning the cars before the races, which in theory were all supposed to be equal, he said.

The legendary drivers competed in an eight-lap

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TIMOTHY BURMAN

**HAYWARD RESIDENT MIKE RIPPY**, 55, (right) a diagnostic specialist at Magnussen Lexus in Fremont, meets three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Bobby Unser at Laguna Seca Raceway before the Race of Legends.

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► **RACE**, from Local 1

race on a nine-turn, two-mile track. Every year this four-day event features more than 375 historic race and sports cars entered in 14 race groups on Monterey's Laguna Seca raceway.

Rippy, who now works at Magnussen Lexus of Fremont,

hopes that he'll one day be in a position to compete in the races.

"Monday I'll go back to my regular job," Rippy said.

"Someday I'd certainly like to have a car and race, but we'll see where that goes."

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