

Shifting Gears

Former Katy ISD English teacher, Creigh Lidiak, zooms through retirement as a race car driver

Written by Tonya Ellis | Photography by Anetrus Wallace



Three years ago, Katy resident Creigh Lidiak shifted gears in a major way, going from English teacher to race car driver. Retiring from a 30-year-career where she taught middle and high school students at Cinco Ranch Junior High and Seven Lakes High School, among others, she was ready to put the pedal to the metal. When she told her husband Gary that she thought she would like to race, he wasn't surprised.

The Color Pink

"She's never been afraid to try new things," Gary says. "As long as it's controlled mayhem, she'll try it."

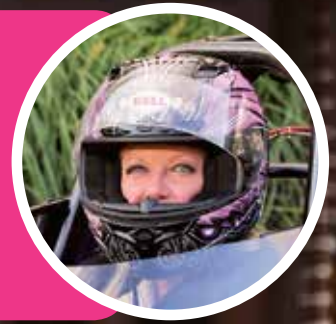
The couple found a dragster and started rebuilding it. Now you can find Lidiak on weekends, zooming around Baytown's Royal Purple Raceway and other Texas tracks at speeds of up to 160 miles per hour. "It's a rush, it truly is," Creigh adds.

Creigh's car is a pink and black dragster, 235 inches long, and very narrow. There is no roof, but she is surrounded by what is called a roll cage. Creigh chose the pink color to honor her best friend, Joy Rutherford, who is fighting breast cancer. "We've always called ourselves sisters," she says. "My children were raised thinking that was their aunt."



Fast Facts About Lidiak

- Race car driver for three years
- Dragster reaches up to 160 miles per hour during a race
- Learned to fly airplanes as a teen
- Wants to try skydiving next



Creigh Lidiak, who was a Katy ISD educator for 30 years, now spends her retirement years as a race car driver

Racing Family

Nine years ago, Gary introduced their middle son John-Michael to the sport. “We bought an old Nova, stripped it, and they made it into a race car,” Creigh remembers. Although Creigh does admit that she is nervous at times seeing her son out there. “When he went from the left lane, to a right lane, and almost drove into a wall, my heart stopped,” she adds, recalling a specific race.

But by 2012, Creigh decided she wanted to take the wheel herself. Now she clocks in faster times than he does. “He says, ‘You know mom, I’m going to win,’” she chuckles. “I reply, ‘You know, sweetie, I’m going to let you win.’”

Women racers are common nowadays, but there aren’t many Creigh’s age. “More and more women from the Houston area are winning. But here I am this grandma,” she says. Creigh has both International Hot Rod Association (IHRA) and National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) licenses for racing. She also joined the YMCA to stay in shape because the sport can be physically draining.

Some of her former students keep up with her racing via social media. “They are shocked,” she says. “They think it’s really cool.”

Pit Crew

Her family is a huge support system and Creigh has her own pit crew made up of their seven grandchildren: Haleigh, 13; Malik, 12; Amirah, 10; Kailah, 7; John-Gareth, 4; Nathan, 3; and Emma, 2.

“They drive the golf cart, wipe down the car, and bring me water,” Creigh says. “They love to see Mimi race,” adds Gary.

Creigh is having a ball during her retirement, and will continue racing as long as she can. “I don’t think she’ll ever stop,” Gary says. “Once it’s in your blood, it never goes away.” **KM**

TONYA ELLIS loves to ride roller coasters but doesn’t think she’d have the guts to drive, or ride in, a race car.