

Nelson Crozier's always on the go, looking for a better way to do things. More times than not, he succeeds

might be choreographing and providing the technical information for a pit reporter's story on restrictor plates.

Crozier's services are constantly in demand. For example, this spring, he helped organize and maintain the complicated network of communications linking all the participants during "Kyle Petty's Charity Ride Across America."

It's no wonder that 18-hour days are the norm for Crozier.

"I went to bed last night at 2:30 a.m., and was up at 6:30," he says. "The night before, I went to bed at 3:30."

The 56-year-old Sanford, Fla., native admits that while he maintains a grueling work schedule, he has no one to blame but himself.

"I've got myself in a kind of routine," he says. "It's very hard for me

to say 'No' to people."

As a youth growing up in rural Eastern North Carolina, saying 'No' to extra work was not an option. His father, a Navy officer on an aircraft carrier, was often at sea for months at a time, leaving his son to tend to things around the house. Young Nelson displayed an early aptitude for all things mechanical, including the family cars.

"For the most part, I had to do all the repairs," Crozier says. "When I was 7 or 8 years old, I was already doing some of the repairs and maintenance to the cars."

He found his way into racing circles in the 1960s, doing various jobs for several different race teams. Junie Donlavey was one of the men who gave him a start in the sport.

"He gave me a rag, a flashlight, a wrench and a creeper and told me,

'Crawl around under the car and see if there's anything you don't like,'" Crozier recalls with a smile.

In the early '70s, Crozier founded his own electronics firm.

"Originally, we did a lot of military, government and industrial work," he says.

Some of those government projects were, shall we say ... classified, or top secret.

"I'm sure some of it falls in that category. We've done work for NASA, the whole bit," Crozier says, politely refusing to elaborate.

It didn't take him long to make a name for himself and his fledgling firm. One of his early jobs was a project with NASA. Seems the space agency was having trouble with the industrial motors it used to operate the satellite dishes at its Wallops Island (Va.) Flight Center. NASA officials had tried just about everything.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Nelson Crozier is easy to spot at the race track, carrying so much electronic gear he once earned the nickname "Capt. Lightning Bolt." **BELOW:** Crozier shares his notes with TV pit reporter Dr. Jerry Punch. The electronics whiz serves as a media consultant during races.



Photo: LaDon George