Bend Family Makes Car Collecting Family Affair

by K_Guice

By day, Harry Fagen runs a logging, construction and trucking company. By night he pursues his passion, restoring vintage vehicles like the ones he will have on display at the Flashback Cruz that runs through August 6.

The Fagen family in their 1927 Model-T   Neil & Ashley, 1954 Mercury "I work a lot of hours," he said. "I work all day in the woods, work half the night on my cars, get a couple hours sleep and then head out again. My wife is always calling out to the shop and asking when I am coming to bed," he laughed.

Though his wife, Beverly doesn't complain. Like her husband she too has a love for old cars. "I like it too so it's easy to support it," she said.

She added to the collection with her own old classic car four year ago. The couple bought a 1953 Cadillac that her grandparents had originally bought new. "Her uncle had sold it to someone in Dairy, Oregon," Harry recalled.

"Bev called her aunt one year to wish her a happy birthday who told her that she heard the car was for sale," he said. "She told me about it and we left at five o'clock the next morning and we went to buy it."

Harry said bringing that car home was a truly special trip for his wife. "That was the first time she had been in that car since she was a little girl and used to ride in the back window of the car to town," he said.

Those childhood ties to a classic are something that Harry understands well. He bought the very first car, a 1933 Ford Coupe nearly 50 years ago. "I bought it when I was 15 years old from the lead guitar player of

the Fleetwoods. They sang Mr. Blue,â€• he recalled.

 â€œI paid 50 bucks and me, the guy and Butch Hoagland hauled the body and frame home,â€• Harry said. Today, that car would likely sell for around $80,000.

 Over the years, the car has lived many lives. â€œI drag raced it in the early 60s in Madres, then I put it on the street and then I tore down and about 30 years later and I restored,â€• he said.

 The 1933 Ford has a â€˜56 Oldsmobile motor, a â€˜39 Ford transmission and a chopped top. â€œItâ€™s all steel,â€• he said with pride. â€œThatâ€™s the key. There arenâ€™t many of those out there that are steel. A lot of them are fiberglass,â€• he added. â€œThis is original.â€•

 It is one of over a dozen cars that the Fagens own. When asked exactly how many he has in his shop, Harry called out to Bev, â€œHow many cars do we have out there? 13? 14?â€• To which she replied, â€œAbout 15.â€•

 The couples extensive collection is impressive, to say the least. It includes a 1927 Model T Touring, a 1954 Mercury hard top, a 1935 Ford truck, a 1928 Ford Model A Phaeton and many more.

 The Phaeton is a rare find, but his particular model is even rarer. â€œThe hand brake in this model is on the left hand side and they only made them for three months,â€• he said.

 While each car is special to Harry, it is his first, the 1933 Ford that he says he will always treasure the most. â€œIâ€™ve had it for 48 years, he said. â€œIt was part of my youth and I want to save it for the kids.â€•

All four children have been involved in collecting and restoring the vintage vehicles over the years. "I think it helped us bond and helped us to work together even in later years in life," he said.

Now, the kids and even his grandson are collecting and restoring their own cars. Harry gave Dallas, his 12-year-old grandchild, a 1964 Chrysler New Yorker.

"I took the title down to the hospital when he was born," he said. Dallas and his dad, Wade, Harry's eldest son who is 42, now work on it together.

In addition, Wade is the disk jockey spinning old '50s tunes from the back of his dad's 1935 Ford truck at the Flashback Cruz street dance.

Harry Jr., 39, now lives in Mt. Shasta, California. He has a 1964 Chevrolet Impala. Neil, 22, is in Seattle. Not only does he show and race his 1970 Chevrolet pickup, he is now working with Bucky Austin, the nine time division 6 funny car racing champion.

"What really excites me this year is, I restored a 1956 Buick Special for my daughter," he said. "She knows I've been restoring it but she doesn't know it's done. It was supposed to be done when she was 16," he laughed.

His 24-year-old daughter is coming from Helena, Montana for the annual Flashback Cruz in Bend. That's when he will unveil her very first vintage car.

Harry is happy that his children and wife alike have picked up his passion. For him it just comes natural. "It's my first love," he said. "I've had cars and guns longer than I have ever had a woman," he laughed.

"I've built something all my life," he added. "It is something you do with your own hands. You start with nothing and the end result it is something that no one else has got."

The couple likes taking their unique vehicles out on the road and to shows like the Flashback Cruz in Bend. He says it's great to see people come out and appreciate the cars that he has put so much time and effort into.

Cruising around downtown as people gather round is something truly special, "I can't hardly explain the feeling, he said. "When you work on something that much it's just a feeling you can't explain."

Maybe it is something that people just have to see for themselves. "There are lots of beautiful cars there… I don't see why anyone would want to miss it if they are into cars at all," he said.

Harry will have several of his vintage vehicles on display at the Flashback Cruz. For more information visit: www.centraloregonclassicchevyclub.com/cruzpage.htm.