

The People Who Keep Old Cars Alive

Most of us have bought — or owned — a great old car that needed some help. Perhaps it needed new body panels, rust repair to the frame and an engine rebuild. Maybe it needed some light bodywork and new paint. Or in an extreme — but not especially rare — case it crashed and burned and needed an entire rebuild.

Over the past few decades, a special breed of mechanics, technicians and historians have made it their life's work to bring old cars back from the dead — or just keep them running.

Without them, our world would be a lot rustier, noisier, more dangerous and, yes, sadder.

SCM Publisher Keith Martin is no stranger to the restoration shop, and he came up with the notion of recognizing a few of the elite people in the restoration world. We reached out to SCM readers, and we got hundreds of nominations. The selection process was tough.

Yet, like a good resto tech, we pressed on, and here are SCM's Top 20.

— *Executive Editor Chester Allen*

Courtesy of The Creative Workshop

Richard Barnes

Company: Paul Russell and Company
Location: Essex, MA

Specialty: Automobile upholstery restoration (coach trimmer).

Years of experience: 40. I grew up in London, England, and was accepted into the Rolls-Royce Apprenticeship training program in 1977, when I was 16. I completed the four-year program and went on to work for Hooper and Co., customizing Rolls-Royces and Bentleys for three years before moving to New Hampshire in 1984 to work for British Auto. Between 1990 and 2006, I worked for different companies. I was also self-employed for a while. In late 2006, I was asked to join the Paul Russell and Company team, and I have been there for the past 11 years.

Most recent project: I'm currently working on a late-1930s Bugatti, a late-1950s BMW and an early-1960s Ferrari.

Most challenging project: One particular car that comes to mind was a 1938 Delahaye. Nothing about the car interior or top resembled its original configuration. A lot of research went into studying what that configuration should be. I constructed new door panels and reconfigured the seats. The car came in with a full-size plastic rear window in the



convertible top, so a new solid oval rear window had to be made for the top and positioned exactly right to allow the top to fold. The car went on to win First in Class at Pebble Beach.

Career high point: Joining the Paul Russell and Company team allowed me to witness every aspect of restoration in detail. After 30 years in the trade, this allowed me to complete my career at the highest possible level. Another high point was last year, when I was asked to teach a few classes in the automobile restoration program at McPherson College in Kansas. It was the first time a tradesperson had been invited to teach classes there.

Ed Barr

Company: McPherson College

Location: McPherson, KS

Specialty: Sheet metal

Years of experience: 13

Contact: Barre@mcpherson.edu

Most recent project: I recently helped a group of students build an aluminum MGB "Zagato" front clip with the classic three-bump hood. It looked unbelievable and gave me a chance to immerse these students in the lore and techniques of Italian coachbuilding.

Most challenging project: I am building a full-size Jaguar D-type wood buck that students will use as a guide in metal shaping. I feel like I have picked a fistfight with a gorilla. Unfortunately, making an accurate sculpture of a car is exactly as challenging as one might expect. Hopefully, the gorilla will tire before I do. My students are counting on it.

Career high point: Getting random text messages from current and former students showing me the amazing cars they are restoring at their internships and jobs. My students are working on Mercedes-Benzes, Bugattis, Ferraris, Aston Martins, and an O.S.C.A.



*Congratulations to our
Top 20 Restorer, Richard Barnes*

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Paul Russell and Company

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Mariah Bruins

Company: MRestoration Design LLC

Location: St. Louis, MO

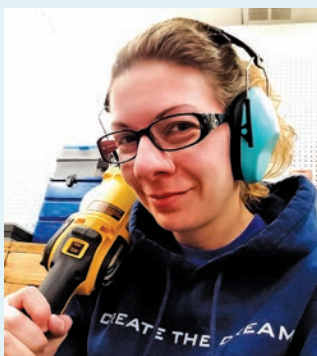
Specialties: Preservation/paint

Years of experience: Seven

Contact: 785.447.0487

Most recent project: Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud and Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud II preservation. I'm also doing full paint and assembly for 1933 Auburn 12 Boattail Speedster and full collection preservation for Hunter Classics (150-plus cars).

Most challenging project: The Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud II. Silver Clouds are custom coachbuilt cars. Parts are expensive and becoming hard to find. This car had original lacquer paint and was found as a barn find. The overall goal was to keep it as original as possible while servicing the mechanics and refreshing any interior that was damaged.



Career high point: The Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud II that won a preservation award at the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club National Meet (with credit to Zenith Motor Company LLC, Kansas City, MO).



Hershel "Junior" Conway

Company: Junior's House of Color

Location: Bell Gardens, CA

Specialties: High-end custom paint and restoration, along with metal finish and lead bodywork.

Years of experience: 65

Contact: 562.928.6393

Recent projects: 1967 Ferrari 275 GTS, 1957 Ford Thunderbird, 1972 Porsche 911, 1936 Fiat Topolino, 1974 Ferrari 246 Dino.

Most challenging project: 1940 Mercedes-Benz 770 Grosser bulletproof car for William Lyon.

Career high point: I'm still working 10 hours a day, six days a week.



Giovanni D'Avola

Company: Autosprint Ltd.

Location: Chicago, IL

Specialties: Mechanical restoration (engine, transmission, brakes and suspension).

Years of experience: 45

Contact: 773.685.0930; info@autosprintchicago.com

Most recent project: A complete engine and transmission restoration for a 1963 Ferrari 250 GTE.

Most challenging project:

It was a 1964 Ferrari 365 2+2 that had been in several shops and had sat for years. It came to me in boxes. Parts were missing, and it took a long time to sort through and research the project.

Career high point: When I bought Autosprint and when I was asked to come out to California and participate in a project on "Monster Garage."



Bob DiFrancesco

Company: Leydon Restorations

Location: Hatfield, PA

Specialties: Machinist, fabricator, welder, engine machining/rebuilding, body and paint

Years of experience: 40

Most recent project: I'm currently working on rebuilding a Type 57 Bugatti engine, which came to us in broken bits and pieces — as they usually do. Many components were missing, therefore requiring machining of new parts and welding repairs. There are a lot of challenges, as these engines are old, have been through a lot of hands and we have to deal with Bugatti's "interesting" way of doing things.

Most challenging project: I have had many challenging jobs over the years, from rebuilding 110-year-old steam engines to rebuilding blown-up incomplete motors and transmissions, so it's hard to pick one. I would say that Bugatti engine hand-scraping requires the most focus and mental concentration. It's a process which involves smoothing all the aluminum topside



engine components, laying out a grid pattern of 3/8-inch squares with a marker and then using a hand-scraping tool — it resembles a large chisel — to strike two marks in each box, perpendicular to one another to create a decorative pattern, thousands of times over. One slip, and you're starting over.

Career high point: Having had the pleasure of restoring a classic car for each one of my three children — and seeing the enjoyment they get from them.

Ken Downes

Company: European and American Auto Upholstery

Location: San Rafael, CA

Specialties: Ken Downes is the founder of European and American Auto Upholstery, which specializes in interior restoration of vintage European and American automobiles.

His restoration projects include cars made in England, Germany, Italy and France.

Ken's craftsmanship also includes modern and contemporary cars, using his expertise for custom convertible-top installation, leather interiors and an assortment of other interior and exterior restoration components. His deep knowledge and skills are far-reaching. He has a fine-tuned eye for the integrity of classic and rare automobiles and he honors the aesthetics that make them collectible and unique.

He has the artistic ability to transform raw materials — such as canvas, wool-blend carpets and European leather of the highest grade — into a finished product. His finishing includes stretching and forming leather on a dash, steering wheel or seats.

Years of experience: Over 30



Contact: 415.459.0353

Most recent project: A complete interior restoration of a 1971 Mercedes-Benz 280SL, using original materials.

Most challenging projects: Interior and top restorations of Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwings, Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadsters and Aston Martin DB4 and DB5 cars.

Career high point: Ken is an Instructor at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, where he teaches Vintage Vehicle Upholstery Restoration in the Industrial Design Department and mentors and inspires his students to become superior auto upholsterers.

Kevin J. Mackay

Company: Corvette Repair Inc.

Location: Valley Stream, NY

Specialty: Corvette restoration and repair

Years of experience: 33

Contact: 516.568.1959; www.corvetterepair.com

Most recent project: The 1956 Corvette SR-2. One of only two high-finned Corvettes ever built.

Most challenging project: The 1963 Corvette Cutaway, chassis 003. This car is completely functional and drivable.

Career high point: The *Corvette Hunter* book that told the stories of the many discoveries of "Holy Grail" Corvettes that we made, with a lot of help, through Corvette Repair Inc. The book is about how we were able to unearth a lot of cars that were thought to be lost forever, such



as the #3 1960 Briggs Cunningham Le Mans Corvette that won its class. We are the most-awarded Corvette restoration facility in the country, with many NCRS Top Flight, Bloomington Gold, Triple Diamond and concours award winners.



Chris McCune

Company: D.L.

George Historic Motorcars, Cochranville, PA

Location: Cochranville, PA

Specialties: Metal shaping, fabrication, paint and bodywork.

Years of experience: 38. I have enjoyed working in the automotive restoration field since 1980.

I began my career by studying automotive bodywork at a vocational technical school in Phoenixville, PA. During my senior year, I learned the basics of paint and bodywork by working in a co-op position. In 1986, I began working for Dave George at D.L. George Historic Motorcars. After 32 years, I am still part of the team. Twenty-some years ago, I studied metal shaping under the late Clay Cook — and the primary focus of my work transitioned into metal shaping soon thereafter.

Contact: Chris@dlgeorge.com

Most recent project: A current project is metalwork, bodywork and paint for a Labourdette-bodied Bugatti Type 49.



Most challenging project: The most challenging project I have completed is the fabrication of a complete Alfa Romeo 8C 2300 Monza coachwork body to Brianza specifications. The scale and complexity of the project made it particularly challenging.

Career high point: Many top awards achieved at Pebble Beach and Amelia Island Concours — and successful finishes at events like the Mille Miglia and Colorado Grand. In particular, I recall Jack Rich's Murphy-bodied S Mercedes and an Alfa Romeo 6C 1500 Testa Fissa Spider Zagato.

Bill Hahn

Company: Hahn Auto Restoration

Location: Harmony, PA

Specialty: Auto restoration

Years of experience: 47

Contact: 724.452.4329

Most recent project: Something totally different from the usual — a Fiat Hellcat. I am putting a 2016 Dodge Charger Hellcat chassis under a 2012 Fiat 500 body.

Most challenging project: The 1938 HRG coupe. It was a prototype and the only one built. HRG produced only 241 cars in 21 years. The car was disassembled in the mid-1960s in England. It was then shipped to the United States in the 1980s. Some used parts from scrapyards and flea markets were thrown in the parts



boxes. The body was rusted and rotted. The frame was stress-cracked. Much of the interior was nonexistent. There wasn't much history to go on.

Career high point: Developing and utilizing 3-D scanning and imaging to restore bodies of Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwings and Roadsters to the tolerances that the original engineers originally drew.



Austin Higbee

Company: Macy's Garage Ltd.

Location: Tipp City, OH

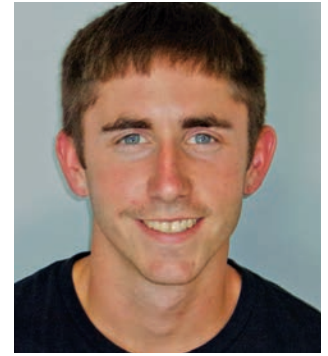
Specialties: Triumph TR2 through TR6 sports cars. Mechanical, interior, electrical, final assembly — everything except body and paint.

Years of experience: 7.5

Contact: 937.667.3014, Austin@macysgarage.com

Recent project: There are 16 to 20 TRs in our shop at all times. Last month, we completed and shipped restorations on two TR3s and one TR3A. In addition to the work I do on the cars, I have the responsibility for scheduling and directing seven other techs to keep all projects moving forward toward completion.

Most challenging project: The 1961 TR4 that was just completed for the owners of Macy's Garage. This was a very early car, serial 288, and there were many parts and assembly methods that were different from all of the later cars that I've repaired and restored. As this car was intended to be an example of our shop's work, all of these early oddities had to be researched and confirmed to make certain that every single piece



was correct and absolutely perfect. I had to research everything, even down to the hardware level to make sure that every bolt had the right finish on it, every screw had the correct head, and that every washer was the right diameter.

Career high point: Winning Best of Show honors at the 2018 Triumph Register of America National Meet with the 1961 TR4 (CT288L). The car received the first perfect 100-point score in the 44-year history of the Triumph Register of America.

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| 724-452-4329

Don McLellan and Ernie Morreau

Company: RM Auto Restoration

Location: Chatham, Ontario, Canada

Specialties: Complete restorations, including body, panel fabrication, paint, mechanical, upholstery, electrical, Dyno testing and woodworking

Years of experience: Over 50 years combined

Contact: 519.352.4575. Website: www.rmautorestore.com

Most recent project: 1937 Cadillac V16 Special Roadster by Hartmann

Most challenging project: The cars we restore can be one-of-a-kind, coachbuilt examples. We have to research their history to make them as correct as possible. Many times, these cars have been restored before — sometimes many times.

Career high point: Six wins of Best of Show at Pebble Beach in 2001, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2013 and 2015. Also getting to show cars all over the world (including England and Italy).



Roger Patten

Company: KTR European Motorsports

Location: Ayer, MA

Specialties: Body panel and parts fabrication and repair. Auto body and restoration management. Assembly.

Years of experience: 31

Contact: 978.772.7800

Most recent projects: 1956 Alfa Romeo 1900 C Super Sprint Tipo 4 and an Alfa Romeo Veloce Spyder

Most challenging project: A 1960 Alfa Romeo Sprint Zagato. Removing the paint and filler revealed major damage to the alloy body panels. Removing the body panels revealed major rot in the main frame rails, rockers, torque boxes, hinge posts and striker post.

The hinge and striker post were removed, straightened, rot-repaired and reinstalled. A section of roof support from the left-side C-pillar to the right-side A-pillar was removed, straightened and reinstalled. The left door inner shell was damaged and rotted to the point that it was easier to fabricate a new shell.

The alloy body panels were damaged beyond repair.

About 80% of the car has been rebodied, the roof skin being the biggest challenge. The right side still had the



correct form and was used for templates to make a guide buck. This ensured the correct shape. With more templates and guide bucks, the rest of the needed panels were made and installed. The car was finished in 2003, and it still looks good. It's also still being raced in vintage motorsports.

Career high point: Working with the different customers over the years. They are passionate about their cars and the car's history. They enjoy the research that they do, and they enjoy hearing about what I find out about the cars. What I enjoy the most is the feedback about how much customers enjoy driving, racing and showing off their cars.

Mike Pierce

Company: Pierce Manifolds Inc.

Location: Gilroy, CA

Specialties: Authentic Weber carburetors, manifolds, conversion kits and other parts.

Years of experience: 41

Contact: www.piercemanifolds.com

Most recent project: Restoration of vintage Weber carburetors, manifolds and linkage for a 1974 Lamborghini Countach LP400.

Most challenging project: Building complete new Weber 38 DCN carburetors from scratch for a Ferrari 250 GTO. We had to make all-new tooling, molds and small parts — as they were made in the early 1960s.



Career high point: During early 2018, we completed the restoration on our 7,000th Weber carburetor while doing a set of Weber 36 D02s for an Alfa Romeo.



Joseph (Joe) Potter

Company: Vintage Underground

Location: Eugene, OR

Specialties: I particularly enjoy complex engine builds. There is something about the intricacy of mechanical, electrical, and metal fabrication that excites me. My shop is a full-restoration shop, so I really get a chance to work on everything from time to time.

Years of experience: Almost 40

Contact: 541.510.5296 or www.vintageunderground.us

Most recent project: I am working on a Jaguar XJC. This body style is one of the few 2-door, 4.2-liter coupes.

Most challenging project: Isn't the hardest project the first one? I was 14 years old, and my father worked with me to build a 1931 Model A Ford pickup. Thankfully, it is a pretty forgiving car to work with, but I learned a lot of hard lessons.

Professionally, it was a 1957 Abarth 750 GT Double Bubble. The objective was to restore it while retaining as much of the original patina as possible, while fully redoing the alloy skins, chassis, drivetrain and suspension. This was immensely challenging from an aesthetic position to make it look fluid



and natural, concealing any indication of transitions between the original and new. The time and research put into the restoration was really evident, and the Double Bubble came out magnificently.

Career high point: Right now, I feel that my career is at a high point. My restoration shop can restore, repair and preserve historical machines. I have acquired and cultivated exceptional employees who are highly skilled in metalworking, restoration, and body and paint. We are in the process of moving into our new shop, with a state-of-the-art paint booth. There is literally nothing we cannot take care of in-house.

Pat Ritz

Company: Sports & Collector Car Center

Location: Tempe, AZ

Specialties: Mechanical restorations, including engines, transmissions, carburetors and distributors. Expert in European, Italian and British cars. Experienced with V12 Ferrari, Lamborghini and Jaguar engines. Expert in multi-carburetor setups, including Weber, British SU and Stromberg.

Years of experience: 44

Contact: 480.968.5000 or patritzsccc@gmail.com

Most recent projects: Just completed two V12 Lamborghini Espada engine and gearbox overhauls, including rebuilding the carburetors. Current focus is a complete engine rebuild for a 1954 Arnolt-Bristol.

Most challenging project:

The mechanical overhaul of a 1958 Tojeiro Roadster was challenging on all fronts. It is a unique car with extensive provenance and limited information. It required in-depth research and a fair amount of fabrication work. I learned a lot about John Tojeiro, the designer. The finished project



was something to behold. The customer was extremely pleased.

Career high point: Opening my own shop with my brother in 2007.



Jeff Snyder



Company: Jeff's Resurrections

Location: Taylor, TX

Specialties: Classic and sports cars, American and European

Years of experience: 30

Contact: Website: www.jeffsresurrections.com. Telephone: 512.365.5346. Email: jeffsresurrections@yahoo.com

Most recent project: One of the 12 existing 1961 Jaguar XKE outside-latch coupes

Most challenging projects: Transforming vintage race cars back to their original road-car configuration and corroded cars delivered in boxes and coffee cans.

Career high point: First in Class win at Pebble Beach

Jack Swint

Company: Porsche Cars North America, Porsche Classic Factory Restoration

Location: Atlanta, GA

Specialties: Porsche engine restoration

Years of experience: 48

Contact: classic.service@porsche.us

Most recent project: 1973 2.7 911 RS engine and transmission restoration

Most challenging project: I inherited a 993 Turbo engine job that had been dismantled and boxed up. It was difficult because there were many parts missing and the customer wanted it to be upgraded to a higher performance level.

Career high point: After 45 years in the business, I had the opportunity to work for Porsche Cars North America — a true high point.



Paul Vorbach

Company: HV3DWorks.LLC

Location: Sewickley, PA

Specialties: 3-D scanning/design and 3-D print management for the automotive restoration and customization industries.

Years of experience: 2.5 years with the 3-D business. Nine years in automotive restoration and 30 years in information technology.

Contact: 724.266.7925, email 3d@hv3dworks.com. Website: www.hv3d-works.com

Most recent project: Just finished up a trunk handle and escutcheon for a 1939 Hudson. We also made a radiator cap and hood latches for a 1921 Kissel and built a heater-fan housing for a 1951 Fiat. We also made a hood ornament for a 1938 Oldsmobile.

Most challenging project/job: A complete lower grille section for a 1934 Cadillac. The part was fairly large, with a large number of angled pieces. The original component that we modeled from was slightly warped, so the scans were only useful as reference pieces, and the entire assembly had to be designed from



scratch. We also re-engineered the part to go together as several separate pieces so it could be adjusted for fit. The parts were printed in a combination of stainless steel and bronze, which ended up being very hard and difficult to drill. This made chasing the 3-D printed threads a significant challenge.

Career high point: On the 3-D front, two vehicles with my parts appeared at Pebble Beach this year. As a restorer, our shop has had cars at Pebble Beach, Amelia Island, The Elegance at Hershey and several other top shows.

Jason Wenig

Company: The Creative Workshop

Location: Dania Beach, FL

Specialties: Concours-level restoration of rare, exotic, orphan, prototype and unique vehicles — both European and domestic. Coachbuilding/custom car building. Unique, historically accurate custom vehicles — from partial to comprehensive coachbuilding.

Years of experience: I have been working with cars since I was a kid. I started working professionally with cars in the late 1990s. I founded this company in 2001 and began formal operations as The Creative Workshop in August 2002.

Contact: 954.920.3303. Email: info@TheCreativeWorkshop.com. Website: www.TheCreativeWorkshop.com

Most recent project: We are completing the forensic restoration of the last 1921 Kissel 6-45 "Gold Bug" Speedster on earth. The car is being unveiled at this year's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. We are also finishing a one-off Ferrari coachbuilt custom car — a 1966 Ferrari 330 GT Speciale.

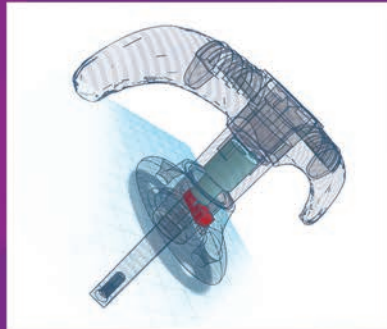
Most challenging project: There are countless challenges that I am faced with in this business, but here are some of the more challenging projects undertaken:



1953 Stanguellini Bialbero, 1955 Alfa Romeo Ghia-Aigle 1900 CSS, 1915 REO Coachbuilt Special, 1966 Ferrari 330 GT Speciale, 1962 AC MA200 prototype, Creative Workshop Coachbuilt Sport Speciale, 1959 Ferrari 250 Series II PF Cab, 1951 Connaught L3/SR.

Career high point: One was the first time I was honored to have had one of our restorations appear at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance (back in 2007). We showed a 1953 Stanguellini Bialbero with our client — which took a class award. It was quite an exciting and humbling experience.

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1939 Hudson Trunk Handle and Escutcheon
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