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HOLIDAY IDEAS CHRISTMAS SHOPS VERMONT WINTER BIRDING

Boot Hill

AUTOMOTIVE RESURRECTION

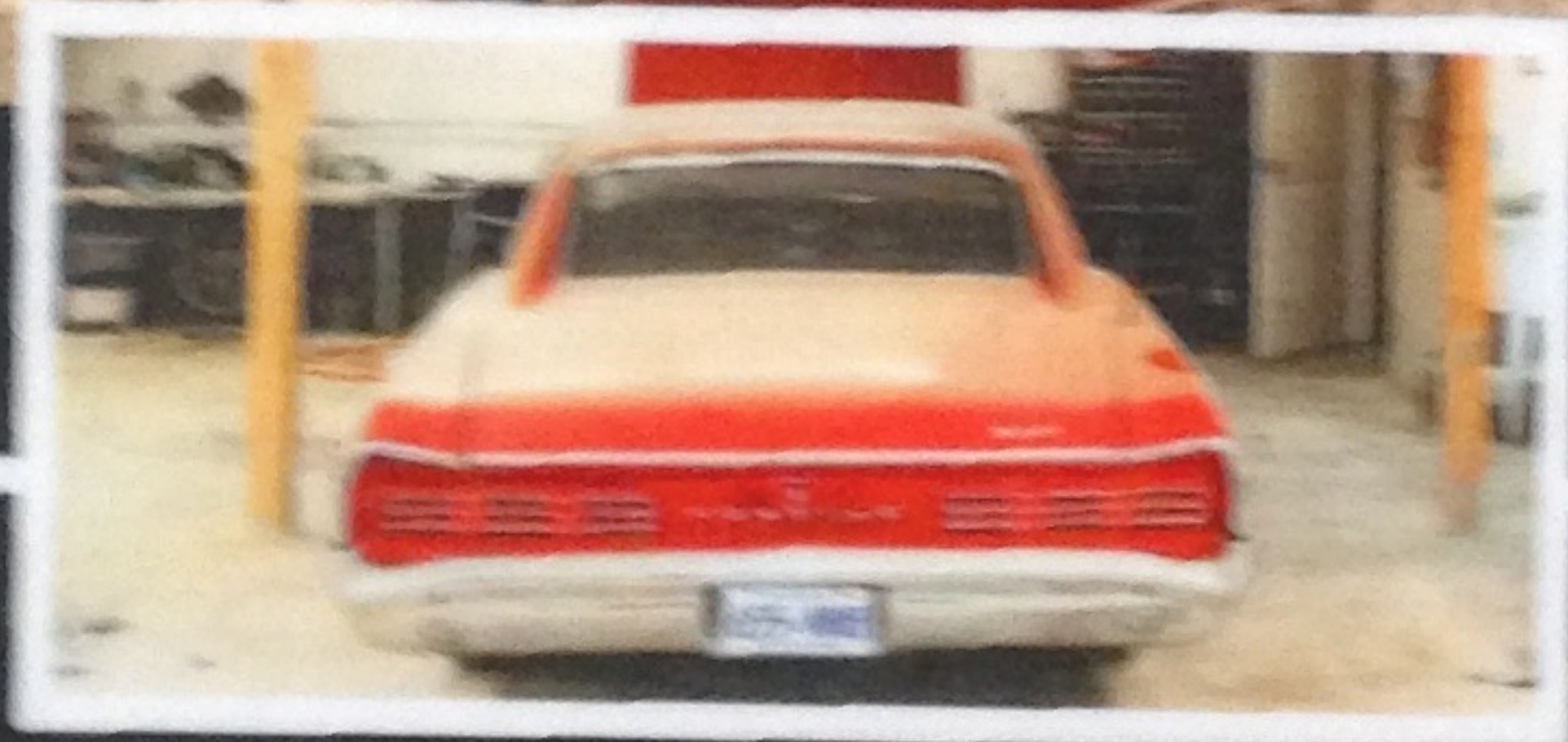
Bringing Classic Muscle **BACK TO LIFE**

words *Mike Beggs*

photographs *Steve Ubraney*

You just can't beat the style of the older cars. They've got those classic lines, you don't see anymore."

Blaine Schmldt, owner, Boot Hill Automotive Resurrection



At Bill Schmidt's expansive garage — officially opened in the summer of 2009 — all manner of vintage vehicles are in the process of being restored, modified, or souped up for high performance.

"You just can't beat the style of the older cars," Blaine Schmidt grins. "They've got those classic lines, you don't see anymore."

That's not just one man's opinion. Just witness the popularity of Classic Car clubs, Cruises, and Show 'N' Shines. Or the success of Schmidt's Boot Hill Automotive Resurrection, in Erin, Ontario, which is dedicated to, "Bringing Classic Muscle Back To Life."

Schmidt himself began collecting muscle cars during a 12-year CFL career as an offensive lineman for Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto, and Hamilton (two All-Star appearances, one Grey Cup

ring). And he has, "a big barn full of them."

But when he got down to a restoration, he found it a "logistical nightmare" getting the body work, paint job, etc. all done at different sites.

"It was painstaking to coordinate a complete build. You're taking it to different shops," he relates. "My whole concept here is to do everything in one location, so I can control the flow from start to completion of the project."

He notes that, "When you take one car apart, you're basically eating up 1,000 square feet."

However, space is of little concern at Boot Hill, where there's 26,000 square feet of shop

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Schmidt himself began collecting muscle cars during his 12-year CFL career...



floor (split between two buildings), and a team of 12. The cars are here for six months to a year, depending on the complexity of the project.

Schmidt's tour of the bays is a sweet blast from the past, highlighted by: a 1970 Dodge Challenger with sleek yellow paint job, custom exhaust, and Lamborghini doors (which open upwards); a '56 T-Bird painted the original Robin's Egg blue; a stunning Tahoe green Camaro; an orange early 70s Gremlin blinged up with fat tires and 400 horsepower; Schmidt's own 1957 Chevy Bel Air (which he considers the start of the Hot Rod era); and a 1963 split-window Corvette Stingray, which has been

returned to its original glory, and colour (Daytona Blue).

That latter gem belongs to Mississauga native and former NHL Hall Of Famer, Paul Coffey, who brought it in for a complete restoration. With a 327 cc engine, and 340 horsepower, it's beautiful to drive, and to gawk upon.

"I got everything redone," Coffey says.

"That was always my favourite car, I bought it in my first year in the league. I drove it for seven years, and then I didn't drive it any more."

Now the owner of Paul Coffey Toyota, in Bolton, he says, "I love the old muscle cars. But I don't collect them, and I don't find time to. It's a pretty expensive hobby." ➤





◀ A restoration will begin at \$30,000 to \$50,000, but fancy jobs can run into the \$150,000-plus range.

Schmidt stresses that much of the work is custom, and for a full restoration, "We strip it right down to the metal frame. If you have any rust in there, it's going to come back to haunt you."

In the paint shop, a car will receive a dozen coats or more, over the course of a day's worth of spraying and sanding. Meanwhile, parts manager Kevin Haysman is "on the computer all day" hunting for parts.

Their customers come from every walk of life — fixing up their cars for fun, sentimental value, as "drivers", or as full racing or show cars.

"That's the beauty of the job, no two cars are the same," says final assembly manager Mike Mervin.

Boot Hill currently has a six-month backlog of work, with customers coming from all over Ontario and as far as Quebec.

During the summer, Schmidt hosts regular tours of the facility for the various car clubs — like the Mustang Club, and the Brampton Antique Car Club. But most of their business comes from word-of-mouth referrals.

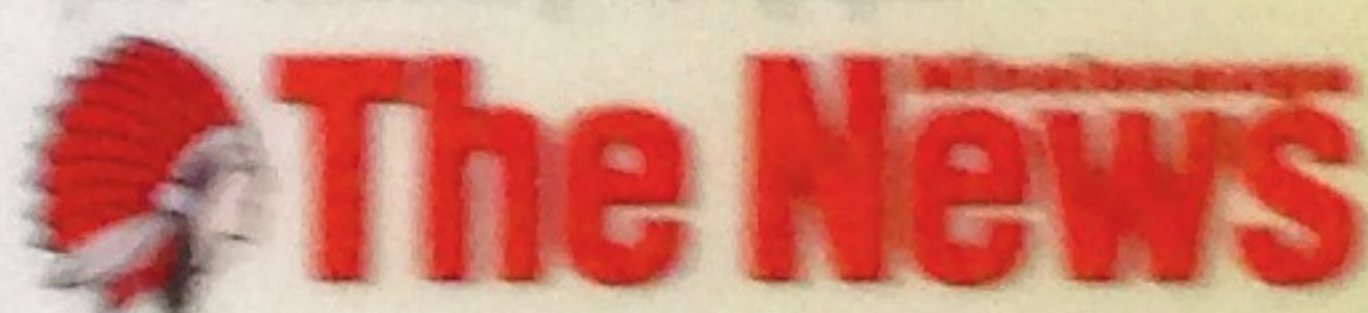
"My whole philosophy is, if you do things well enough and have a happy customer, he's the one who's going to go to all the shows and he's showing off his car," adds the easygoing father of five.

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