

Gee whiz, dad had one of these!



Ken Neilson with the first car he restored, a 1948 FX

In 2006 at the Meguiar's MotorEx in Sydney, well known as a top show for custom and restored cars, it was a tangerine sensation named JUCETR which won a heap of awards.

JUCETR is a fiberglass replica of a '32 Ford roadster. Photographs show the sporty two-seater resplendent in chrome and tangerine livery with a huge four-bolt 101 block 350ci Chevy Mo Tec injection producing about 300kW - which to the layman, means there is plenty of power and then more.

Latrobe City's senior business development officer, Leo Billington, said that local motoring enthusiasts who admired JUCETR, may be impressed by the fact that the bodywork was completed here in the Latrobe Valley, by Ken Neilson, who worked basically full-time on it to be ready for the Sydney show.

"Together with his wife Teresa, Ken runs his full-time business, Streetwise Rod and Custom from Traralgon, and is an excellent example of a small business catering for a unique market largely driven by the onset of post-war baby boomers with spare disposable income," Leo explained.

Teresa and Ken can profile their typical customer - male, between 40 and 50 years, generally has been successful in business, and reminisces about 'the good old times'.

"They will tell us that they had one of these cars when they were young; or that, gee whiz, dad had one of these," Ken said

'One of these cars' might refer to an FX or FJ Holden, an early pre 1948 Ford, or a T Model Ford, a Chevy or even a Mercury. Ken is currently restoring a Triumph TR3A sports car - in fact he will restore anything, preferably vehicles.

It is now a full-time career keeping four employed as they delicately manipulate and dissect old cars to make them new again. Everything must be carefully labeled and stored away; nothing must be lost. It will be needed again.

"I first restored a 1948 FX for myself. I was a self employed carpenter in Maffra and the car took seven years to build. It was sold several years ago, although I think Teresa still misses the car a bit," Ken said.

"When we were living in Maffra, I started this business in 1995 using our carport and garage. We simply ran out of room, moved to Traralgon and have never looked back. We are booked up to two years in advance.

"Sometimes we think we have 100 bosses; but they are our customers. They are fastidious, which is quite understandable because we are as well. When fully restored, the vehicles increase in value very quickly. Generally a full restoration takes around 12 months with minimal interruption. What happens though is owners will request extra work while we have the car.

"Work flow planning is a perpetual problem which we are now beginning to master more effectively. Together with insurance work for hot rods, restorations and all the extras, we need to be vigilant to give everyone a fair go and make sure jobs are completed as planned.

Yet it seems as though Teresa's office administration partnering Ken's mechanical knowledge is paying dividends when it comes to winning awards and consequently more jobs. It is well known that Teresa and Ken's passion for their work flows on to customers who subsequently enjoy driving and showing their dream car.

At the 1999 Victorian Megabike and Muscle Show, another '48 FX sedan built by Ken won top car of the show, best engineered award and top paint award. In consecutive years, at the Australian FX-FJ Nationals from 1999 to 2001, the same car won the top modified award. The tangerine '32 Ford Roadster replica won awards for top custom paint, top undercarriage and top engine bay at the Victorian Hot Rod Shows in 2006 and 2007, also taking out 'Australia's Coolest Ride'. Awards have also been gathered nationally at the Summernats in Canberra, and internationally.

"When cars I have restored win awards, we get a real buzz. It definitely means the customer is satisfied; it's also excellent promotion for our business. But serious customers will source us anyway. They track us down, we have never advertised in the usual way. In this game, one must have patience - restoration takes time, customers need to know the cost they are looking at, work flows must be coordinated and we are working for persons who love vehicles.

It is also handy that Teresa loves 'the old cars'. But perhaps the focus of Ken's work is best portrayed by another writer describing and congratulating Ken's meticulous work on another fully restored '48 FX. This calypso red mica pearl coloured car was likened to a time capsule - "the FX and its good times were saved for a future generation to experience".

Wood heaters can create passive smoking on a big scale



On a cold winter's day an open fire or wood heater can keep your home wonderfully snug, while the elements play havoc outside. But did you know that smoke from domestic wood heaters and open fires is the main source of air pollution in Victoria during the autumn and winter months?

A major component of wood smoke pollution is fine particles that can be taken directly into the lungs and contains a number of toxic and cancer causing agents.

Latrobe City's manager health services, Andrew Mackintosh, said many people don't realise that their wood fire can be a real nuisance to their neighbours, reducing visibility and causing physical discomfort for those with respiratory problems, especially older people and young children.

"To reduce wood heater smoke and improve air quality, it is important to select suitable dry seasoned wood and not to burn plastics, household rubbish, garden clippings, painted or treated timbers, particle board and wet or damp wood.

"The correct method of 'firing up' a wood heater can also minimise pollution by leaving it on a high burn rate for 20 minutes after lighting or after adding more dry fuel," Andrew suggested.

"When purchasing a wood heater, ensure that it meets the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 4013) and is installed by a licensed plumber. The heater flue or chimney installation should meet the necessary height requirements to allow the combustion gases to disperse efficiently and reduce pollutant concentrations. It is necessary to annually inspect and clean any build up of tar and soot in flues or chimneys," Andrew said.

"Often owners of wood heaters or open fires do not realise their fire is affecting their neighbours and for this reason council encourages neighbours to discuss the problem amongst themselves to find a suitable solution. However, if an agreement cannot be reached, council's health services team can be contacted for advice and assistance," Andrew added.

Don't be a scam victim

Latrobe City Council has embraced warnings from the Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce, urging residents and businesses to protect themselves from scams and consumer fraud.

Latrobe City mayor, Cr Bruce Lougheed, said scams are designed to trick people into giving away their money or their personal details. "Scams can come in many forms including mail, email, telephone, over the Internet and door-to-door."

"Scammers try to suck you in by promising things like great prizes, true love or easy money. But before they deliver anything, they will ask you to send money or give them your bank account or credit card numbers or other personal details. They never deliver what you expect and always rip you off.

"Scammers sometimes pretend to be legitimate banks or businesses. They approach you out of the blue with leaflets, letters, emails, websites or phone calls with requests that seem like the real thing. Then they'll give a reason as to why you need to provide them with your personal details, like your credit card number, password, bank account number etc. Genuine organisations don't usually make such unsolicited requests. If you provide such people with your personal details they could steal your money and your identity.

"A scam succeeds because it looks like the real thing. Scammers are manipulative - they push your buttons to produce the response they want. Don't let scammers steal your money and personal details - protect yourself. Take time to check credentials and don't be bluffed into providing immediate details. If you are being unduly pressured, suspect an ulterior motive. If something sounds too good to be true - it probably is," Cr Lougheed added.

Latrobe City's, acting executive manager economic development, Geoff Hill, said businesses are equally at risk from scams as individuals. "Some common scams targeted at businesses and their staff involve directory listings, mobile phone charges, and fax back schemes," he said.



The SCAMwatch website is a great place to start to protect yourself from scams and consumer fraud

"A common scam is for businesses to receive an invoice for a directory entry they have never requested, with the hope someone will simply pay it, no questions asked. Sometimes businesses are led to believe that they are responding to an offer for a free entry, but in fact, the order is for an entry requiring later payment, or there's a large fee involved for faxing the 'free' details back to the directory. Another common approach used by scammers is to ring a company or organisation asking to them to confirm details of an advertisement that they claim someone in the organisation has already booked. The scammer might quote a genuine entry or advertisement your business has had in a different publication or directory to convince you that you really did use the scammer's product.

"Mobile phones provide huge opportunities for scammers and it's important to check each phone bill carefully. A mobile phone user responding to an SMS competition, calling back an unfamiliar missed call number, or subscribing to a ring tone can all cost dearly. Even completely unsolicited SMS calls made to you and charged at premium rates such as \$5 a call may appear on your bill and need to be challenged," Geoff said.

"Mobile phone scammers make money by charging extremely high rates for the

messages you send, and any further messages they send to you. These charges could be as high as \$4 for each message sent and/or received. Look out for SMS and MMS numbers that start with 19. These are charged at a premium rate (sometimes even for receiving a message) and can be very expensive. You can call your telecommunications service provider and have numbers with 19 blocked to save yourself a lot of hassle.

"A faxback scam is an unsolicited fax that can offer you anything from amazing diets to fantastic deals, business directory entries and competition entries - all you have to do is send a fax back to a premium rate number (starting with 190). Premium rate faxes can be charged at more than \$6 per minute. The scammers make sure your fax will take several minutes to get through, resulting in hefty, unnecessary charges on your phone bill (a single fax could cost you \$20 or \$30). They usually target small business, often with offers of directory entries and catalogues of goods and services. It's important employers alert their staff to such schemes, so the business is not duped, and the cost of doing business gets out of hand," Geoff added.

To find out more about scams and to report scams visit www.scamwatch.gov.au or call SCAMwatch on 1300 795 995.