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RESTORATION GIANT BRINGS CLASSICS TO LIFE

Paul's
HOT ROD & MUSCLE CAR PARTS

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RESTORATION GIANT

By
Patricia
Kaowthumrong

A New York auto restorer's thirst for excellence brings classic vehicles to life.

Paul DiMauro's entrepreneurial spirit, commitment to quality and true affinity for car restoration continues to power the growth of his Deer Park, New York-based business.

While DiMauro started his career in the auto repair and body business nearly 34 years ago, running the company isn't work to him.

"I turned my passion for classic cars into a way of life," he says. "They say if you do what you love, you'll never work a day in your life. For the past 15 years, it doesn't even seem like *work*."

CONQUERING NEW MARKETS

Since its inception, Paul's Rods & Restos (paulsrestos.com) has experienced consistent growth and expansion. The operation now includes Paul's Custom Headers & Exhausts, Paul's Classic Cars, Paul's Towing & Storage and the latest venture—Paul's Hot Rod & Muscle Car Parts Store, which opened in September 2016 and occupies over 2,500 of the 27,000 square feet in

DiMauro's Deer Park establishment, nestled in the heart of Long Island.

"We have become a true one-stop automotive resource for classic and custom cars, street rods and muscle cars," DiMauro says. "We can now meet the full range of needs right from our headquarters in Deer Park."

While the majority of Paul's Rods & Restos' clients come from Manhattan, the Hamptons and the Tri-State area, DiMauro says he's confident that adding the parts



Paul DiMauro, in the office of his Deer Park, New York shop.

company, coupled with the referrals and accolades he receives from his growing list of loyal customers, will continue to attract a larger East Coast customer base.

"I saw a growing need for a specialty parts company," he says. "We already had access to an extensive parts inventory and industry expertise and this was a natural addition to our existing services. I also recognized the opportunity to be a resource for other restorers and do-it-yourselfers, who in many cases could also become new clients for our restoration and automotive services."

WORKING FOR GRINS

Auto restoration, which currently accounts for about 75 percent of the revenue, is still what DiMauro is most passionate about.

He enjoys seeing the satisfaction on customers' faces during the transformation—and especially during the reveal—when clients first see their vehicles completely finished. It's an emotional experience.

And, the finished projects are a direct



reflection of how seriously Paul's Rods & Restos' staff takes their jobs, he adds.

"I love hearing clients' stories when they flash back to a memory they hold dear when their car rolls out of the shop," DiMauro says. "They restored the car for a reason; our job is to bring that reason back to life. So, every time they drive in it, it's like they flashed back to a time when they were happiest. It's that ear-to-ear grin that continues to fuel our love for this business. It's what we work for."

But, satisfying as the results are, it's often the culmination of a long, tedious process. Since the cost of quality restoration services can range from \$2,000 or \$3,000 to upwards of \$250,000, finding the right client base in a restoration business is one of its principal challenges.

"Since quality work is always our top priority, there are occasions where a customer wants the best, but may not always understand the value proposition," DiMauro says. "We can't and we won't compromise because a customer may not be willing to pay for our services. When we started this business, we did have to make sacrifices, because we wouldn't compromise quality, but we obviously needed the business. Eventually, these sacrifices were an investment as we grew our client base—many



Many of the shop's 28-person staff joined the business through referrals from clients, other employees and industry colleagues.

coming from those original customers who provided referrals. I can now look back at discounts I had to offer back then as just another investment in the business."

DiMauro encourages other shops to be open, upfront and transparent with customers and to educate them on the potential cost of the project—and that restoration projects often need to be done in stages.

"It's important to know what you're getting involved in and not to over-promise

and under-deliver," he says. "Always maintain the highest standards of quality and put out your best work. Sometimes, what the customer can or wants to pay can stand in the way of quality, but in those instances, you need to know that you just can't do the job."

BEAUTIES FOR CHARITY

"Every car that leaves our shop is a billboard on wheels," DiMauro says.

Some of his favorite builds include a custom Pro-Touring 1966 Corvette, a 1937 Cadillac four-door sedan with a Northstar V-8, an all-original 1954 GMC panel truck and a 1947 Ford custom pickup.

Another build that DiMauro knows will be among his favorites is a 1965 Pro-Touring Mustang convertible the shop is currently building to auction off for charity. All proceeds will go to Homes for Our Troops, a privately funded nonprofit that builds mortgage-free, specially-adapted homes nationwide for severely injured veterans who served after 9/11.

The '65 Mustang isn't the first project Paul's Rods & Restos has taken on for charity. The shop completed the restoration of a 1970 Pontiac GTO convertible in 2014 to honor Maj. Jeffrey Calero, who was in the process of restoring the car before he died in Afghanistan in 2007 while on patrol.

DiMauro—who took on the extensive project at no cost to Calero's family with contributions from 37 different companies and organizations and many of the shop's



Paul DiMauro checks repairs done on a 1967 Mustang Fastback. Paul's Rods & Restos is a Hagerty repair facility. In the background is a 1968 Pro-Touring big-block Firebird that was just completed.



DiMauro and painter Jimmy Muench inspect a restoration project in progress.



DiMauro seeks vendors who share his commitment to excellence.

customers—values supporting veterans and partnering with organizations like Homes for Our Troops to pay tribute to the sacrifices made by those serving our country.

ONE BIG FAMILY

DiMauro also believes in hiring and working with only dedicated, passionate people. Many individuals on his 28-person staff joined the business through referrals from clients, other staff members and industry colleagues.

“For people who love cars, this is a dream job,” says Dan Reed, one of Paul’s shop leaders. “We get to work on some of the coolest cars and not only be part of the transformation, but get the satisfaction of seeing the customer’s response as well. We have a warm, congenial culture; it’s like one big family.”

That’s in addition to a competitive compensation and benefits package.

Paul’s Rods & Restos also makes the most of relationships with trade schools and the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services



In the mockup and assembly facility, (left to right): Top row: '37 Ford Custom, '29 Ford, '62 Cadillac, '63 Impala; bottom row: '61 Falcon, '56 Chevy.



In Paul’s Custom Headers & Exhausts facility: '69 Corvette, '72 Mustang, '67 Mustang Fastback, '49 Chevy, '67 Shelby Mustang.

of New York State to identify young talent interested in the restoration business, who are dedicated and have a passion for the industry.

“With a good foundation, we can further train and develop our own talent,” DiMauro says.

DiMauro seeks not only staff, but supply chain relationships that share the same commitment to excellence, like those he’s forged with Holley Performance Products,

ididit, Vintage Air and American Autowire.

FAR FROM FINISHED

As for the future, DiMauro is always ahead of emerging trends and predicts that the restoration industry will continue to grow in the coming years. He’s noticed that if restoration customers find a facility they can trust, they will invest.

“I see restoration growth in Pro-Touring



Paul's body and metal shop crew (left to right): Andre, Joe, Eli, Paul, Nando and shop leader, Milton.



Main office crew (left to right): Claudine, Joe, Leonor, Chee Chee, Paul, Lucy, Tianna.

cars and pickups, as well as '80s and '90s cars and trucks," he says. "This has also increased demand for those vehicles' parts. Quality assurance is becoming the industry mantra, as more people want to see the great cars of the past restored to preserve their place in auto history."

He also thinks 3D printing technology

will continue to help auto restorers increase productivity and efficiency and help expedite metal and composite component fabrication.

Regardless of what lies ahead for the restoration market, one thing is certain: Paul's Rods & Restos will continue to evolve. In fact, the business has plans to expand its sales and consignment sector and create a larger

inventory of its own classic and custom cars.

"We need to be evolving with the industry—keeping pace with the changing market and the younger generation of restorers and car owners," he says. "We need to be not only ready to meet their needs, but we also need to be ahead of the emerging market trends." **TS**

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