

My life-long hobby – by Rob Norton



Hello Everyone! It's Rob Norton here. I worked at CH2M from 1969 until 1990 (employee number 465) and have been asked to post a few words and pictures related to my life-long hobby. So here goes.

As a Salem, Oregon, teenager in the 1960s, I shared the car crazy culture alongside nearly all of my classmates. If you were describing a friend in those days, the type of car they drove was always included. It was part of our identity. On Friday and Saturday nights, we “cruised the gut,” which was a specific route through several hamburger joints. If you were lucky enough to secure a date, which was a rarity for me, it was understood that the entire evening would involve driving around town. If you were alone or with a buddy, racing between stop lights was common. I still occasionally watch the movie “American Graffiti,” which accurately portrays the scene. Speeding tickets were the cost of admission for all that fun; and learning how to rebuild blown engines, transmissions, and differentials was a necessity.

Always curious how things work, technically oriented, and having a father who was an auto mechanic contributed to my being branded as a “gearhead.” During a career in civil engineering, I was never without some kind of car-related project at home. Now retired, I stay busy fabricating things in my shop and helping fellow hot-rodders and budding gearheads with their projects.

Following are pictures of my current rides.

The tan car is a '35 Ford coupe that I have kept stock except for making it safe, reliable, and comfortable to drive (still gotta cruise the gut occasionally you know 😎).



The black one is a '32 Ford sedan project that will have a modern-day chassis with about 600 horsepower. Hopefully, this build will improve my won/loss record between those stop lights and at the

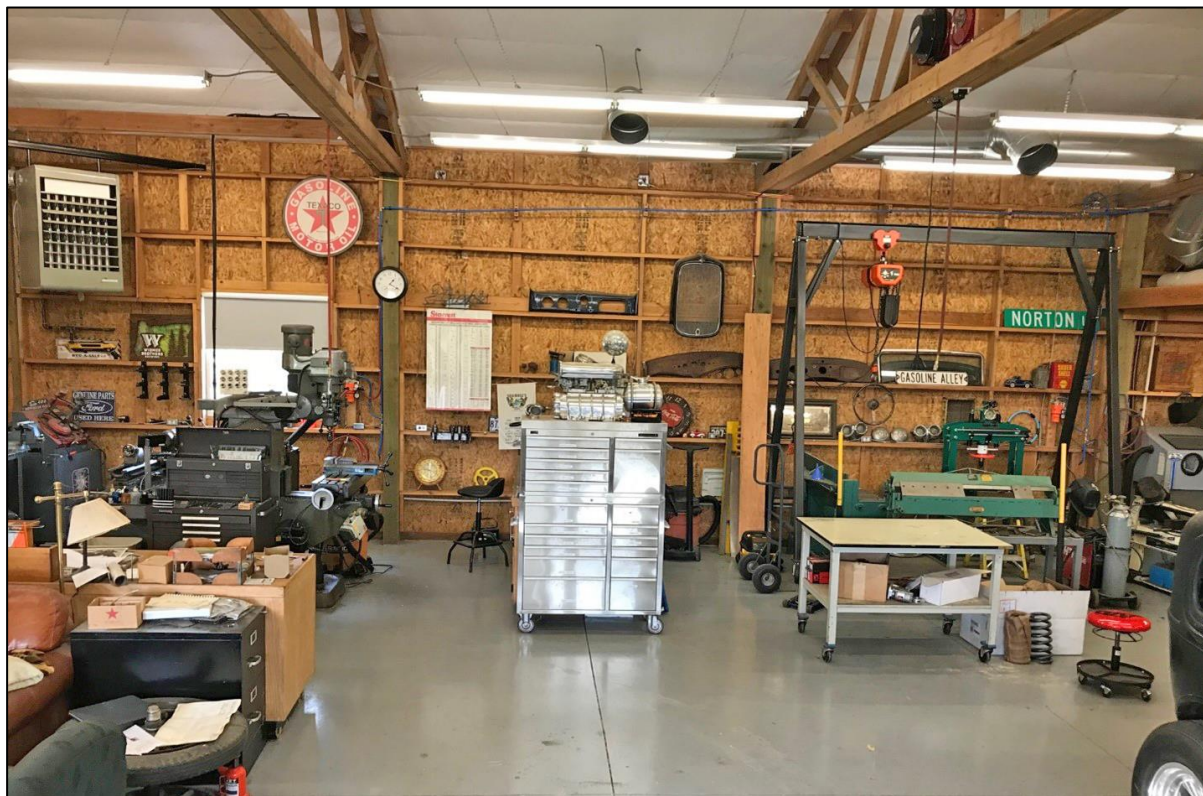


racetrack. ☺ Actually, I might take it to the track; but I don't drive that way on the street anymore.

The dark blue car is a '37 Ford slant back sedan that I finished in 1998 and have driven over 100,000 miles. I have also raced it a few times in the quarter mile at a local dragstrip with a best of 110.6 mph in 12.17 seconds. (This growing-up thing is overrated.)



The picture below is of my shop with equipment acquired over the years including a metal lathe and milling machine enabling me to make parts for various projects.



Since retiring, Gretchen and I enjoy traveling in an RV and have built a home with room for my avocation and her horses. At 75, I am still doing something fun almost every day!

Though leaving CH2M after 20 years to pursue other adventures, I cherish the memories of my time there and feel blessed to enjoy the many enduring friendships acquired during that time. And finally, thanks so much to those alumni who carry forward the legacy of CH2M. I sincerely enjoy the newsletters and hope to one day attend a reunion.

