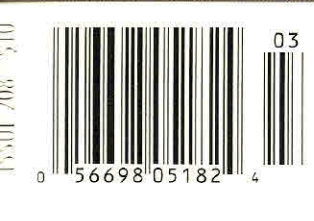


# AMERICAN DRIVER

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# COUNTRY CRAFTSMANSHIP

R&A Engineering Uses a Rural Setting to Their Advantage to Perform Award-winning Restorations



Southeast Michigan's Irish Hills are full of winding country roads and hilly terrain that make a perfect playground for automotive enthusiasts, but while the area is ideal for roaring through the curves in a vintage car, it's not where most of those enthusiasts would picture an award-winning, world-class restoration facility.

Convention says that restoration shops should be tucked away in back alleys in industrial neighborhoods, housed in concrete blocks that share little in common with the meticulously restored automobiles that emerge from the paint booths and detail areas.

If you wander through the quilt-patchwork farmland and country homes that make up much of the rural area around Manchester, Michigan, about half an hour from Ann Arbor, you'll eventually stumble on a what looks like a dairy farm, picture-perfect red barn and all. On any given weekend, however, there are dozens of vintage cars parked out front. This isn't any farm you've ever seen before; instead of milking cows and raising hogs, this farm is churning out Best of Show and Best in Class collector cars that are garnering attention all over the world.

R&A Engineering isn't a farm, though the facility once was. Restorer Bob Anzalone and his wife, Mary, bought the former dairy farm in the mid-1990s when they decided to take Bob's knack for restoring cars to a whole new level.

Since opening its doors, R&A has put an impressive touch on numerous award-winning cars, like Ethel Lanaux's 1931 Waterhouse-bodied Chrysler Imperial CG Victoria, which was recently awarded Best in Class at the 2007 Meadow Brook Concours d'Elegance and has previously placed in class at Pebble Beach.

The aubergine (a deep eggplant purple) Chrysler has been the center of attention at more than a few collector car events since its 5,000 hour restoration was completed by R&A. Subjected to a 100-point level restoration, the Chrysler became a family member for the Anzalones.

"We chose the pinstripe color with Ethel from a flower in my garden," says Anzalone's wife, Mary. A bright green, hand painted pinstripe adds a certain flair to the regal Chrysler.

The shop became so close to the car that, when it was on the tour prior to the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance and the transmission gave up the ghost, Anzalone replaced it with a rebuilt transmission right on the polo field merely 12 hours prior to the early morning Dawn Patrol. With the help of other restorers, Anzalone was able to track down a rebuilt transmission in Chicago and have it shipped out to California in record time.

Thanks to an extensive background in engineering, Anzalone could run the restoration shop on his own – and he has done so in the past. When he decided that he wanted to do what he truly enjoyed, he opened R&A Engineering, an outfit that has grown from his garage to a full-scale, fully-staffed restoration shop.

The Anzalones moved out into the country from Monroe, Michigan, located in the nearby Detroit-Toledo corridor, in order to focus on their booming restoration business. They chose a former dairy farm because of its quaint 150-year old farmhouse and 14,000-square-foot red-painted barn that could easily be converted into a restoration facility.

Step inside the barn and you'll see that dairy cows have given way to vintage classics. On the day of *American Driver Magazine's* visit, the aforementioned Chrysler shared space in the shop with enough a partially assembled classic cars to stage their own Concours d'Elegance.

Tucked away in one corner was the body of a 1952 Jaguar XK120 Fixed Head Coupe body fresh from the state-of-the-art paint booth and color sanding. The Jaguar was ready to be polished out and properly set. This voluptuous car had stayed in the Ann Arbor area for its entire life, so it required some rust repair, including fabrication of an all-new trunk lid.

