

BY JEFF RUNDLES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROB HAMMER

# a passion for the classics

Jack Farland and the staff at Classic Restoration are artists, creating masterpieces in the valuable medium of classic cars.



JACK FARLAND WITH ONE OF HIS MASTERPIECES

**It all started nearly 20 years ago in a garage** on Williams Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, but that's not the most interesting part of the Jack Farland story.

Among the most interesting are these gems: a 1964 Ferrari Lusso, a 1969 Corvette convertible, a 1965 Lincoln convertible with suicide doors, a 1961 Ferrari PF Cabriolet, a 1956 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing, a 1957 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster, a brittany blue '67 Shelby GT500, a 1965 Mustang convertible with a 289 hi-po V8, a 1950 Hudson Commodore 6, a 1940 Ford Coupe Deluxe with a French flathead 8 — and these are just the cars that Farland and his crew are currently working on at Classic Restoration by Country Club Auto in Englewood.

Yes, Classic Restoration is a body and paint shop. And they do mechanical work as well. But while these jobs are typically done by competent journeymen with varying degrees of craftsmanship, here, it goes several steps beyond.

A case in point: A little over two years ago, Farland and his staff undertook the restoration of another 1961 Ferrari, this one a Pininfarina 250 GT SII Cabriolet, black with a black interior. There were only 201 of this model ever made, and the cost of this 112th example exceeded \$200,000 *before* restoration. Classic Restoration undertook the intricate job of rebuilding, repainting, mending the upholstery, restoring every detail to exacting original conditions. This is a two-seat

convertible roadster with a 2,953 cc V-12 engine, putting out some 250 horsepower, featuring three Weber 38 DCN carburetors, a four-speed gearbox with overdrive, and much more, and it was all broken down and remade. The project took Farland and his staff more than 2,700 hours, and the cost came in at about \$250,000. The car sold at auction in Italy last year for nearly \$850,000; RM Auctions Italia S.r.L. said of the restoration in its bidding literature, "It is quite possible that there is no other example as meticulously restored or prepared anywhere in the world."

So lest anyone wonder whether Farland and his artisans have, as they say, the chops to handle world-class automobile restoration, let

the Ferrari — along with all the other beauties that have passed through this shop — put an end to that discussion.

“A lot of the cars we do come from other shops all around the country,” says Farland. “They abandon the projects. I often tell my guys, ‘The goal is to make each car perfect and the next car better than that.’ This is no accident. I set a very high standard for each job.” If the artisans don’t have a part, or can’t find a part, they make it.

Farland is a relatively low-key guy, not obviously prone to exaggeration or even excitement except when a real classic car is involved. His eyes lit up when discussing the 1950 Hudson brought in by a client in nearly mint condition, a very rare find. “Look at that,” he said. “It’s beautiful.” Classic Restoration is set to do about \$400 of “minor” work on the car.

#### AN EARLY EDUCATION

Farland comes by his love of cars, especially classic ones, in a very direct way although the

route to owning his own company took several detours over the past four decades.

Born and raised in Denver, on Williams Street right there at Cheesman Park, Farland is the son of Fo (Adolfo) Farland who, with Temple Buell Jr., was the long-time owner of Farland-Buell Chrysler Plymouth, located in the early 1960s at 10th and Broadway, in the building that has become known as the Sports Castle, and later on Colorado Boulevard. The younger Buell, son of the famous Denver architect, was Jack Farland’s uncle. In addition to the dealership, Buell owned racing teams in Europe and the United States in the 1950s and ’60s with such legendary drivers as Carroll Shelby, Stirling Moss, and Juan Fangio. Farland recalls going to events as a young boy, sitting in the pits during races, even having the famous Shelby come to dinner at his house.

Farland graduated from East High in 1972. He went to college in California but gave it up because “at the time I didn’t have a purpose.” He did, however, have a passion. “I grew up in the car business, and I was going to go to the



THE “DIRTY” SIDE OF THE SHOP

Chrysler dealer school and take over my father’s dealership,” he says. That plan got sidetracked when, in 1975, in the aftermath of the gasoline crisis, Farland-Buell Chrysler Plymouth ran out of cash and closed for good. Jack Farland drifted to California and, for nearly the next 15 years, managed mobile home properties there.



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In 1991, Farland came back to Denver with his wife Trina, nearly penniless. So Farland and his sister Wendy, both with the dealership background, borrowed \$145 from their father and a vacuum cleaner from a friend (“Our grubstake,” says Farland), and in the garage of the family home on Williams formed Country Club Auto Detail, a high-end shop named after the nearby Denver Country Club.

“I should have gone back into the real estate business because Denver real estate was just about to boom,” says Farland. “But I wanted to take a break from real estate and get my hands dirty. We had no idea it would turn out to be what it is, but I’m very good at the things I do.”

The next step occurred when a high-performance mechanical shop in Englewood called needing someone to fix a scratch on a million-dollar car. “Wendy and I wore white doctor’s coats to the appointment, and he couldn’t believe it. He rented us 800 square feet of space in his shop, and we were there for two years.”

Following that was an expansion into 4,000 square feet down the street on Kalamath, where the siblings extended their detail work to interiors, leather repairs, restored engine compartments, and show car preparation. They got more and more calls for restoration and saw the opportunity, hiring a restoration guy in 1998 and expanding the business.

In 2005, through a client who was a builder, an opportunity arose, again down Kalamath Street, to buy a piece of land and build a new headquarters. Farland said yes. “Another one of those deals where I had no money or anything. I pulled on my real estate experience and built the building,” he says. “We went from 4,000 square feet to 15,000, and it kind of frightened us when we first went in. But it took us a very short time to fill it up: more room, more work.”


#### A PERFECT PASSION

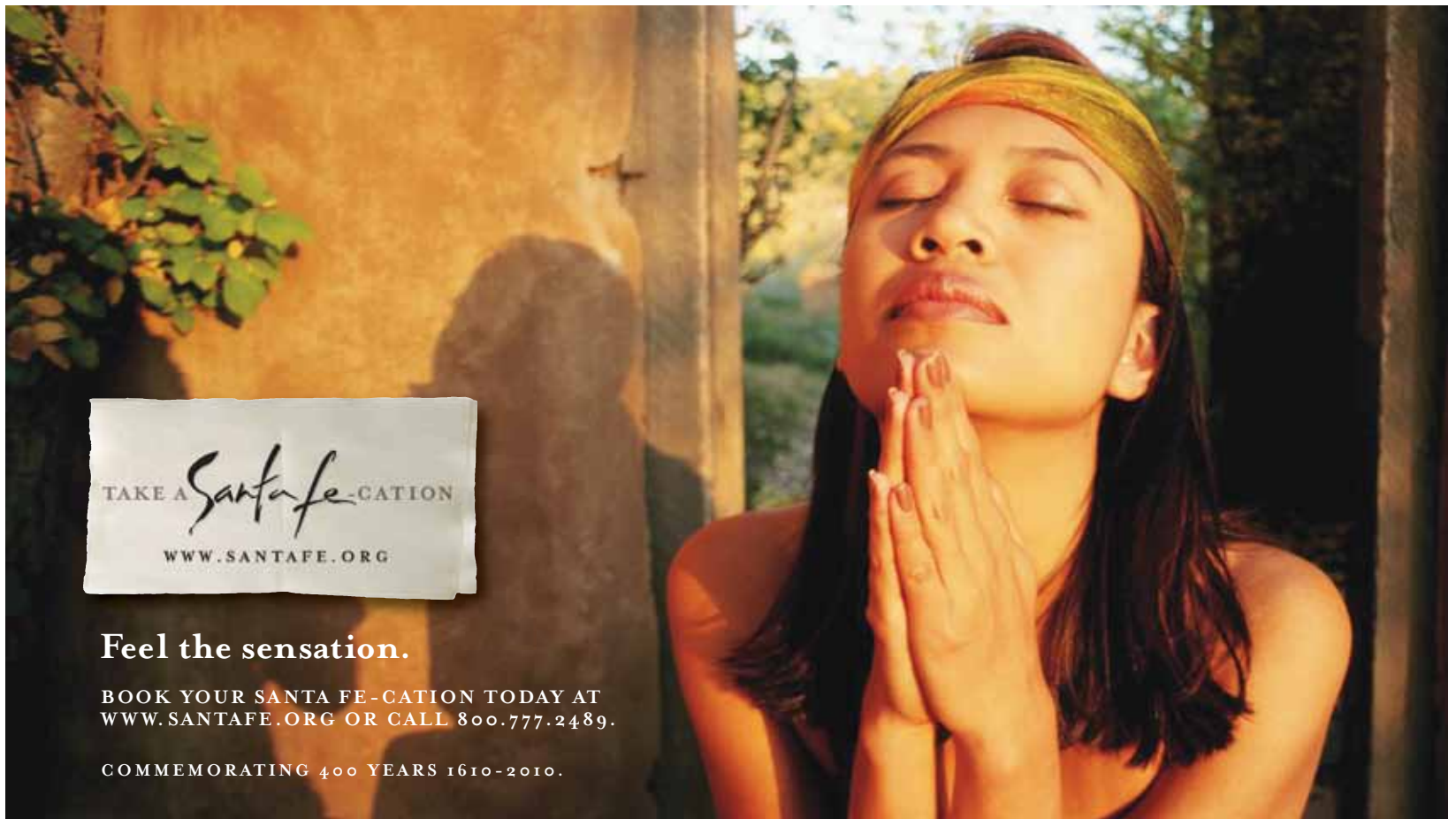
Today the new building can best be described as a house of wonders. There are two sides; the clean side is almost a showroom with a paint booth, a couple of fine-work bays, and a dozen or

so nearly finished classic cars. The dirty side is where the majority of the work takes place. The cars are in various stages of repair, or disrepair, ranging from what the untrained eye might call complete junk to the almost-perfect classics they will all be one day soon.

So what does the high-end classic automobile restorer drive himself — a man who drools over vintage Corvettes and rare Porsches and could easily drive the most choice-looking car on the planet? A 2008 high-MPG turbo diesel VW Jetta; he cares about his carbon footprint.

It’s the low-key Jack Farland again. If you want to see the passion, drive in some day in a 1955 Lincoln Capri (someone did once) and see his eyes light up. It might look like hell, but Farland sees the finished classic.

Farland is a perfectionist with a passion despite inauspicious beginnings as a driver. He crashed three cars within 90 days of getting his driver’s license at 16: “Then I figured out you had to look in front of you.” In high school, he had Jaguar XKE convertibles. “I loved that old junk,” he says. Loved it then; loves it now. 



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