

Auto body artists bring metal magic to Clackamas

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Copy Editor

• "An Evening with Ron Covell and Gene Winfield" comes with eye-bending hot rods and considerable talent for a one-right-stand

Ron Covell, aka "Professor Hammer" of Street Rodder magazine, revealed a few secrets on how to form metal into any shape one can imagine for a car body. On Monday night, Feb. 18, Gene Winfield, a legend who has imagined and fabricated lots full of dream vehicles, let the audience scratch at the surface of his knowledge about customizing.

The body shop in Barlow was cleaned out of various student works-in-progress, pressure washed and filled with hot rodders and their rigs. Red carpet should have been laid down for all.

Fred Davis, a CCC auto body instructor, brought a beautiful and subtly blue-flamed '57 Chevy and screaming red '32 Ford from his collection. Along with the '63 split-window Corvette and '23 Ford T-bucket racers on display, there was a rare car worth more than the rest combined an original 1966 Ford AC Cobra owned by Casey Powell, former head of Sequent Computer. It is made from aluminum so light and thin that a handprint can dent it. Its appraised value is \$480,000.

Covell's appearance at Clackamas this year, the third in a row, is beginning to look like a tradition, started by Wayne Austen, CCC instructor and owner of Austen's Body Shop in Canby. Covell regularly gives metalworking workshops across the country and sells his own line of tools and equipment.

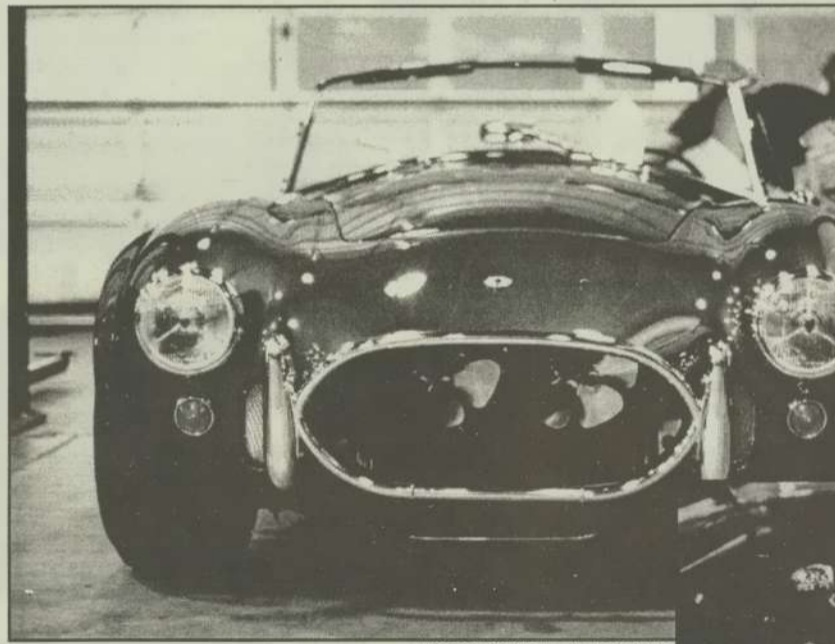
Using a nifty piece of metalworking equipment called an English wheel, Covell impressed a piece of aluminum with hot-rodding flames (perfect for a 3-D paint job on a front fender). He demonstrated stretching, shrinking and annealing of aluminum for a quick show of how to make what you need and want for a unique car. (The flat disks of metal soon looked like nice pie tins, but hey, there wasn't enough time for him to make the teardrop-shaped motorcycle gas tank.)

Now if you have an extra \$30,000 or so, you can get Winfield to create your dream for you. He has been customizing cars for 58 years and still builds cars for himself and customers out of Mojave, Calif.

Winfield went through the real basics of chopping, channeling and sectioning. One thing was clear: These are not quickie weekend projects for your



From left to right: Students Eric Morales, Graham Chaney, Grant Pendergraft (owner of car) and student Keenan Wilson gather around Pendergraft's '23 T-Bucket as he explains how the replica was built. A total of over 200 students and community members strolled the auto body shop observing many rare and classic hot rods.



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Rare 1966 Ford AC Cobra was one of many cars featured at Monday night's metalworking seminar. The cobra sits at an appraised value of \$480,000.

daily driver. But the audience plied him with enough questions so that some could attempt it on their own projects.

In addition to building cars for the rich and daring (including Evel Knievel), Winfield has created vehicles for over 20 movies, including "Robocop" and "The Last Star Fighter." He made 25 vehicles, using VWs, for "Blade Runner." His fantasy rigs have also appeared in many television commercials and shows, such as "Batman," "Mission Impossible" and the original "Star Trek."

Winfield uses more than metal to fabricate his fantasies. Alumi-

num, steel, wood, fiberglass and Plexiglas can go into the mix for making the perfect effect.

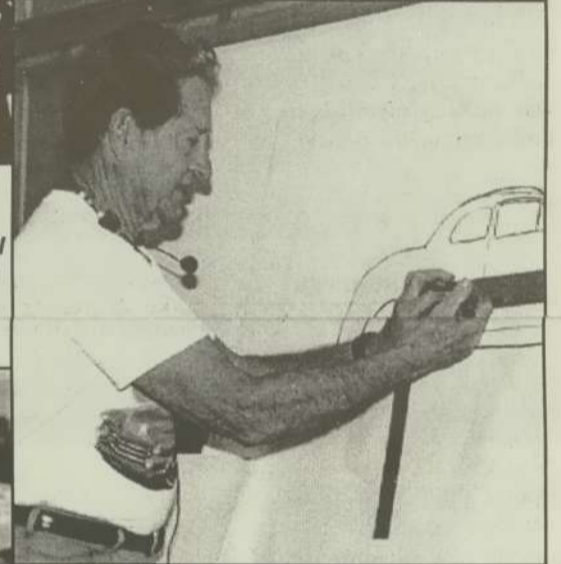
One of the qualities that makes both these guys masters is that the end result looks effortless — smooth and sweet auto candy. The cars look so "natural," the sweat and work invisible, until a night like this when you see all the sculpturing and engineering that goes into each process and into the overall thought behind each machine.

Over 200 students and serious car fans sat attentively on those hard school chairs after a cafeteria-catered buffet for a seriously

entertaining night. And long past when it should have been over for the early-morning working type, Steve Van Gordon of Team Van Gordon in Barlow rallied the audience for a surprise auction: flaming mailboxes, CCC auto body and paint classes, the demo sketches of Winfield and seemingly anything that wasn't nailed down and could be autographed by the guests was sold off.

Clackamas President "Joe" Johnson admired the cars and, in acknowledgement of all the talent on hand, said that "the people who can really do skilled work are the ones that get the job done...that's what it's all about."

Covell should be back next year to continue the tradition, joined by an up-and-coming car customizer, John D'Agostino.



Gene Winfield gives an example of how to section off the body of a car. Gene is famous for designing a light weight DeLorean that was used as a prop in the movie series "Back to the Future" and created the Bat mobile for the T.V. series.

