

TALES OF PERSONAL PASSION

a problem, and often you'll think of one. Sometimes you do get sick of it though, and you just have to leave the shop for a week and come back to it."

A 30-year passion

Silva said he has been building custom cars for over 30 years

"As a kid, I was fascinated by it," he said. "I lived in California, and I rode my bike down to the local automotive shop and watched Big Daddy Roth. I was a pest, I would hang around the shop until eventually they let me hand them tools, they realized I knew what tools were, I swept the shop. They were always cutting stuff up and building hot rods."

At the age of 9, he learned how to weld. Over the years, he expanded his repertoire to sketches, automotive painting, building frames, sectioning and chopping, working on transmissions and rear-ends, glass installation and numerous other skills.

"The only thing I haven't tried is upholstery," he admits.



No one was bugged by this trio of VWs at a recent Rod Run to the End of the World.

When he's not helping friends with their cars, he is working on his 1941 Willys.

"I cut the top off of it, made it into a roadster," he explains. "It has a 13-point cage, 586 big block; it's a

killer machine. Great big wide tires in the rear, customized suicide doors, low to the ground, big woofers and tweeters, two big amps — all the little toys."

As one would imagine, rebuilding

a car takes dedication and patience.

"You have to love it because there's not a lot of partners that would put up with being out there in the wee hours of the night during the week, that's why guys like me are divorced," he laughs. "It is very time consuming, but it's the satisfaction you get out of it — even if you're a person that gets it done in a lot of different phases. As long as they get their hands dirty and take part in that creativity of it, they can see a clunker out in the field and turn into something of a dream. It's kind of a spendy hobby. And I hate to say it, but people like me, and Ross, are a dying generation, and there's no one to take our places. Now, people buy pieces and bolt it on, nobody knows how to cut a car in half like I do and weld two cars together."

He also adds that classic car enthusiasts can actually build a great hot rod for less than they expect.

"I have a bunch of books of different makes and cars from all over the world. So, for example, someone said



It was definitely "top down" weather for this classic Impala at Rod Run.

they want to have a '32 Ford. Half of those people that want a '32 Ford can't even afford the headlights. But they can achieve the same look and appearance with a '34 Chevy. They can build a great car for less than they expect, and I can tell them, 'You don't have to spend \$30,000 to \$50,000 to build a car like this.'"

For those following Silva's advice, there will be plenty of project inspiration on view at this year's Rod Run.

Enjoy the Rod Run to the End of the World!

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