

Alan Siebert - CARS

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Look down the street. Here comes a 1952 Chevy four-door in robin's egg blue. What a beautiful car. This car has been restored to its fabulous condition by an automotive craftsman from rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Alan Siebert is the auto specialist who redid this car. Fittingly, his business is called CARS which stands for Classic Automotive Restoration Specialists.

Alan Siebert was born in Great Bend. His father ran the body shop for a local auto dealership named Spruills which is now Marmie Ford. When Mr. Siebert wanted to start a business of his own, he opened a body shop in the Stafford County community of St. John, a town of 1,215 people. That's rural – but there's more.

Alan helped out in his dad's body shop as a kid and moved into the business himself after graduation, working for his father and learning from him first-hand. "He was my vo-tech teacher," Alan said with a smile.

Now Alan has more than 30 years experience in the business. Of course, he's a piker compared to his father, who began in 1949 and was still coming to the shop regularly until he got sick in 2012. That would give Alan's dad 63 years of experience in the auto repair business. Wow – Alan has a long way to go.

In 2007, Alan's wife Janet transferred to a job in Arkansas City. Eventually Alan transitioned to a new business and new shop in the Arkansas City area as well. They live in the nearby community of Parkerfield, population 342 people. Now, that's rural. Alan also broadened his business from auto repair to auto restoration, which is one of his specialties.

The new business, as noted before, is called CARS: Classic Automotive Restoration Specialists. There is a lot of interest in classic cars around Arkansas City.

"Ark City has a big classic car show each year," Alan said. "It's called the Last Run. Last year was the fortieth annual, and they had more than 600 entries."

Alan's business can handle the full gamut of auto restoration and repair from A to Z – or as his business card says, "From Model A's to Z28's." He has literally worked on everything from Model As to the most modern automobiles. Of course, lots of restorations involve muscle cars from the 1960s and '70s.

"I've worked on Mustangs and Camaros and Corvettes from that period," Alan said. Now those were real cars! Alan worked on a gold 1970 Plymouth Duster and a 1968 Barracuda which was banana yellow. "It sounds crazy, but we added a black stripe and it looked really cool," Alan said.

One time Alan went to look at a used car in the Dodge City area but it wasn't suitable. "What else do you have?" Alan asked. The man showed him a 1962 Austin Healy which the man wanted to gut and turn into a salad bar in a restaurant. Alan bought and restored the car, saving it from a fate of lettuce and ranch dressing spills.

Then there was Carol, who came to Alan to ask about a 1952 Chevy four-door. It had been Carol's family car which she had driven to high school. Her grandmother ended up with the car, which had deteriorated and then sat for 25 years. The car was in terrible condition.

“I could see the ground through the floorboards,” Alan said. And talk about bucket seats – the front seat was literally a big bucket turned upside down.

But Carol’s forty-fifth high school reunion was approaching and she wanted that old car restored. After hours and hours of work, including Janet and their daughters, Alan restored that car to pristine condition and painted it the original color.

Look down the street. There goes a 1952 Chevy four-door in robin’s egg blue. The driver is Carol, with a big smile on her face as she goes to her forty-fifth high school reunion in style. We commend Alan Siebert, a classic automotive restoration specialist, for making a difference with his craftsmanship and workmanship. In my opinion, building such a business in rural Kansas is the way it “auto” be.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.