

Innovation and a Passion for Cars

Legendary Hot Rod Builder Boyd Coddington Enjoys Being Part of the AMSOIL Family



Boyd Coddington has had a powerful influence on the California hot rod scene for more than 30 years.

He was born in rural Idaho, but you'd never know it by his trademark Hawaiian shirts and the California lifestyle he exhibits today. His older brothers and their friends were into the early Deuce Roadsters and '32 Coupes, his first introduction to hot rods. From his earliest memories cars have been his passion, and through cars he has expressed his genius. Even after a lifetime of designing cars, building cars and driving cars, Boyd Coddington still goes to swap meets and car shows when he has time off. He loves being around both cars and the people who love cars.

This year his business, Boyd Coddington Hot Rods and Collectibles, will celebrate its 30th anniversary. Producing 12 to 15 cars a year in the \$100,000-\$500,000 price range, Coddington's company in La Habra, Calif., employs 26. High profile owners of a Boyd Coddington original include Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top and Van Halen's Michael Anthony.

In early summer 2007 AMSOIL and Boyd Coddington formed a relationship that united two pioneers and their groundbreaking companies. Coddington's unique approach to building hot rods had a major impact on the hot rod scene, and A.J. Amatuzio's innovative efforts created the synthetic motor oil market for passenger cars.

It had been Coddington's dream to move to Southern California when he grew up. After serving an apprenticeship for a machinist in Salt Lake City, Utah, the door opened for him to make the move. His machinist experience enabled him to acquire a position at Disneyland, where he learned welding skills and good machining skills. "I actually worked

on cars when I got off the graveyard shift," Coddington said. "It worked out very well."

In 1978 he left Disney to start his own business, Hot Rods By Boyd. "I never dreamed it would be like it is today. We couldn't ever find a set of wheels that we liked for the car, so in 1982 we made our first set of billet wheels."

Boyd and contemporary L'il John Buttera, who made his fame building drag-racing funny cars before getting into street rods, were both master machinists who developed new aesthetics for rods. Rather than buy a reproduction of a vintage Ford rearview mirror like other restoration gear heads, Coddington and Buttera would use a lathe and mill to carve away at a block of aluminum to give it the look of a mirror. Thus was born the billet phenomenon. Creating and customizing parts from scratch, Coddington gained a reputation and established his name.

Like ripples in a pond, others emulated the new concept but missed the point of what they were doing. By using pre-designed programs they became mass production houses, losing the sense of art behind the personalized craftsman approach. Coddington's style was to never mass produce anything.

His high standards led to magazine coverage, which in turn resulted in enough fame to attract wealthy customers from other states who made their pilgrimages to Coddington's garage to obtain one-of-a-kind cars that made a statement. Vern Luce's so-red '33 coupe and Jamie Musselman's roadster became touring hits in the show circuit, increasing his visibility and the appreciation for his talents. His red cars were so eye-smashing that Dupont created "Boyd Red" as a production color, followed by "Boyd Hot Hue," "Boyd Yellow Mellow" and "Boyd Black in Black".

Coddington avoided the loud ultra-flashy graphics that were making their appearance in the effusive 1980s. Coddington's cars had an attitude that set them apart from the herd. His personalized cars were unique without being weird, stopping people in their tracks by their beauty and style, not freakishness. Flawless metalwork and paint were givens. Coddington had the ability to take an inner vision and transform it into contours that subtly bring the original design to a new harmonious line.

Cars built at Coddington's garage have won the prestigious "America's Most Beautiful Roadster" an unprecedented seven times and the Daimler-Chrysler Design Excellence Award twice. Coddington has been inducted into the SEMA Hall of Fame, the Grand National Roadster Show Hall of Fame and the National Rod & Custom Museum Hall of Fame. In 1988 he was voted *Hot Rod* magazine's "Man of the Year."

A lot has changed since those earlier times. "What's happened with the car culture today is that it has become a

lifestyle. A lot of the people like that lifestyle and that's what they do. They get up and live their whole lives around their automobiles," he explained.

Though Coddington says he hasn't really changed, he admitted there can be a downside to fame. "You're going through the airport and you're really late and a guy is standing there with two of his boys. You're late, you've got to catch a plane and the guy says, 'We watch your show every week. Our boys love you and we want to get a picture.' What are you going to say?" Coddington stops for the photo.

During the interview, a father and his three sons from Oklahoma came over and asked, "Are you Boyd Coddington?" To their delight it was so. A few minutes later they returned with a camera and had their photos taken together. They said they never missed a show. "What we want to do is get back to people like this," Coddington said after they left. "You don't have to spend a lot of money to get back to people like that. We're going to have a car contest called America's Most Beautiful Home-Built Car. Guys like this, not professionals. These are the guys who will never have one of those cars that we build on TV. We can influence them."

Altruism is a facet of Boyd and wife Jo Coddington's shared experience. Both have been involved with numerous charity organizations over the years. Boyd Coddington's Garage has been working with the Elwyn Foundation, hiring mentally challenged adults to work in the shop. "It makes you feel good. If you have ever been around Down's Syndrome adults... They don't know how to lie; they are very special," Coddington said. "Don't feel sorry for them. Those kids are sharp."

Boyd and Jo have always had a special place in their hearts for children and for the mentally challenged, the primary reason they started The Coddington Foundation in 2005. The Coddingtons also generously raise funds for other non-profit organizations, including La Habra's children's programs, the Elwyn Foundation and the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

AMSOIL began its sponsorship with the Tulsarama, Oklahoma's 100th anniversary celebration in mid-June of



"Bonneville was a great experience," said Boyd, here pictured with Jo. "It was something wonderful that we had never encountered before."

last year. Coddington and his crew were called upon to bring a '57 Belvedere to life after 50 years preserved in an underground vault. The intention was to install AMSOIL lubricants and filters in the classic hardtop. Unfortunately, decades of water seepage resulted in the Belvedere being unsalvageable.

The relationship with Coddington soon evolved and his next AMSOIL undertaking was a Bonneville build. The aim would be to set a new record for the fastest pre-1934 roadster, 3 liter/blown gas/modified with Jo Coddington at the wheel. The building of the AMSOIL/Coddington roadster, dubbed "Salt Fever," would be filmed and shown on TLC's *American Hot Rod*.

Coddington was well-acquainted with AMSOIL products before partnering with the company. "I had heard about how good AMSOIL (synthetic oil) was. We actually tried some for a break-in on a couple cars. We were told you can't break-in motors with synthetic, but with AMSOIL you can," he said.

"I'm working on a couple jobs for the government right now, and AMSOIL made all the difference in the world. AMSOIL makes great products. It's very exciting to see when I talk people into using it as a break-in oil how fast the rings seated," he added, declaring, "That's what I like. When you're talking about something and you believe in it, you know it's good."

So, what is the Boydster like up close and personal? He's serious but also warm. His mind is ever-active, and he still has an undying passion for cars.

Coddington's new show, *Boyd Coddington's Garage*, starts filming in January. The half-hour program will feature technical discussions on modification, building, painting, engine building, suspension, CNC work and more. It is currently scheduled to air Thursday nights on the Speed Channel. TLC will continue to run *American Hot Rod* in worldwide syndication beginning in March.

Jo, too, is scheduled to have a girls' car show of her own soon. Stay tuned.



The AMSOIL logo was displayed prominently on the AMSOIL/Coddington roadster at Bonneville.

A Conversation with Jo Coddington



Jo Coddington shared her enthusiasm for cars, Boyd, family and AMSOIL during the interview.

Jo Coddington was wearing her pink AMSOIL Cabana Shirt and a warm smile. She talked about her relationship with Boyd, her love of racing and provided advice for women working in what used to be a man's world.

It may have surprised a few people to see Jo slide behind the wheel in the Salt Fever AMSOIL/Coddington Bonneville Roadster, but it shouldn't have. Jo has been racing since age

six, and her favorite style of racing right from the beginning has always been foot to the floor, pedal to the metal. In fact, her father installed a restrictor plate on her early go-karts because she never used the brake.

AMSOIL: How did you and Boyd meet?

Jo: We were introduced by mutual friends. My husband had passed away. I had been kind of sad and depressed and wasn't doing too much with my cars or anything. They convinced me to go to Hot August Nights with them. I had known Boyd and bought his wheels before. They were three-piece billet wheels. He had these styles that stood out from all the others. To me wheels are like jewelry for a car, like specific watches and necklaces.

AMSOIL: How many cars did you own then?

Jo: I had about eight cars when we met, and now I'm down to five.

AMSOIL: Do you have a favorite?

Jo: Probably the one he's building right now, a '40 Ford convertible. It's going to have a removable hard top instead



It may have surprised a few people to see Jo behind the wheel of the AMSOIL/Coddington Bonneville Roadster, but her achievements speak for themselves.

of the rag top. And we're going to have several alterations on it, like extending the chassis. That way I'll be able to have my grandchildren in the car because all my other cars are one seat or two seats.

AMSOIL: What advice would you give to women working in the business?

Jo: I really think that women involved in the car business have to feel it is not a man's world. It's just as equally a woman's world. It has to do with passion. It has to do with the inner you coming out. If you have a love for motorsports, and for products that assist in motorsports excellence, there's nothing that's going to make it harder or any less hard than it would be for a different gender. You just have to be passionate about what you do.

AMSOIL: Did you enjoy your Bonneville experience?

Jo: It was really humbling because normally with the TV show we have eight weeks to build the car. Because of deadlines on other cars for customers we were cut down to five and a half weeks. I was so humbled by how hard and how dedicated our guys were to make sure that I would be at Bonneville, and to make sure that I was safe. They doubled everything they could to make sure I would get from point A to point B, and God forbid that if I were on my head or on fire that I would be safe. If the car did catch on fire, I had eight minutes to get out. I was actually wearing the same safety gear that John and Ashley Force wear.

AMSOIL: What's it like driving fast on the salt surface?

Jo: Bonneville is unique in the fact that it is the only place I have ever raced where the conditions change from morning to noon to your late afternoon runs. There's a water table that comes up during the day. Your first run will have some moisture in it. Depending on the time, the prevailing winds usually come from the side. So it differs that way. Your main run would be rather dry. When we went in August they'd had lots of rain and almost cancelled it.

AMSOIL: You really look like you're enjoying what you do.

Jo: I'm living my dream. I have always lived my dream.



From the minute they set out to build the car, Jo Coddington had "salt fever" and couldn't wait to put her foot on the accelerator.