



Joe Kavalauskas, of the Village of Pennecamp, stands with his 1933 Ford Speedstar. He built the car with the total look of the '33 Ford with the side panels, and the engine is special in that it has a 1960 sprint car fuel injection that has been converted to a full computer. Photos by George Hunsford | Daily Sun

Villager Builds Speedstar Roadster From Ground Up

Joe Kavalauskas built his own roadster in 2005, and it has won several national awards.

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By Rachel Stuart

Joe Kavalauskas has owned many cars in his lifetime.

It wasn't until 2005 that he decided to build his second show car.

After buying the body and the frame that were originally built in the '90s in Maryville, Tennessee, the Village of Pennecamp resident built a 1933 Ford Speedstar roadster from the ground up.

"I put it all together from there. It took about four years to build," he said.

He built the car with the total look of the '33 Ford with the side panels, and the engine is special in that it has a 1960 sprint car fuel injection that has been converted to a full computer.

"The controls on the engine are what make the car so unique," he said. "It's a four-wheel independent suspension, and it rides like a big go-kart because it sits right on the ground. It has no body lean to it whatsoever."

While building the car took time and effort, Kavalauskas' wife, Barb, said it was quite an experience to watch her husband build it.



"I've never seen him build a car before. It was a lot fun watching him do it," she said. "Who knows? He might want to do another one."

Though Joe is the only one who drives the car, he lets Barb ride in the car and feel the open air.

Moving to The Villages permanently two years ago, Barb said she is able to get more opportunities to feel the freedom of riding in the car.

1933 Ford Speedstar Roadster



Engine:
Chevy 350



Transmission:
GM 350



Wheelbase:
120 inches



Base Price:
\$60,000



Curb Weight:
2,450 pounds

"The wind's in your hair. I really love it," she said. "There's no roof, so you can look out and see the sky and everything that's around you. It's not like being in a normal car."

Joe is attracted to, and has an appreciation for, cars from 1933, and he has owned '33s and '34s before. But, he had the desire to build a roadster, or a two-seater with an open top, with a burgundy color that is the original color for the Corvette's 50th anniversary car.

"I just like the styling of the car. The lines of the body are what I like the most," he said.

Before he built the roadster, Joe had a two-door 1933 Ford sedan, which was the first show car he owned.

He currently has four cars in total, including another hot rod and a 1965 Chevelle convertible that is being painted at a shop.

But the roadster is the only show car at the moment.

"It's got 4,000 miles on it, but that's just back and forth to shows," he said. "It's won its share of awards."

The car has won more than 10 awards at different hot rod events around the country, including an award at the Shades of the Past Car Show in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

"To win a top 25 there is pretty prestigious. That's probably my favorite award," Joe said.

Driving the car to shows and winning awards is exciting for Joe, but he said being a part of the hot rod community is what he enjoys the most.

"What's nice about the hot rod community is that you can have an expensive car that you put a lot of money and effort into, or somebody can drive up with one they found in a barn that they got running and cleaned it off," he said. "Everybody is equal and accepted."

Though Joe enjoys riding in his roadster, he said he wouldn't hesitate to sell it when the time comes.

"If somebody wanted to buy it, I'd be glad to let somebody else have it because it's been a good car for me he said.