



This page: Willie Martin and his award-winning '55 Chevy. Opposite: ACDelco parts are in demand at Ed Martin Garage.

## a true classic

ED MARTIN GARAGE STILL THRIVING AFTER  
MORE THAN 70 YEARS IN BUSINESS

BY KATHY SENA | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSEPH PUHY

**W**illie Martin was just 4 years old when his grandfather gave him an old carburetor to work on. Little did he know the repair was his first step toward carrying on a family tradition passed down through three generations.

Back in 1934, Martin's grandfather opened his own auto-repair shop, Ed Martin Garage, in Riverside, Calif. Martin's father, John, inherited the business in 1972. Martin helped his father run the shop for 26 years until 1991, when he took over the reins after his father passed away.

Today he owns Ed Martin Garage, an ACDelco Total Service Support member, with the same guiding principles his grandfather established: Fix it right the first time and use top-quality parts.

Fortunately, the parts part of the equation was a no-brainer. "We've been associated with ACDelco since the 1940s, before it was even called ACDelco," Martin says. And it's likely that not many shops have put ACDelco's extensive parts inventory to





Martin and his crew find that ACDelco has the parts they need to service the diverse array of cars that come into the shop — from late-model imports to rare classics.

He adds that although he's worked on many great classic cars, one of the most memorable is probably a '31 Cadillac V12 sedan. "And just last week, we worked on a '66 Corvette," Martin says. "Now that was fun!"

The shop has serviced some customers for the past 40 years. "People bring in their classic cars, and then they end up coming back when they need service on their everyday vehicles, too," Martin says. "Aside from a small monthly ad in the local paper, it's pretty much word-of-mouth advertising for us."

#### A WINNING PARTNERSHIP

ACDelco district manager Paul Jackley, a former automotive technician who currently owns a couple of Corvettes himself, is a natural fit as the local sales rep for Ed Martin Garage. "ACDelco offers superior coverage for vehicles past and present," Jackley says. "The guys at Ed Martin Garage do some very custom stuff. They're excellent technicians and it's great to be able to provide the parts they need to get the job done."

But no matter how many times Jackley comes through in the clutch, he knows he'll be hard pressed to ever become Willie Martin's favorite ACDelco rep. That's because Bob Sauer has a lock on that title.

Sauer was the rep for Ed Martin Garage back in the United Motors Service days. "Sauer called on my grandfather, my dad



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and me," Martin says. "He even introduced me to my wife. In 1992, at age 76, he was the best man at my wedding. And we just attended his 90th birthday party."

It's obvious that long-term relationships mean a lot to the folks at Ed Martin Garage. And the Martin family business looks like it will be in good hands down the road, too. "My 7-month-old grandson, Justin, was here at the shop the other day," Martin says. "All he wanted to do was crawl straight toward a '46 Plymouth."

Looks like the family tradition will live on. ■



the test quite like Ed Martin Garage has, given that the shop specializes in fixing classic cars and hot rods in addition to "regular" auto repair.

In 1970, Martin inherited what he calls his "high school hot rod," a '55 Chevy (and a former loaner car in the family business) and set out to turn it into his dream car. He replaced the original 235-cu.-in., six-cylinder engine with a 327 V8 (the first of many engine upgrades to come), painted the exterior "medium guard-rail blue" (adding flames on the hood, naturally), and cut the fender wells to look like those on a '55 Nomad.

Thirty-four years later (after a lot of sweat equity, Martin laughs), that same '55 Chevy took top honors in 2004 at Asphalt Ego-Rama IV, *Rod & Custom* magazine's annual invitation-only road trip/performance competition. The contest, which featured six cars chosen from 1,500 nominations, included driving from San Francisco to the NHRA Motorsports Museum in Pomona, Calif., with an editor from *Rod & Custom* sitting in the passenger seat and assessing everything from performance to fuel economy.

#### IF YOU REBUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

While Martin jokes that winning brought him "fame, glory and a \$12 trophy," taking top honors in the prestigious competition

caused more than a few custom-car enthusiasts in Southern California to head to Ed Martin Garage. In fact, hot rods and classic cars account for about half of his business these days, says Martin, who works closely with Rod Bauman, a master body and paint man working for a private automotive-restoration shop in nearby San Marcos, Calif. "He does the paint and body work and I handle the mechanical stuff," Martin says.

