

Rebuilding iconic engines a passion for Reno resident

By AP

RENO -- In a lifetime spent under the hood, Reno's Everett Adams has quietly built an encyclopedic knowledge of engines and a museum's worth of cars, boats, airplanes and memorabilia.

Adams, 80, has had a hand in the restoration and recreations of some world famous motorized machines – ranging from George Whittell's famed boat the Thunderbird to the around-the-world-winning Thomas Flyer automobile to the 1911 Renault Town Car in which Kate Winslett and Leonardo DiCaprio famously made out in during the James Cameron film, "The Titanic."

Adams and his crew at Adams' Custom Engines on Glendale Avenue built a replica of the Renault that went down with the Titanic in only 60 days. Adams was in Baja, Mexico during the filming of the movie, even getting a bit part as a chauffeur in the film.



The Thunderbird is one of the engine's Everett Adams has rebuilt. Photo/LTN file

"It was quite an experience," said Adams, who has numerous

great experiences since moving to Reno in 1957 to go to work as a Ferrari mechanic for Bill Harrah. He also built engines and was the crew chief for Harrah's racing hydroplane, the Tahoe Miss; worked as a crew chief for Indy cars; and worked as a mechanic at Harrah's Automobile Collection until 1965 when he left and started Adams Custom Engines.

It's safe to say his business is largely a well-kept secret. The company has never advertised itself, instead relying on word-of-mouth recommendations from one car person to the next.

The name is also a bit of a misnomer, because the company does much more than just engines. It rebuilds and restores classic vehicles, often from the ground up, often hand-crafting parts that are impossible to find. It also has a "modern side," where it works on contemporary vehicles.

The business has completed more than 380 body-off vehicles over the years, meaning the body is taken off the frame and the vehicle is restored from the ground up. Each of those vehicles is documented in photo albums that Adams keeps in his office.

Almost 50 years later, it is still a labor of love for Adams, who said he still enjoys being in the shop and the fabrication area where parts are refurbished, restored or built from scratch. Through the years, the shop has created its own molds and dyes for parts that are hard or simply impossible to find anymore.

Adams has also amassed a huge collection of manuals, books, magazines and other materials that can help he and his staff in any project brought to them – from Rolls Royce and Ferrari to Corvettes to classic cars of any vintage.

"We're just now organizing our books and moving them to one of the other warehouses, which we're converting into a library," he said. "We're going to have a research section with probably 1,500 volumes."

When completed, the research library will also be a bit of a museum with displays on the history of the business, vintage posters, memorabilia and ephemera that Adams has accumulated through the years.

When it's completed, the plan is to have the research library available to car enthusiasts.

For Adams, who still enjoys driving the 1932 Ford he bought for \$25 in 1949, it's about sharing a love and a passion for all things mechanical.

"We've had a lot of fun," he said. "I've had a lot of enjoyment out of this."