

## Jerry Harrison builds contemporary classic cars

By BD Tharp

A short time before he retired in 2006 Jerry Harrison took his love of the automobile and started his own company *Contemporary Classic Cars, Inc.* “I’ve been into cars since high school, having had a 1940 Ford Coupe, 1966 Corvette, 1969 Corvette, then we started a family and we purchased a Chevy Nova!” said Jerry. He had always wanted his own business after he retired and knew that it had to deal with cars. Equipped with a Bachelor’s degree in Engineering, a Masters in Business and 41 years of engineering and management in the aircraft industry Jerry made this dream a reality.

“I was born in Sterling and grew up in Raymond, and graduated from Alden High School. Wichita was the “big city” for us. I’ve lived here 43 years and plan to stay,” Jerry said. He worked his way through college, attending Emporia State, Kansas State and then graduated from Wichita State. “I have always been interested in things mechanical. I built my first bicycle from scrap parts. And did the same for my first car, a 1940 Ford.”

His first classic car was a 1955 Chevy he refurbished after his oldest daughter was graduated from East High School. “It was featured in an article in Classic Chevy Magazine,” he said. “My youngest drove it during her senior year at East High and was voted the girl with the coolest car, competing against Jeeps and Cameros.” They purchased her a different car to drive to college and Jerry got the ’55 back, so he did another restoration with upgrades for his own use.

He decided to build contemporary classic cars after the purchase of a 1933 Ford kit car. The engineer in him determined that it just wasn’t right, the car was too small, it wasn’t wide enough, there was no trunk room, no top, and the list goes on. “It was natural [for me] to modify the kit into a car that I wanted,” said Jerry. That is how the Ravenhawk LSR was born. “Our daughter actually came up with the name Ravenhawk, which gives us a distinctive name that is easy to remember. The design evolved from the stylized ‘33 Ford kit into this form in order to incorporate all of the luxury items that I wanted in a car for me. I felt that if I liked it, then there would be other people who would like it also,” said Jerry.

“I built the Ravenhawk to drive and since July 2008 I have put nearly 3,000 miles on it,” he said. He took a trip with his son-in-law to Ada, Oklahoma when the car had only 200 miles on the engine. “We left at 4:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning in August to look at some classic cars. It was a beautiful cool morning, so we put the top down. The car handled wonderfully! The trip was trouble free, and we received “thumbs up” everywhere we went.” On the way back they put the air conditioner to the test to combat 104-degree temperatures outside. “I’m living a dream by building this car and having my own company,” he said.

The initials LSR, behind the Ravenhawk name indicates that it is a Luxury Street Rod. It has the style and performance of a street rod, but the luxury of an exotic automobile. Jerry has designed in a trunk large enough for golf clubs, plenty of leg room, a clamshell hood, fully independent suspension in the front and rear, 6-speed transmission, full sound system, GPS, leather seats and power door locks. The engine is a 405 hp Corvette with cruise control and it also has automatic front and rear cameras with audio warning. There's a perimeter security system with key fob pager, and an electronic tracking transmitter that allows you to determine the car location on your computer. And it offers even more. For detailed specifications visit the web site that Jerry designed at <http://contemporaryclassiccars.info>.

"It is truly a luxury car, and it has the powerful engine and exhaust "rumble" of a street rod versus a sports or exotic car," said Jerry. "We've been able to build this car in three years with only one other employee besides myself, and some part time help. This design would be considered a full custom in the fabrication or modification world, and normally would take five years." Due to the development and experience they have gained building the prototype, Jerry anticipates the next one will only take two years and their five-year-plan would increase production to 12 per year in the future.

While the Ravenhawk is Jerry's brainchild he admits that his wife Judy provides critiques and he listens closely to feedback from friends and employees. "I've been studying this type of design for several years, and I have two file cabinets full of system and body design information filed by subject," said Jerry. Building this car has allowed him to not only utilize his experience, but to gain new skills such as welding, fiberglass fabrication, body painting and upholstery.

"The typical hot rod is usually cramped, has no leg room, has a very small trunk, is hot from the big engine, windy due to not having a top and loud inside as well as out," said Jerry. "I had my fill of rust and grease from working on "old" classic car restorations. The Ravenhawk is several steps above a restoration." And as the name *Contemporary Classic Cars* implies he's successfully built a car with a classic profile and contemporary engine, suspension, electronics and other systems. This is not a kit car where the buyers would spend hours piecing it together. It's a limited production, hand built, fully assembled automobile.

Keep on the lookout because Jerry likes to drive the Ravenhawk about town. Like its designer, the Ravenhawk *"is a true original...you won't want to put into a museum, because you will want to drive it instead!"*