



Life in the other

LANE

(Last month we talked about the joy and bliss associated with MASS acquisition and the planning for it's reincarnation. This month we'll crash back down to earth and deal with the reality of said plan.)

Having already freely admitted to massophobia, it won't be difficult for you to understand why my nose is pointing straight up in the air as I write this. I'm going to tell you about the magical (and pungent) world of fiberglassing. This will also explain why Chateau Walrich smelled the way it did for about a month over the winter (nope, can't blame that on the cats).

At first blush the whole process of fiberglassing is rather fascinating. You decide what parts of the body of a car you want lots of, you take said parts off the car, and you apply about 45 coats of "mold release wax" to the OPPOSITE side of the part you want. This opposite side business still has me a bit confused despite the fact that my TH explained it in terms I should be able to understand. I think his exact words were, "it's just like a jello mold, dummy!" Be that as it may, after the wax business the process is as follows: gelcoat, resin, mat, resin, cloth, resin, cloth, resin, acetone. Got it? No?

Okay, let's slow down a little. Gelcoat is dark, bluish-black slimy stuff. It reminds me a lot of the stuff Hollywood came up with a bunch of years ago for the sci-fi classic, *The Blob*, only it's runnier. The purpose of gelcoat is the same as the primer you use on your average wall before painting it. This is the stuff that prepares the surface for further attack. Resin is the binder and smells just like a fully stocked refrigerator that hasn't been opened in about six months. This stuff is brutal but important if you expect things to stick together. Mat is like cloth only weaker. We've covered resin. Cloth is like mat only stronger, like comparing denim to lace. We've covered resin. We've covered cloth. We've covered resin. And for the finishing touches we use acetone to clean up any little messes we've made or, if we've been neat, it is useful for removing nail polish.

The MASS, upon close inspection, required a front right and front left fender if it had a ghost of a chance of passing tech. Early in the reincarnation process it was decided that simply going to a junk yard and finding same was a ridiculous pursuit when it would be just as easy to make them. This level of logic is lost on a massophobic. The concepts I was able to latch onto were (1) fiberglass fenders are lighter and a lighter car goes faster (2) once a mold is made it is

conceivable that infinite numbers of fender clones can be manufactured and sold to the hoards of 510 owners that would be beating a path to our door. Thus far we have had a hoard of one but I'm still optimistic.

Designing and constructing a mold requires that a real part be assaulted so the species can be perpetuated. Our Wolf Creek Racing partner, Ken Burt, just happened to have a spare set of fenders that he deposited in our care over the Christmas holiday. The plan was simple, my TH and his dad (an expert fiberglasser) would make the molds and the originals would be returned to Ken. My TH and his dad came away from this adventure unscathed, the fenders alas were mortally wounded. My offhanded suggestion that we have a proper burial was met with a counter suggestion that I deliver a case of beer to the work shop pronto! Kenny's reaction to the demise of his fenders was an assurance that he really wanted a set of fiberglass ones anyway. What a guy!

Back at the basement of Chateau Walrich in the dead of winter the molds are perfected and the process of fiberglassing begins. Nights and weekends are spent in the singular pursuit of cloning fenders and airing out the house. I don't want to dwell on this time in my life. Now that it's over I can say with some certainty that if the idea of fiberglassing anything inside the house in the dead of winter comes up again, I will be writing this column from poolside at Club Med.