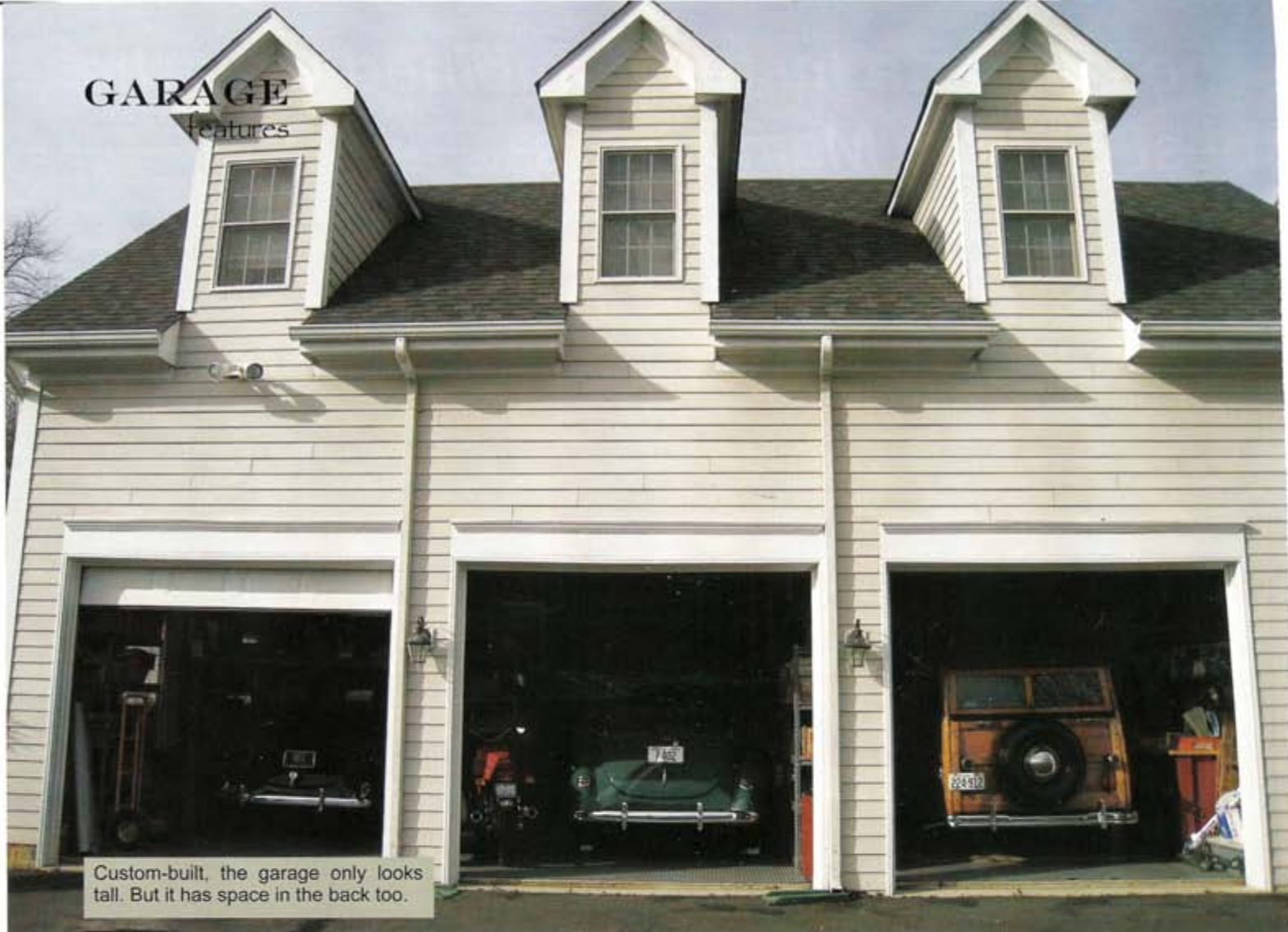


GARAGE features



Custom-built, the garage only looks tall. But it has space in the back too.

A Lifetime Garage

How an Automotive Author, Historian and Buff Enjoys His Space

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Ken Gross is a bit of a celebrity among car enthusiasts and publishers alike. For over 30 years, readers have enjoyed Ken's informative and playful writing style in magazines such as *Car and Driver*, *Road & Track*, *Playboy*, *Robb Report*, and numerous others. He's also authored five books of automotive interest, and is currently working on a couple of other projects, and has assisted Jay Leno with his columns for *Popular Mechanics*. Because of his extensive experience in the automotive media circuit, Ken has also been the subject of radio and television interviews, and helped put together and maintain some of the world's great automotive museums. To say he enjoys his work would be a gross misrepresentation of the facts.

"I started collecting books, magazines and tools when I was about 12, and still have all of them because I never threw any of them away," he said.

As such, Ken has amassed one of the largest literature collections in the world, counting out to roughly 30,000 books and magazines.

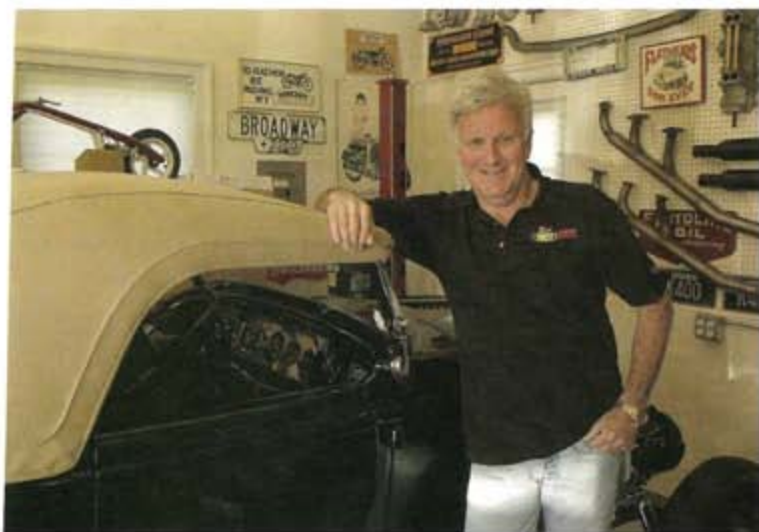
"They're a lot of fun, and immensely handy in my work," he said.

When it came time for he and his wife, Patricia, to build the third of three houses they've assembled themselves, they made certain three major elements were in place



A lift makes all the parking and servicing difference.

"Really, it's a great garage though. I can park four cars in it because I have a Backyard Buddy Lift that I put the roadster on, and park another car underneath. I love servicing and maintaining my cars. It seems weird, but I enjoy getting a car up in the air and going from front to back, checking this and that. You really find all kinds of interesting things."



(Above) Upon BLT roll out floors Gross has organized shelves. Ken Gross (left) is dyed in the wool car guy. (Below) Intakes as art.

– one, a terrific garage for the cars and automobilia; two, a spacious home office for Ken to store his magazines and books, and work; and three, an ample kitchen. Patricia works for the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence, so when it comes to car stuff, she's not opposed to much.

"She's terrific, very understanding about the automotive hobby," he said.

The kitchen provides an outlet for Ken's other passion, cooking. Complete with Viking professional appliances and a wealth of space and storage elements, it lightly reflects the thought process behind the garage, which is an oversized three-car space with various tools, rolling carts, shelving units, plenty of lights and switches, electrical outlets including 220V access, a lift and storage cabinets. The floors were painted originally, but over the years the paint began to show wear, which Ken remedied with a roll-out vinyl floor by BLT.

"I loved how easy it was to install, and it looks terrific," he said. "So long as I don't burn out or do something silly, it should be fine."

While Ken is very proud of the garage, he admits wishing he'd spent more time designing a larger space.

"I don't do a lot of heavy work, mainly because the space is a bit limited, but I have everything I need for what I do," he said. "But, I would love to have some equipment and space in the garage that would allow me to really tear a car down to the frame and do a restoration without having to move things out of the way."

Considering the options, Ken knows that he could extend out onto the property from the back wall of the garage, which would give him enough room to park cars in tandem and



afford him space for more tools and heavier restoration and maintenance work.

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During high school, Ken worked in a gas station, so he really prides himself on being able to check those components notorious for becoming loose, or greasing parts that need frequent attention. Even if they're not obvious items.

"I can probably grease any early Ford with my eyes closed," he said.



One of Gross' favorite cars is this old Woody.



Like most eclectic working garages, Gross has this 'n that everywhere.

While not massive by any definition, the garage serves Ken's needs well, and is a bit of a working museum, complete with a lifetime's worth of collectibles, most apparent of which is one wall completely splashed with about 130 flathead Ford intake manifolds. Adding to the flathead performance mix is an occasional period-correct Isky Cam or specialized high-compression head or distributor, all highly desirable to the hot rod community, and gaining in popularity.

"My wife jokes that at night, they breed," he chuckled. "Over time, a renewed interest in vintage hot rods and speed

equipment has really driven the price of these parts up, so what used to be \$200 is now over \$1,000, so I don't buy them anymore unless I find a collection to pick from."

Ken's obsession with the flathead Ford and Hot Rods in general is indicative of a youth spent at drive-ins behind the wheel of '32 Fords and light-to-light combats after a few chocolate malts. And, nothing could be truer.

"I grew up in the 1950's, and a lot of hot rods during that era had Ford flatheads, and they were tremendously powerful, and I guess that made an impression," he said.

But, more truly, Ken is just a car guy at heart, having owned a host of automobiles and motorcycles from around the world.

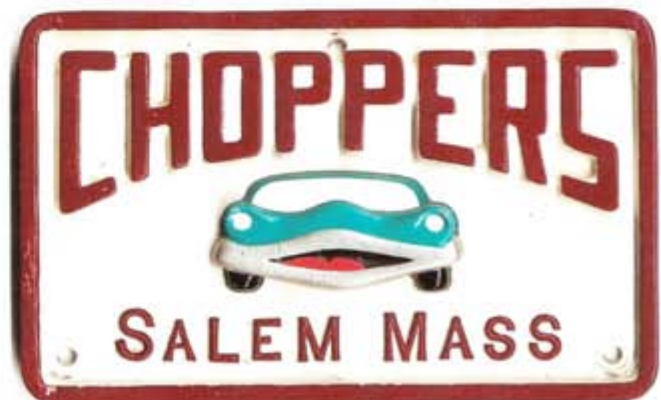
"I've owned a number of cars, including a Ferrari 275GTB, Lamborghini 400 GT and a few Morgans," he said.

Currently, Ken owns a 1931 Ford highboy roadster, a 1939 Ford convertible with an early Chrysler hemi, 1942 Ford woody and a 1985 Ducati motorcycle that he enjoys using and maintaining.

"I enjoy driving everything I own, but I also believe in maintaining them very well," he said. "For this, the garage is an absolute necessity, especially in states with four-season climates."

Aside from driving and enjoying his cars, one of his favorite pastimes is to simply adjourn to the garage and admire all the items he's collected over the years, reminiscing about days gone by, or imagining potential projects. Surrounded by memorabilia gathered over a lifetime, the garage is Ken's space to unwind and enjoy.

"The garage can be a wonderful place," he said. "People just have to make it their own." GSM



An old club license plate.