

A WORLDLY EDUCATION

BANK REWARD CARDS

OUR SEAFOOD RESTAURANTS

CITY & SHORE

MAGAZINE

FINE JEWELRY
**BEYOND ALL
MEASURE**

PROJECT
RUNWAY'S
AMANDA PERNA'S
NEXT PROJECT

A photograph of Jay Leno, a middle-aged man with grey hair, smiling and sitting on a wooden stool with a teal seat. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and a watch on his left wrist. The background is a solid blue color.

JAY TALKING

Iconic Tonight Show host brings timeless comedy to celebration of timeless vehicles at Boca Raton Concours d'Elegance

FEBRUARY 2016



Jason Wenig at The Creative Workshop – and Dan Johnson's 1929 Peerless, shaping up, in the inset at right.



Peerless **Example**

One man's childhood wish may soon be granted at the Boca Raton Concours d'Elegance

By Eric Barton

When Dan Johnson was a kid, he would always hear stories about his great-uncle's car. It was a Peerless, a little-known brand that was once the Rolls-Royce of America. It sat seven, and Johnson's whole extended family would pile in for road trips across the country.

By the time Johnson came along, his great-uncle had already sold the car. So it existed just in the stories his family would tell, about its reliability, its plush interior and a style that looked ready for a head of state.

"My whole thing back then was, one day, I'll have a chance to get a Peerless and get it perfectly restored," Johnson recalls.

It happened 25 years ago, back when Johnson owned a company in Chicago that produced trade magazines. He heard about a 1929 Peerless, just like his great-uncle's, for sale in West Virginia, and he headed straight there to buy it. Johnson drove it regularly, but it was far from the perfect car he had envisioned.

So after he retired to Fort Lauderdale, Johnson decided to finally restore his 1929 Peerless. He brought it to a place that's among the world's foremost experts on specialty cars, which just happens to have headquarters in nearby Dania Beach.

It's called The Creative Workshop, and owner Jason Wenig has promised Johnson's Peerless will look as good as it did on its first day. It has to, because Johnson plans to show it at this year's Boca Raton Concours d'Elegance, Feb. 19-21. Johnson wants nothing less than his car to win its category, if not the entire show.

That's now in the hands of Wenig, who founded his shop in 2001. Wenig had always had an affinity for fixing things – a photographic memory, really, for how things work – so he decided to try restorations.

"Many of the cars we see, there's just a handful of them in the world, if any," Wenig says. "For someone who's into cars, it's really a special thing. I mean, how many people have a chance to work on these cars?"

Nearby as he spoke in his workshop was a half-century-old, one-of-a-kind Stanguellini, an Italian racecar as curvy as a Broadway dancer. On the other side of the room was a Bosley, an exceedingly rare fish-faced car, which was in pieces but promised to be ready by August in time for Pebble Beach. And in another corner was a Maserati, like no other, although nobody knows why it has no sibling.

"Sometimes these cars remain a mystery," Wenig says. "We really don't know why Maserati decided to build just this one car."

Johnson's Peerless sat on blocks in the center of the workshop. The paint work was completed, but the engine was still being rebuilt by a specialist in Massachusetts. Wenig still had a long checklist to complete, and each item could be a challenge. A missing knob under the dashboard took him about 30 hours of research before finally finding a photo, which he sent off to a specialist knob maker to recreate.

But Wenig has a pretty good idea when it will be ready. "It'll probably be 10 o'clock the night before the event, if not that morning," he jokes.

Johnson has his own idea. He won't trailer his newly rebuilt car to the show in Boca – he wants to drive it there himself. It's about fulfilling the dream he had going back to when he was a kid.

"My Peerless is going to be as perfect as anybody could make it," Johnson says.

"I'm not a demonstrative man, but that moment driving it to the show, it's going to be a cool moment, it really is." ■

"MY WHOLE THING BACK THEN WAS, ONE DAY, I'LL HAVE A CHANCE TO GET A PEERLESS AND GET IT PERFECTLY RESTORED."

- Dan Johnson



Boca Raton Concours d'Elegance runs from Feb. 19-21.

For more information visit bocaconcours.com or call 888-302-5439.