

# THUNDER ROADS



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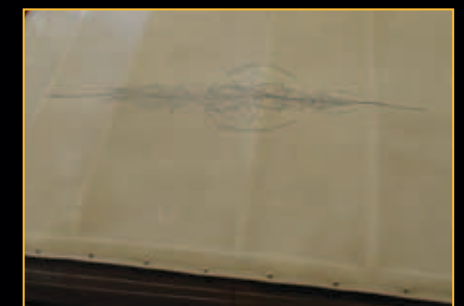
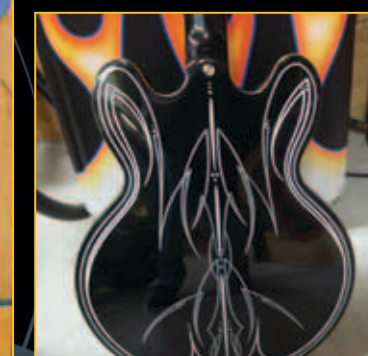
# The Paint Chop

by Ed Hinchey  
PHOTOS The Paint Chop & Tammy Hinchey

Just off Route 31 in Somerset PA is a house with a cool looking garage that had always brought a smile to my face on rides. It was obviously owned by someone with an appreciation for the history of riding and customs. Upon closer look, the name Kennell's Garage is worked into the front with certain artistry. This unassuming garage along one of the best riding roads in the state is the home of The Paint Chop. Having been a fan of great pinstriping for decades and being a veteran of the recent World of Wheels Autorama and Bike Shows I'd seen Casey first hand as he worked with the Pittsburgh High Scrollers and their charity auction for Autism. We also recently did a feature on Sam Childers, The Machine Gun Preacher, who only lets Casey do his paint work and he asked that if we ever did paint special that we make sure we reached out to The Paint Chop. So we made the appointment and headed out to Somerset. Walking in was an experience that hit a nerve with me – Along the walls, on the ceiling, almost everywhere you looked was the memorabilia of everything I'd grown up with. Album covers and soundtracks of Surf Rock like the Ventures and movies like Easyrider and Hell's Angels '69. Old Schwinn Chopper bicycles. And everywhere you looked was Casey's touch. The shop stool was pinstriped, so was the ceiling fan and the soft top of the Rod parked inside. On display just inside the front door are 2 T-Shirts in a frame – the first commissioned work he'd ever done, which was back when he was 12...

Casey has never had a lesson. He possesses that rare talent that allows him to take an image and with a brush make it come alive. He always rode motorcycles and points out another frame where you can see his first bike, a '67 Triumph chopper dubbed "Black-beard the Pirate" that went on to win numerous trophies. Casey's passion for his work

continued





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is apparent while we talk. His smile and easy transitions from one project to another and nonchalant mention that he creates his own colors to work with as needed as if that is a common, everyday kind of event. Next to the Blackbeard photo is one that I initially took to be from the pages of one of the old '60's bike magazines. When I asked, Casey nodded and corrected us – it's a picture of his aunt on her BSA that she rode everywhere. Art and motorcycling are obviously in the blood and Casey passed the talent on to his daughter who is a local Junior High School art teacher and who pinstripes as well.

One of the specialties Casey works hard to preserve is hand lettering. He's been hand lettering signs, business cards, trucks, cars and most everything else you can think of since long before the advent of vinyl and computer generated decals. As if hand lettering and pinstriping weren't enough, Casey is one of the few artists who excel at microstriping. Casey saw some of Mark Peters microstriping work and thought he'd give it a try. Mark saw what he was doing and asked him, "When you get it done let me autograph it." On the back of the panel in Casey's shop Mark Peters has written "When you love a good thing, pass it on"

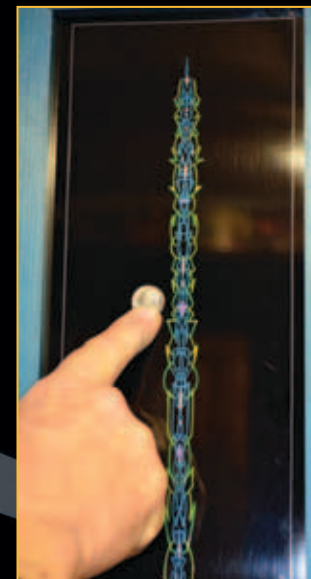
Speaking of passing it on, there is a Hot Rod Casey had done awhile back that ended up in Jay Leno's stable. Before it was Jay's it was Casey's and Casey had traded it for some lakefront property. From there it eventually became Jay's. Passing on a good thing flows through the shop. Legends like Pete Flannigan looked at Casey's work on a bike and asked who'd done it stating, "He knows his stuff and he's Old School" Mike Abraham told him the first time they met and he'd seen his work, "I feel like I've known you forever" and called him a parrot



adding "No color is safe!" He recalls a bit of controversy when a writer in Art magazine asked "Was Von Dutch this good?" referencing one of Casey's practice panels.

With a history that includes flat track racing, bike mechanic and dirt drag racing Casey knows the history of the culture and brings it to life like few others can.

When we do our series on Diners this summer we'll be covering a great one just off the turnpike at the top of the hill in Somerset, called logically, The Summit Diner. When



you stop in for the great food make sure to walk into the back dining area to see Casey's work.

Casey credits his 3 heroes for influencing his style: Mike Abraham, Jack Lindenerger and Al "Brush" Battista. And he credits his success to his motto "Keep on practicing" and, of course to his wife of 40 years. As if you need a reason to be at the I-X Piston Power Show in Cleveland March 20-22, you can catch Casey himself at work on the show floor along with Sam Childers and the crew from Machine Gun Preacher and Angels of East Africa. Along with Host sponsor Thunder Roads Ohio and Iron Cowboy productions, TRPA will be there all weekend staffing Thunder Alley. This is a fantastic opportunity to see one of the true legends of paint at work.

As we wrapped up the interview, Casey already had another appointment headed into the shop, this time with some tools for Casey to turn into awards for the local technical institute. Right behind him was a client wanting work on his bike. Do yourself a favor and head to the next event where Casey will be appearing – his work remind you where we come from and it will inspire you to be true to that history. Thanks Casey for 40 years of history on the end of a brush and here's to the next 40!



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