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Andy Says: Are you missing your Cat?



Not the cat that goes "meow", but the catalytic converter that goes on your vehicle.

Several customers a week inquire about catalytic converter installations because theirs was stolen. Across the country, thousands of drivers are experiencing the same awful surprise. With the price of precious metals skyrocketing, thieves are helping themselves to catalytic converters that contain enough platinum, palladium or rhodium to make it worth the risk to cut it from the underside of your vehicle.

What are catalytic converters, and why are they worth stealing?

Catalytic converters are devices that reduce pollution-causing emissions. Since 1975, all vehicles produced in the United States must have a catalytic converter as part of the exhaust system. The precious metals inside act as catalysts; when hot exhaust enters the converter, a

chemical reaction occurs that renders toxic gases, such as carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons, into less harmful emissions.

Stolen catalytic converters are sold to scrap yards for around \$100 to \$150, and when you consider the current prices for precious metals you can understand the demand. Rhodium sells for roughly \$9,500 an ounce, while platinum pays at about \$2,000.

Meanwhile, victims of catalytic converter theft are left to deal with the aftermath. There's the hassle of a vehicle that can't be safely driven, and the impact that has on your business. There's the high expense of having it towed to a local repair shop. Replacement of catalytic converters can run anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000, depending on the make and model of the vehicle.

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HAGIN'S

AUTOMOTIVE



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Fall 2011

Local riders live to tell tale of "Death Ride"

Excerpt from Martinez News-Gazette, July 12, 2011, by Greta Mart



Boasting a cycling skeleton as its logo and a subtitle of "The Death Ride," the innocuous-sounding annual sporting event called the Tour of the California Alps is certainly not for the faint of heart.

On Saturday, a group of brave Martinez athletes and other locals met the challenge of bicycling 129 miles, climbing 15,000 feet up and down over five mountain passes in the span of one day.

Andy Hagin, owner of Hagin's Automotive on Alhambra Avenue who

was raised in Martinez, said Monday "Every little slight hill seemed giant," by the time he was nearing the finish, but he was determined to complete the grueling event.

"Three years ago I decided to do it before I'm 50, it was on my bucket list," said Hagin, who hits the half-century mark on December 27.

For the past three months, Hagin trained "hard-core" by going up and down Mount Diablo three and a half times each session.

"We've been putting in a lot of saddle time," Hagin said, referring to his cycling group christened "The Old Farts."

The race begins in Markleeville at 5,501 feet and heads south first to Monitor Pass, the apex of Hwy. 89 at 8,314 feet. The riders descend Monitor to the juncture of Hwy. 89 and 395, then turn around and climb back over Monitor. Then they ascend and descend Ebbett's Pass, the top of Hwy. 4 at an elevation of 8,730 feet and move on to scale Carson Pass at 8,580 feet. All riders must be off the course by 8 p.m.

According to the Alpine County Chamber of Commerce, 3,500 riders participated in the 2010 Death Ride. 2,916 of those were men, and 584 women. The oldest was 85 and the youngest 10, and 2,417 of the riders completed the ride traversing five times over the three passes.

Hagin detailed his weekend. He and (friend) Picard camped out at Grover Hot Springs, a

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state park complete with wooded campground and natural, greenish-yellow hot pools located a few miles from Markleeville.

"We got up the next morning and drove up and down all the passes and then went to the spaghetti dinner put on by the [Alpine County] chamber. It seemed the whole town was working. The "Old Farts" all described the race as exhilarating, and "everybody had different paces, but we all finished," as Picard said.

Hagin, who opened his automotive repair business 13 years ago – first on Pacheco Avenue near Ace Hardware and then for the past seven on Alhambra, promised to be in business

"for a long time," to come. Hagin said he grew up on Blum Road, an area he and his neighbors called "Blumhawk."

"I went to College Park High School, my father taught auto shop there," said Hagin. "My side of the street went to College Park and the other side [kids attended] Alhambra High School."

Now that he's conquered one of most challenging bicycling races in the world, Hagin said next weekend he's participating in the Rubithon, an annual event that sees participants tackling the Rubicon Trail, a 22-mile half road-half 4x4 trail near Lake Tahoe.

"And I'll keep up with Old Farts," promised Hagin.

Meet "Tony Stewart"



No, not the driver of the #14 Nascar, but Jeff's such a Nascar fan that he named his cocker spaniel poodle "Tony Stewart".

A friend had told Jeff and his wife Julie about a litter of puppies at Delta Shores RV Resort on Brandan Island. They went to check the litter out and, to cut a

long story short, they fell in love with Tony and traded a set of tires for him! Tony was about 6 weeks old at the time and one could hold him in the cup of one's hands.

Tony has been a part of the family now for three years. He loves going RV'ing and boating. On long trips he "paws" at Jeff's leg and gestures toward the door (that's the potty signal).

As for favorite pastimes, Tony loves to play "hide and go seek", "keep away" (his toy from you), and of course the walk to the park to play "fetch".



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What thieves look for

Vehicles that sit higher from the ground, such as trucks, pick-ups and SUVs, are particularly vulnerable to catalytic converter theft because thieves can slide underneath without having to jack up the vehicle to gain access to the converter. With just a few cuts of a battery-powered saw, the converter can be removed in less than a minute. Thieves typically look for vehicles that are parked for prolonged periods of time in large lots, such as shopping centers, mass transit commuter lots or company parking lots such as at the SunValley Mall and at BART. Corporate fleets are particularly vulnerable, because thieves can hit multiple vehicles in a single location, and

if that happens, it can shut down a business for days.

Smart steps for preventing theft

Preventing catalytic converter theft on your vehicle is a matter of common sense and some research.

1. Always park in well-lit areas.
2. At shopping centers and other similar parking lots, park close to the entrance of the building, or near the access road where there's a lot of traffic.
3. If you own or work at a business or factory, park within a fenced area that's busy during the day and secured at night.
4. Engrave your license plate number on the converter to make it traceable. This can help with local police investigations.
5. Purchase a vehicle security system, and make sure it's set to trigger with just the slightest motion.
6. Visit a local muffler shop and have the converter secured to the vehicle's frame with a couple of pieces of hardened steel welded to the frame.
7. Check out the different types of catalytic converter theft deterrent systems at your local auto parts store or on the internet.

Our New Assistant Service Advisor: Brandon



By Andy Hagin

Let me introduce Brandon Proctor, our new assistant service manager. With business picking up once more, I felt it was time to bring an experienced team member from the shop up front to help Jeff in the office so that I could continue to focus my attention on the work out in the shop itself. Brandon will be there assisting Jeff to ensure that the quality of your repair work is top-notch.

Brandon has lived in Martinez since 1988 and from the age of 14, he has enjoyed working on cars. Brandon also spent three years in Alhambra High School's auto shop program, in one of the few auto shop classes still around. He graduated from Alhambra in 1999.

Brandon continued his education at Universal Technical Institute in Phoenix, AZ. He graduated from UTI in 2001 with an Associate degree in Automotive, Diesel and Industrial Technology.

After school Brandon had various jobs at dealerships and independent shops.

Brandon's son Nathan was born in 2005. At the age of 25, in 2007, Brandon started working for Hagin's Automotive. Brandon married his wife Rachel in 2009, and on August 20, 2011, his daughter Amelia was born.

I feel strongly that this blend of education and experience make Brandon an excellent addition to the office.

Martinez shop owner credits father and ASCCA for much of his success

Reprinted in part from Parts and People, July 2011

Martinez, Calif.—Hagin's Automotive Owner and ASE Master Technician Andy Hagin suffered from a learning disability that hindered his progress in school. With the guidance of his father and teacher, Bob Hagin, Andy Hagin said he excelled in all things mechanical and found his inspiration and success.

"I am dyslexic, so I had a very hard time at school," he said. "But as the son of the auto shop teacher, I got a one-on-one education right in our driveway. Like all kids at the time, all I wanted was a car. For my 14th birthday, I got my first project, a blown-up 1963 Fairlane 500."

Before his father became a teacher, Hagin said, he was a racer and owned several shops. "My dad owned Impossible Motors and Union Jack Garage, and was well known in racing for his work on Sunbeams."

The senior Hagin was a mechanic and tuner for Bud Rose Imports Sunbeam out of Walnut Creek, his son said. In 1961, the Sunbeam Alpine was driven at Riverside Raceway by two drivers who would become world champions and knights: Sir Stirling Moss and Sir Jack Brabham, he said.

"My father was very important to me and my success," he said. "My father was a syndicated columnist for the Contra Costa Times, the Sacramento Bee, and other papers around the country for 25 years. He was also Dr. Grease on KCBS radio in the mid-1990s. My old man's name is gold; he made the reputation, I just keep it."

"I tell people that my dad is here every day," Hagin said. "We have his photo on the wall holding his favorite drink, a martini. The photo is hung above his tool box and below his ashes. My dad will always have a work station in my shop. On his birthday and anniversary of his death, we'll put the martini flag out. When our day is done, we'll have one in his honor."

