

**And now it's time to "brake"
for some added SMILEage!**

Michael

The Auto Archangel

*Sometimes God literally stops us in our tracks --
as in the case of a spike that punctured a tire and
led me to a mild-mannered mechanic who rolls his
eyes when I call him Michael, The Auto Archangel.*

So what if the proprietor of Michael's Automotive sports neither the halo and wings of the archangel to whom nuns taught me to pray as a child nor the flamboyant spirit of the Michael portrayed by John Travolta ("He's an angel, not a saint") in the 1996 fantasy film by Nora Ephron!

Not only has Michael Polsinelli never steered me wrong, he has consistently gone the extra mile with a smile even when the repair challenges I've brought to him came straight from motor vehicle hell!

From our first encounter after I'd defied the odds by driving directly over a derailed railroad spike to a recent exhaust system that threatened to wake the dead after my car veered into a crater-sized pothole, Michael has remained upbeat while fixing the flattest flats and deepest dents.

Moving heaven and earth to make the repairs as promptly, professionally – and affordably – as possible is standard operating procedure for Michael whose shop bustles from dawn till dusk with customers.

The fact that many of his patrons represent second and third generations of the same families is a testimonial to how highly Michael's congeniality and integrity are valued. Advertising has never been necessary because glowing word-of-mouth referrals bring in new customers whose vehicles require maintenance, repairs or government inspections. Wheel alignments are a specialty that Michael enjoys tackling almost as much as he loves his longtime hobby: Restoring antique automobiles.

Please turn the page to learn much more about this remarkable soul for whom one can't help but pray the good times will continue to roll long into the future ...



Michael, The Auto Archangel

Going the extra mile with a smile is something Michael Polsinelli does not only when restoring antique autos for himself, but also for those who bring cars, trucks, vans and motor vehicles of virtually every make and model to him for servicing at Michael's Automotive – which, coincidentally, was a popular automotive garage in Ballston Spa in the 1930s (inset).

While other teens were assembling hot rods for soapbox derbies, Michael Polsinelli was busy taking apart antique automobiles and putting them back together. The vintage vehicles upon which he labored would leave his garage not merely in working condition, but meticulously restored to mint condition.

“The first car I refurbished was a 1956 dusty plum and Indian ivory two-door hardtop Bel Air that I received as a birthday present from my father, Tony, when I was either 14 or 15. The restoration was a real father-son project. I had earlier watched my Dad restore a 1913 Model “T” Touring Brass and learned a lot from the combined experiences,” muses Michael, who has owned and operated Michael’s Automotive on Milton Avenue (Route 50) in Ballston Spa since 1994. Prior to that, his was a familiar face at a garage at the corner of Routes 50 & 67.

While the 1956 vehicle will always hold a special place in Michael’s heart, his fleet of vintage vehicles has since expanded to include almost enough antique autos to stock his very own “The Way We Were” Car Show.

Also included in his personal automotive menagerie: A silver and black 1931 Model “A” street rod, a black and white 1955 Bel Air Coupe; a royal blue and white 1957 convertible, and a solid black 1957 two-door hardtop Bel Air.

All were restored by Michael — who moves proverbial mountains to secure authentic parts. He’s long since lost track of the distances he’s traveled to ensure that each vehicle is nothing short of perfect upon completion.

“I love taking old cars apart down to the last nut and bolt and then doing whatever it takes to make them look and run as good as, or preferably better than, they did in their prime,” explains Michael, adding he has a special affinity for vehicles that were manufactured during the 1950s.

“I really enjoy the lines, the detailing, the colors. That was an exciting time in automotive history, and they’re a lot of fun to bring back to life – that sounds a lot better than resurrecting the dead, but that’s what you’re doing in some cases,” quips Michael.

Some of the classic cars he has returned to their original splendor have won awards in highly competitive contests such as the GTO Electric City Show and the Adirondack Nationals in Lake George. As per the photos that accompany this chapter, Michael has also won “Best of Show” trophies in a number of other prestigious competitions. Michael’s fine craftsmanship has additionally been showcased in such periodicals as Chevrolet 1955-1957 Magazine — which boasts an international readership.

One of the things Michael most enjoys about the antique auto world is how his circle of friends has widened since he made his first public appearance with one of his classic cars at a benefit for the Ballston Spa Teen Center in May of 1984.

“Once the word got out that I restored old automobiles, I started receiving calls from people who needed advice. I helped those I could and those I couldn’t, I tried to steer in the right direction,” recalls Michael.

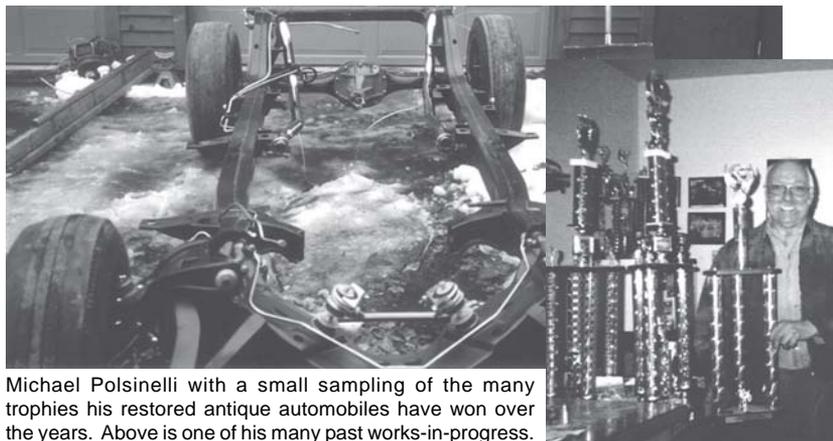
While the master mechanic insists that “everybody has something they’re good at; I just happen to have a knack for this,” friend and fellow antique auto buff Nick Mone was adamant in a 2009 newspaper interview that Michael has far more than a mere knack for what he does.



Master Mechanic & Auto Restorer

Michael Polsinelli (above) with cherished 1956 dusty plum and Indian ivory two-door hardtop Bel Air that he meticulously restored during his teen years. At left is his 1957 royal blue and white convertible. Bottom photo reveals the black and white 1955 Bel Air Coupe that he paintakingly refurbished.





Michael Polsinelli with a small sampling of the many trophies his restored antique automobiles have won over the years. Above is one of his many past works-in-progress.

“I always had muscle cars when I was young – a 1968 Chevelle Super Sport and a 1972 Chevelle Super Sport. Then I got married, had kids and put family first, driving the kind of cars you’d expect from a family man. But after the kids got older, I wanted to get behind the wheel of a less conservative vehicle. I met Mike a few years ago through an individual who has a street rod. Mike was recommended as the guy who specializes in front end alignments – something at which he excels – but I couldn’t believe what else this guy does!”

While he commutes to and from his job in Saratoga Springs in a GMC truck, Mone’s pride and joy is a 1934 street rod that Michael keeps in tip-top shape. When the weather is nice, the two can sometimes be spotted driving their respective Depression-era street rods. In their original condition, the 1934 and 1931 vehicles could achieve speeds of only 30 or 40 mph. Thanks to Michael’s magic touch, they are now capable of far surpassing the state speed limit, should their lives ever depend on it.

While Michael prefers not to discuss the dollar value of his fleet of restored automobiles, he quips they are “better than a 401-K.” As an example, one that cost just \$25 would now net “top collector’s value” in antique auto services. (A quick visit to the Internet revealed that six figure amounts are not uncommon.)

Going the extra mile is something Michael does not only when restoring antique autos for himself, but also for those who bring cars, trucks, vans and motor vehicles of virtually every make and model to him for servicing at Michael’s Automotive – which, coincidentally, was a popular automotive garage in the village in the 1930s.

These days, Michael, who along with wife Carol has three grown children (Michael, Jr., Adam and Lisa Marie), two grandsons and another grandchild on the way, insists it’s not enough to be able to take a car apart and put it back together nut by nut and bolt by bolt. “We’re in the computer age so you also have to keep up to date with the latest technology. Things were a lot simpler in the old days. When it comes to cars, I’d take the way we were any day.”

The same can surely be said of the service Michael, The Auto Archangel provides for the customers who are blessed to have found their way to his garage – no matter the age or condition of their motor vehicles.



Michael Polsinelli accepts the 2014 "Best of Show" trophy from John Cole of Cole's Collision in upstate New York. The recent award honors Michael's meticulous restoration of the 1957 hardtop Chevy Bel Air seen on this page. Silver and black 1931 Model "A" street rod below that was also refurbished by Michael is often seen parked outside of his business along the main drag in Ballston Spa, NY. -- home of the annual "The Way We Were" Antique Car Show. A vintage photograph of what is now Michael's Automotive is showcased at bottom.

