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Car customizer says avocation retains youth

MIDLAND (AP) — Allen Frasier remembers when he was 11 years old and his older brother, Carl, was working on his car at Midland Paint and Body Shop and elicited his help. That was 25 years ago and the beginning of a fascination with cars which is still growing today.

"It becomes an addiction," Frasier says. "Like anything else, once you start it's hard to stop. Everybody gets enthused with it."

The first car the two brothers customized was a '55 Nomad, a station wagon.

"We cut it down into a pickup," Frasier says. He laughs and adds, "Of course we wouldn't do that now; it's worth too much money."

Frasier, vice president of Midland Auto Buffs, is president of ARC Truck and Auto Body and president of Video Air Time.

The Midland-Odessa area has several nationally sanctioned automobile clubs, including Classic Chevy, the Permian Basin Oil Burners, the West Texas Street Rods Association and the West Texas Car Club, Frasier says.

Car club members have a place to "get together and be able to swap ideas and swap labor," Frasier says. The members in the clubs are "not just a bunch of guys running around crazy on the streets," but people who enjoy doing "something for the community as well" and have staged car shows for various non-profit fund raisers.

Frasier organized an Autorama Car Show in connection with last week's National Demolition Derby at the Twin Cities Speedway between Midland and Odessa.

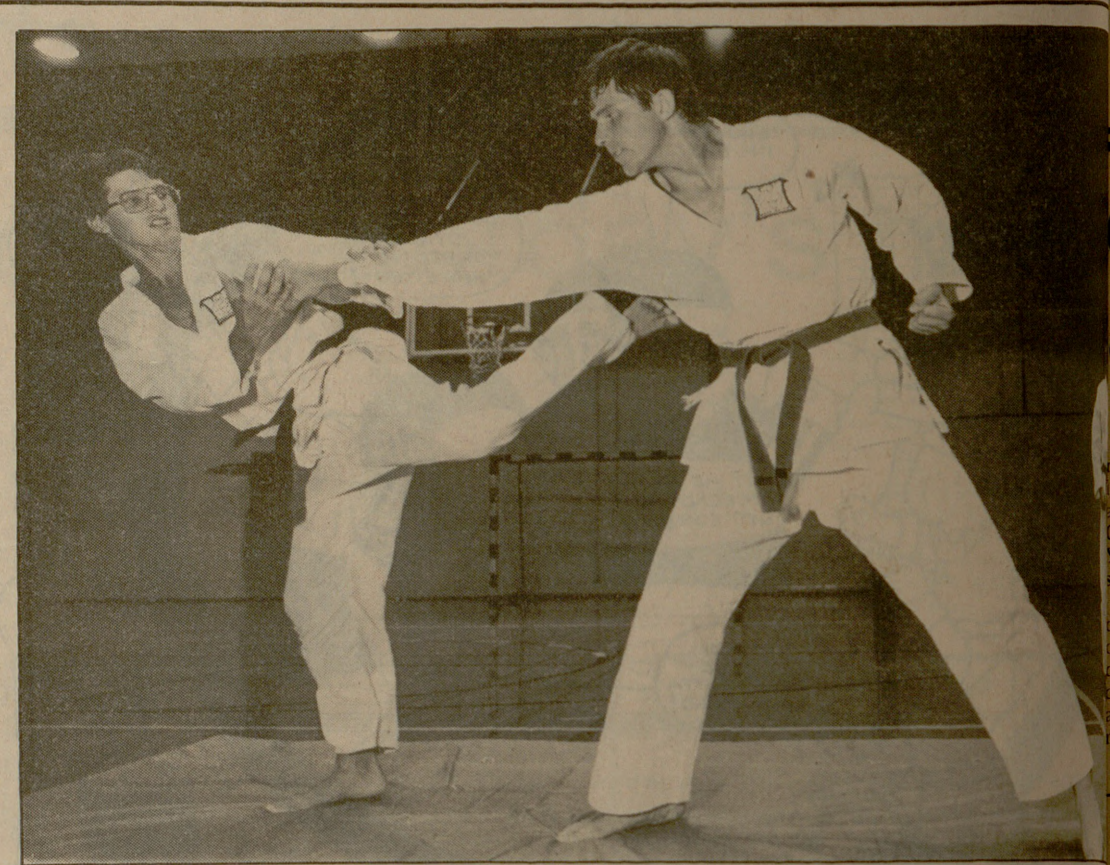
Restoring or customizing a car requires money and time, he says.

"I've seen guys that could take and spend a month on a car doing little things to it and have it just where they want it, and some guys take six or seven years just to restore a car," Frasier says.

But after 25 years spent working on customizing and restoring cars, Frasier finds the fascination to center around a return to youth.

"For a lot of guys, this really brings out the kid in them. Let's say a guy drove a '55 Chevy in high school. Now, he's made some money and wants to go back and relive his youth of yesterday.

"We're all kids at heart; the older we get the younger we get," Frasier says. "We're wanting to do again all the things we had fun doing back then."



Kick!
 Printis "Doc" Hyde, a senior physical education major from College Station defensively kicks Joe Bostick. The two are members of the College Station Fighting Arts Club.

Galveston officials hope Gilbert will spare island

GALVESTON (AP) — City officials, hopeful Hurricane Gilbert will continue its trek toward South Texas and spare the island, postponed calling for any evacuations until Thursday evening.

"If the storm or hurricane continues in its present course, we could delay the decision to evacuate and if it doesn't intensify, we could make a decision as late as 8 p.m. tonight," City Manager Doug Matthews said at a Thursday afternoon news conference.

Officials, however, were warning residents of Galveston's west end, which is not protected by a 17-foot-high seawall, to watch for high tides as the only road heading out of the area usually floods.

"We're telling people on the west end that there's only two foot tides

above normal," Matthews said. He added weather reports indicate the tides could reach six to seven feet above normal by Thursday night. He suggested if west end residents don't leave the island entirely, that they at least move behind the seawall.

Galveston officials estimate it would take 17 hours to evacuate the entire island. Officials predict 60 percent of the island's 63,000 residents will leave before the hurricane hits.

Gilbert, at one point considered the strongest storm on record with winds as high as 175 mph, was traveling west northwest in the Gulf of Mexico toward Brownsville. Forecasters, however, warn that the storm could turn north.

Despite where the hurricane makes landfall, heavy rains and winds associated with the storm are expected along the entire coast. Galveston remained on hurricane watch Thursday.

Those who decided to leave Galveston were stopping at Galveston pick up stickers that will allow them back on the island after the storm.

Most businesses were closed Thursday and owners were boarding up windows. Galveston's "Gilbert Go Home" and "Galveston Away" decorated the phone booths at a local restaurant. A restaurant billboard for "Carla, Alicia, Allen — We Live" in reference to three hurricanes that have hit the Texas coast.

Houston residents preparing for worst as Hurricane Gilbert approaches coast

HOUSTON (AP) — Despite indications that Hurricane Gilbert would vent its wrath on the southern Texas coast, Houston residents were taping up windows, buying food and water and removing tall billboards along freeways — just in case.

Even in the exclusive River Oaks neighborhood, residents were storing up on canned crab and lobster and jars of caviar to make sure they could weather the storm in style.

The killer hurricane, weakened somewhat after hitting the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, churned through the Gulf of Mexico on Thursday and seemed headed towards the South Texas coast for possible landfall Friday.

Brownsville was given a 32 percent probability of being the spot where Gilbert will hit land, though a hurricane watch was in effect along the entire Texas coast as well as the northeastern Mexican coast from Tampico.

Houston residents who remembered the damage caused by Hurricane Alicia in 1983 were stocking up on supplies and securing their homes and some even went northward to wait out the storm.

Gilbert's threat even prompted promoters to delay Saturday night's

sold-out show featuring Frank Sinatra, Liza Minnelli and Sammy Davis Jr. until Oct. 9.

City officials continued a close watch on the storm, but they had hoped Houston would be spared from any severe weather.

Mayor Kathy Whitmire said since the storm seemed headed to South Texas, the city would continue all services and would not close downtown Houston.

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The FBI is investigating at least one person in the apparent sabotage of O-rings used on space shuttle rocket motors and an arrest or indictment is imminent, an agent said Thursday.

HydraPak, which manufactures the O-rings in West Jordan, Utah, discovered in June that a small number of the rubber-like seals had been deliberately cut. Officials immediately notified rocket maker Morton Thiokol, the FBI and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the federal agencies began

a joint investigation.

"We do have suspects and the case will be prosecutable," said FBI Special Agent Cal Clegg. "Right from the inception, we have been discussing the case with the U.S. attorney's office, and we feel that arrests or indictments will be imminent."

Clegg said he did not know whether more than one person was suspected, but the number "could expand . . . it depends on the evidence that is gathered."

Charges could be filed within the month, he said.

James Dockstader, HydraPak vice

Whitmire said the center would go into full operations and that the shuttle might be closed off by police services might also be temporarily.

When Alicia hit Galveston in 1983, heavy rains and 85 mph winds pounded Houston. The sheathed skyscrapers in downtown Houston were hit by flying debris from other buildings.

The O-rings are used as seals between segments of the shuttle's rocket to prevent leakage of hot gases from burning propellant.

After the 1986 Challenger mission, a presidential commission found that an O-ring allowed a plume of fiery gas to escape from the shuttle's main engine tank, triggering the blast that ended Challenger's seven crew mission.

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