



Ladies in Autosports

Ashley Webb
Detroit Autorama 2009-Interview
By Your LIA Lady, Julia

LIA Mag: When I interview people I like to know a little bit about the person so that you don't have to repeat information that I can find on my own. So, I went to your Hub Garage, <http://www.hubgarage.com/mygarage/AshleyWebb>, and found quite a bit of information about how you became involved in the whole car thing. You remind us a lot of our daughter, Crystal, who always went with us to the car shows. One thing that intrigued me; which your dad basically answered the question; is how young you were when you first got into the car scene. On the Hub there are two pictures of you; one in your little pink corvette and the other in 1991 pictured with your dad's roadster. What ages were you at that time?

Ashley: Yes I was standing next to my dad's Ridler winning roadster. I would have been two then. But, I was pretty much born into it. I came in strollers to the car show and little red wagons and everything. I think my first car show was probably in 1990 at Cobo Hall

LIA Mag: And you were three or four?

Ashley: No, I was two or three

LIA Mag: That being said you were born into it, came to all these car shows, similar to our daughter. You're more involved than our daughter who came to the car shows with us every year. You were born into the builder or constructional side of things. So, what age would you say that you can remember when you were in your dad's shop actually working on something to where at that point you knew hey I like this and this is what I think I want to do?

Ashley: Well, I have been going to my dad's shop every since I was little because the shop is right behind the house (is on the same property). I have been going to the shop every day. I've always grown up in my father's shop and I really thank him for getting me in this industry and teaching me so much.. I'm always asked how did I get into this industry and that's one of the hardest questions I'm asked because I feel like I was born into it with a love and was meant to be in the industry. And I'm glad I can be in such a great industry with great people, the people are what really make the industry for me. Probably when my dad built his Ridler car in 1990. I have kind of a few little remembrances' of that in 90.

LIA Mag: What do you remember or what is the most memorable moment in 1990 about the Ridler car?

Ashley: I kind of remember coming to the show at Cobo Hall in 1990 and my dad winning. I also remember going out to the shop every day.

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LIA Mag:: So in 1990, you would have been two?

Ashley: I was three, it's difficult to go back that far.

LIA Mag: When did you become involved in going to the shop and actually helping your dad to work on projects?

Ashley: I have always been there learning. He has always showed me things. I would say, what I can remember was when I was five years old.

LIA Mag: Do you remember what kind of things you did at that point in time?

Ashley: He just kind of showed me different things such as; how different equipment would work. And he would let me stand on different things.

LIA Mag: When would you say was the first time for you to actually work on the very first project in the shop to where it really meant something to you and what was the project?

Ashley: All the projects meant something to me but, probably my roadster meant the most to me because being it was mine. I had a lot more involvement in it and that was just a few years ago. Everything I've worked on has meant something to me at the shop, however I would say that is my most significant project.

LIA Mag: Basically through the years as you were in the shop every day, your dad was teaching something new all the time, constantly. That knowledge was building. Did all that come together with the build of your roadster?

Ashley: Yes all that knowledge I utilized in building my roadster.

LIA Mag: What was the most difficult part in building your roadster?

Ashley: As with all shops or individuals it is dealing with the stress of building a vehicle.

LIA Mag: Did you have a deadline date of when you wanted your roadster completed?

Ashley: We actually completed the roadster for SEMA 2005. We came down to the wire, however we were in pretty good shape. We had planned to debut my car the year before but postponed it to the following year which was better. It was a lot of work, running, etc., stuff like that, it was all work.

LIA Mag: What age were you when you built your car?

Ashley: I was a junior in high school.

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LIA Mag: Was it difficult to balance school and building the car?

Ashley: Yes, I was in softball and it was a little difficult to balance all those things.

LIA Mag: Was it difficult for you to decide softball over your car or vice/versa?

Ashley: Not really because I love cars and I put that before any other extra things outside of school and sports. After softball I came home from school and went straight to the shop to work on my roadster. I also spent the weekends working on my car. It was just a balancing act that was required, which wasn't that bad because I love cars.

LIA Mag: I see that you are going to College and you are seeking Automotive Marketing and Public Relations. You are also taking TV broadcasting classes.

Ashley: Yes, Marketing, Management, Advertising, and Public Relations

LIA Mag: After graduation you would like to have your own company or work for a company in the Hot Rod industry or Motor Sports. First of all what type of job will you be looking for if you are working for a company?

Ashley: I actually would like doing the PR stuff for a company. I would love to be a PR person for Chip Foose. Actually I would kill for it! (Chip was sitting at the next table and I told Chip that Ashley would like to be his PR person, and he said your hired. Ashley told Chip, who is a good friend, that she brought up his name in the interview about wanting to be his PR person and that is why Julia said something to you.)

LIA Mag:: Ashley, you probably didn't think it would be that easy getting a job with Chip! (ha, ha) Now you stated that you would want to work in the Hot Rodding or Motor Sports Industry. Which is your preference?

Ashley: Probably the Hot Rodding Industry because it's in my blood.

LIA Mag: If you couldn't get a job in the Hot Rodding industry then what area/venue would you choose in the Motor Sports Industry and why?

Ashley: I love drag racing. My dad took me down to Indy when I was two or three. I love the feeling when the dragsters go down the track and you feel your heart beat out of your chest and the ground shake.

LIA Mag: Did you get to see Shirley Muldowney here at the show?

Ashley: Oh yes!

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LIA Mag: Where exactly are you going to college and why?

Ashley: I am going to a community college right now. I'll be done in the spring with that degree. After that I'll be going to Northwood, which is a business college and they focus really in automotive. I picked a community college because all my friends go away and fail then they have to come back and then they end up at the community college. So, I decided I'd go to the community college first to get a little more level headed and not party. Then Northwood being that it has such a good reputation. I want to go there for the business automotive.

LIA Mag: It sounds like you want to be close to home. With all the photos that I see on the Hub does that allow you as much as possible to be in the shop?

Ashley: Yes, every day after class. I go to school Monday and Wednesday. After that I don't even go to our house first. I go straight to the shop.

LIA Mag: What classes are you taking that will help you in the shop or later on in your career?

Ashley: I am just finishing up a couple of my last classes. I'm taking accounting, sociology, and I had all my business classes; advertising, sales promotion, stuff like that.

LIA Mag: What was one of your favorite courses that you have taken?

Ashley: I like advertising because I got to be creative and lay out advertisements. I also liked the sales promotion class because I got to do the display windows and I just loved it!

LIA Mag: Now your father has been in business how many years?

Ashley: I am not sure. Way before I was born.

LIA Mag: I also saw that your father used to do drag racing and worked on...

Ashley: Yes. Al Bergler's Motown Shaker and he used to paint all kinds of cars for guys like Dick Lahaie and so on!

LIA Mag: So you know these guys?

Ashley: This was before I was born but, I know these guys. I call Al Bergler uncle Al.

LIA Mag: Has your father ever said or have you ever thought about some day when your father retires to take over his business?

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Ashley: Not really because I'm more of the business person of the shop. He doesn't really want to see me get into the building part of the shop. He said he really doesn't want to see me with dirt on my hands and dirt under my finger nails. Currently I do a lot in the shop building and stuff, however, down the road he'd rather see me more in the business side of things.

LIA Mag: Would that be more along the lines of Project Management or such?

Ashley: Yes. He wants me to do my purse line or anything like that. Later on down the road he doesn't want me building.

LIA Mag: What attracted me to your site on the Hub Garage was your automotive art from scrap metal. On there you stated that you're not doing the art as much lately. Is it because of time constraints? Or is it because you said you have your purse line, which I had no idea you were doing. You're also talking about clothing apparel, accessories, and jewelry. So, is that kind of the direction???

Ashley: That's the direction I'm going. All the art that I have on the Hub was for a studio class in high school. The teacher burnt me out so bad that I didn't want to do anymore sculptures. She just pushed us so hard. So I took it in the purse direction. I want to do more like put my automotive influences into the different stuff like my purses. Did you see my headband yesterday?

LIA Mag: No

Ashley: Oh, I had a headband that had the different spline and holes drilled into the band. Different stuff like those items. I'm really into the current handbag designs and fashion and stuff like that. So, I thought I might as well put my automotive spin on those things.

LIA Mag: Okay, that is very interesting. Now the purse you have with you today, is that made from a headlight bezel?

Ashley: No, this is actually made from an old Stuart Warner heater. Do you know the old Stuart Warner heaters that used to be in the cars that set under the dash?

LIA Mag: Oh yes! Okay, so you just take the different items like that to create your purses.

Ashley: Yes. My dad had one sitting up at the shop, which we saw it at a swap meet and he said, you know I might build this in a roadster in the dash. It was sitting in the shop and I'm like, you know that would make a neat purse. I don't know how I envisioned it but I did.

LIA Mag:: That is really cool! What did your dad say?



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Ashley: He just shook his head but, he thought it was cool. He thinks I'm crazy because I have an obsession with purses and shoes. I spend too much money on things like that.(ha, ha)

LIA Mag: There could be worse things that you spend your money on. How many different style of purses like this do you have that you would like to sell to the public?

Ashley: I actually have three of these done right now. This is like the smaller version, then I have a medium and larger version.

LIA Mag:: You have some really cool ideas!

Ashley: The fine art exhibit here has invited me to bring some stuff to SEMA. Some different purses. So I need to produce some more purses before SEMA.

LIA Mag: Obviously you are going to showcase your purses on the Hub Garage. Are the purses for more the upscale audience? What age group do you want to gear the jewelry and clothing line towards?

Ashley: Accessories I can make a lot cheaper. We have a big scrap bin in the shop and I just search through that and make jewelry and bracelets and headbands out of the material in the bin.

LIA Mag: Is there one type of metal over another that you like?

Ashley: I love copper. I love to put the color in it with the torch like a blue. I love stuff with holes drilled in it. I made a bracelet like the splines and the stuff similar to the headband I wore yesterday. It turned out really cool.

LIA Mag: You have really got a lot of cool ideas. Would you gear accessories like that towards high school gals?

Ashley: Anything, I'm kind of focusing on the automotive because that's my love.

LIA Mag: Even the high school gals that are into the autos they'd eat that up.

Ashley: I'm just into the beginning stages for the purses and plan to have everything sorted out by SEMA.

LIA Mag: You told me that once you finish community college you plan to go on to Northwood for you business automotive degree. You seem to have several different visions going on. Within the first five years after you graduate from college, what are your personal dreams and goals you have for yourself?



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Ashley: My vision and goal for myself is I would love to get this purse line started. I would love to see somebody carrying my bags. Just having different stuff like that and I'd probably keep doing the automotive stuff. Possibly building another hot rod and keep working with my dad but, most of all to be happy.

LIA Mag: So are you telling me that you see there's definitely people out there who would want these purses?

Ashley: Oh yes. People like unique things. I had so many people stop me over the weekend and ask where did you get that purse. I told them that I'm making them. They said I've got to have a card. They just can't believe it. People like things out of the ordinary. I don't plan on producing a lot of them. I'm going to produce a limited number and move on to a different purse design.

LIA Mag: Will you be numbering the purses?

Ashley: Yes, I might have that Motor Jewelry company make a tag with my logo and number them, or we might make something ourselves.

LIA Mag: You were talking about continuing to work with your dad. Parents have an influence on their children. How has your father had an influence on you and how has that shaped the direction you're going?

Ashley: I don't know. He's so talented, it's amazing! Sometimes, I don't think he sleeps at night. Sometimes I wonder about all his ideas. I just love being able to work with him. He gave me so much and taught me so much.

LIA Mag: If you had to say in one sentence what your dad has done to move you in the direction that you're going, that's important, what would it be?

Ashley: I think that he gave me a lot of great opportunities by introducing me to all the people that he knows. He just said he gave me all the opportunities that he never had.

LIA Mag: That's great! You were saying he's so creative and never sleeps. Would you say you are similar to your father with your creative side. You have so many ideas and what he has done has definitely influenced your creative side. Would that be accurate?

Ashley: Yes, I believe so. I mean, my mother is very creative too. So, I guess you could say I got the creative side from both.

LIA Mag: What does your mother do?

Ashley: She is actually retired from GM. I guess I got the automotive side from both.

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LIA Mag: We know what direction you said you want to go as far as the business side. What is it you want to see happen in the industry and how do you want to help influence the direction of automotive marketing for the women in the industry?

Ashley:

As of now my main concern is to get the young people interested in the industry. I try to do this by talking to them on my views and the opportunities in the industry available to them. In the future I hope to be one of those handful of women in the industry and contribute to this great industry that I love. I also hope to use my creative side and automotive influence in my purse and accessories line and continue my marketing efforts for my father's business.

Now, how do I feel that we can aim to get the females in the industry: I think many great programs are being focused toward the young women such as educational day at Detroit, technical schools and so on. I think that the girls in this industry need to be aware that there are many other opportunities available for them, just not the ones that they have to get their hands dirty. So that is why I'm asked to speak at many of the programs to show them the opportunities and resources available to them. I feel that going to the shows such as the SEMA show has really inspired me to become a business women in a industry full of men.

LIA Mag: Did you happen to speak to the gals from the Roseville High School?

Ashley: No I didn't see the gals. I need to try and go over and speak with them.

LIA Mag: By listening to you talk, I'm sure your dad has already left a legacy that you'll remember later on in life. What legacy do you want to pass on for yourself and what is important to you?

Ashley: I want to contribute to the hobby that I've grown up in and love so much. Getting the young kids involved would be very important for me down the road. This needs to keep living, the Hot Rod Industry. I think by me talking at the technical schools and being out here talking to the kids, that's important to me.

LIA Mag: I want to thank you for taking the time to let us interview you. We wanted to get your take from your age group. You are the Pioneer for your generation similar to the women in the past. Like Shirley Muldowney, Lynn St. James, Danica Patrick, Sara Fisher etc.

To sum up the interview with Ashley I want to end with a quote she said to us during the interview: (***I was born into this whole car thing, so I had two choices, either Deal with it or run away. I chose to deal with the whole car thing and haven't regretted my decision at all for anything. I wouldn't change my decision for the world. Because I love this and this is in my blood.***..." Ashley Webb)