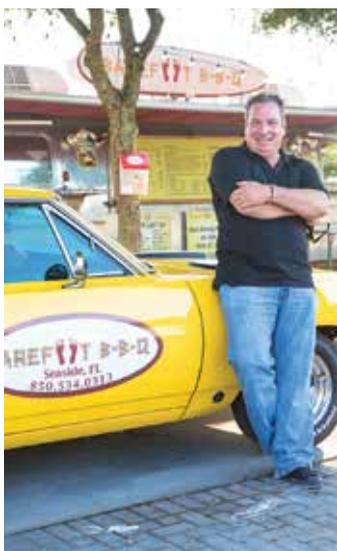


Ruling the Road

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

3OA might be known for its beachfront locale and its burgeoning presence as a hotspot for great food, entertainment, art, and shopping; but this boutique community has something else going for it. Here, putting pedals to the metal are the owners of some of the coolest cars around. Everything from vintage convertibles to restored military vehicles, these rides are running proud, ruling the road and laying rubber from beach to boardroom. Take a look under the hood, and you'll find the pulse of a finely-tuned machine. Take a look behind the wheel, and you'll find a pulse quickened by each RPM, each mile covered. These cars might have some age on them, but they're far from roadway relics.



1969 DODGE SUPER BEE – JAMES MURPHY

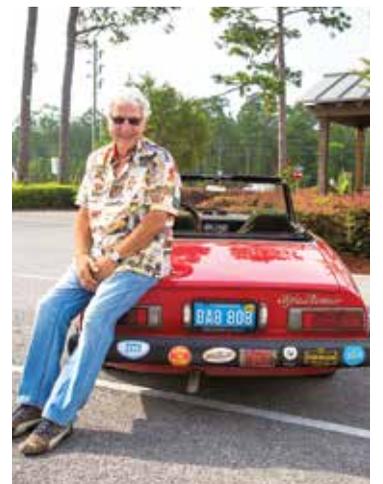
“My car is a 1969 Dodge Super Bee, which was only manufactured from 1968-1970,” says Barefoot Barbecue owner James Murphy. “The best thing about owning this car besides the joy of driving it is that you’re never in a bad mood when you’re behind the wheel. People are always giving you the thumbs-up, honking their horns, rolling down their windows at stoplights to tell you how much they like your car...It’s so cool to drive something that makes people so happy!”

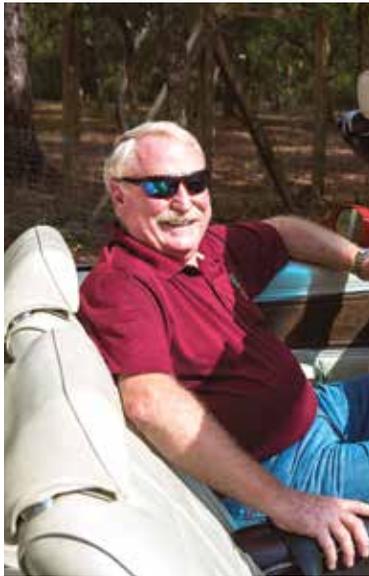
As a car from the peak years of the Muscle Car Era of American history, Murphy has even greater designs for his baby—painting it what he calls “1986 Corvette yellow” and souping it up with the installation of a brand-new 5.7 Hemi V-8 engine.

1977 ALFA ROMEO SPIDER VELOCE – LOUIS PETIT

When Louis Petit, owner of The Red Bar, had the chance to buy a 1977 Alfa Romeo Spider Veloce, he was literally taking title of a dream he’d had since he was 18 years old. Designed by Italian designer Pinin Farina, the car is the same model as the one driven by Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*; and—ironically enough—Petit actually purchased his prize from a 16 year-old who had received it as a graduation gift.

Fully restored to its rightful glory, this candy-apple classic has been Petit’s pride and joy. “Like the French singer Jacques Brel said, ‘Men spend the rest of their lives trying to realize their adolescent dreams.’ One of mine was to buy a cool car like the Alfa Romeo...” And so he did. Now, this Belgian-born transplant zooms along 30-A on his way to the beach, full-throttle at the life he only imagined when he was young.





1970 OLDSMOBILE 442 – JACK MCTIGHE

“They only made about 2,993 of the 442 convertibles,” boasts McTighe’s Irish Pub owner Jack McTighe. McTighe’s piece of Muscle Car Americana is original, “with matching numbers—the transmission, the motor, everything is original to the body of the car.” A rarity, indeed. And this viper-red showpiece certainly has some power behind it: “It’s got a 455 cubic inch engine, a competition CAM, an Edelbrock high-rise intake manifold, a functional Ram Air Hood system, and a souped up carburetor. It’s big and fast, and it gets about ten miles per gallon. The only thing that goes faster than the speedometer is the gas gauge!” he laughs.

And the car certainly has made a name for itself on 30-A. “It’s been the car that the Grand Marshall has ridden every year for our St. Patrick’s Day Parade—it’s rare, and it’s great looking.” Reason enough for the spotlight.



1967 JEEPSTER COMMANDO – DAVID RAUSCHKOLB

Eight years after buying a 1967 Jeepster Commando he saw sitting for sale on the corner of Hwy 30A and 395—“It’s a true 30-A piece” -- Bud and Alley’s owner David Rauschkolb finally has his rare find up and running. Ever the workhorse, the Jeepster has served Rauschkolb well, both at work and at play. “I have magnetics for all the restaurants on it, so it’s great advertising, and it’s an awful lot of fun to drive.”

A few other things that drew him to this ultimate beach-bummer’s ride? “I liked the lines on it,” he says simply. “I keep a canvas top on it that I had made in Bud and Alley’s blue, with a white body. I put in a roll bar, harness racing seat belts, and headrests for safety. And one of these days, I’d like it to run on an electric motor.” In the meantime, Rauschkolb seems to be giving his relic rider a second wind and enjoying every minute of it.



1986 LAND ROVER DEFENDER – MIKE RAGSDALE

30A.com owner Mike Ragsdale couldn’t have been more pleased when he stumbled over a 1986 Land Rover Defender while traveling abroad. After serving its time as an official British military vehicle, the camouflaged Defender sat abandoned in a British military yard, unappreciated and “going to waste,” as Ragsdale recalls.

“I wanted something different, and I thought this would be the ultimate beach cruiser,” he says. The decision couldn’t have been more ideal, as Ragsdale’s wheels are, in his estimation, “kind of indestructible. The body is made of aluminum and won’t rust, which is a problem in coastal areas,” he continues. “It gets great gas mileage, and it could probably last another hundred years.” And while this all-terrain trekker might be painted military issue Light Stone, it’s far from fading into the background.

**1977 PONTIAC TRANS AM –
RON ROMANO**

Next to roll off the line was ‘the Bandit,’ Romano’s 1977 Pontiac Trans Am: “It’s fully-restored, all original car with the window sticker and original ‘build sheet,’” he says proudly. “I wasn’t originally looking for a Trans Am, but it’s turned out to be my favorite car. It’s a blast to drive, and people always want to sit in the car and get their picture taken.” Little wonder that this piece of vehicular vintage is such a novelty—with a fully functioning 8 Track system, the Trans Am rocks in style.



**1967 FORD MUSTANG CONVERTIBLE –
RON ROMANO (NOT PICTURED)**

Ron Romano of the Beach Group has a full garage of collectibles that get his motor running, each distinct in style, spanning three decades of riding the road. Says Romano of his 1967 Ford Mustang Convertible: “We still have the original owner’s manual and the dealer sleeve with all of the original owner’s information typed in.”



**1984 KNUDSEN BAROQUE CONVERTIBLE –
RON ROMANO (NOT PICTURED)**

Even the Beach Group’s “company car” is one to notice—a 1984 Knudsen Baroque Convertible. “Knudsen built 11 cars—two were convertibles—and sold them all for between \$80,000 and \$250,000,” Romano says. “We bought the car from its pervious owner for \$9,000 and use it to promote the Beach Group in parades and around town.” Fun wheels at a fair price—certainly worth the bargain.



1973 JEEP – JASON BEER

While he might not be fully versed on all the factory specs of his 1973 Jeep, Jason Beer of Pizza by the Sea can still appreciate the uniqueness of his rustic rumbler, which came part and parcel to the restaurant when Beer purchased it from its previous owner. “It’s just really beachy, and it kind of reflects the fun, easy-going way of South Walton and Pizza by the Sea. People think it’s really cool, and we get a lot of people out taking pictures with it; so it’s been great for marketing the restaurant.”

Though the Jeep spends a large part of its time in Park, every once in awhile, Beer will take it out for a spin. “It still runs from time to time, which is amazing,” Beer laughs. Such is not always the case, however—“Two years ago, it broke down in the 4th of July parade, and a couple of my team members had to push it across the finish line.” A photo op in the making...

**1950 CHEVROLET STYLELINE DELUXE CABRIOLET –
MICHAEL AND KELLY RAFFERTY**

Michael and Kelly Rafferty couldn't be more proud of Nona, the fully restored 1950 Chevrolet Styleline Deluxe Cabriolet that's been in Mike's family since his grandfather purchased it for his grandmother, the car's namesake. "I've driven it my entire life," he says of the dark green convertible that has become a regular presence in local events, weddings, and even magazine features. "It's a beautiful car," Rafferty boasts, and indeed, it is—which might explain why he's been able to make a sideline business of renting it out as a touch of elegance for specially booked occasions, at which point Rafferty wears the hat of official chauffeur.



"Everybody waves and smiles and asks about the car when they see it." Obviously, this car was made to create memories. *If you would like to create Memories in Nona, call Mike at (850) 687-1588.*



**1975 PONTIAC GRANDVILLE -
ROBERT DAVIS**

Robert Davis is laying tracks of his own in his red 1975 Pontiac Grandville convertible, which he jokingly refers to as "The Land Yacht." Says the co-founder of Seaside, "It kind of floats serenely and slowly down the street, so it's easy to stop, hop out to take photos or make sketches and notes," Davis observes. "It's an important part of Seaside's development, since my wife and I used it to explore and get a feel for the coastal south and small town Florida. It was part of how we rediscovered traditional homes in north Florida and got a feel for how we wanted to plan out Seaside."

A fitting vintage of car, then, for reconnecting with days gone by. "People love the car, and they're continually giving it thumbs up or talking with us about fond memories of their own or of their parents or grandparents and their long American convertibles. It's an icon of another era, when gas was cheap and going for a Sunday drive after church was a drive in the countryside and a pleasant pastime."

