

## 20-Year Vendor Spotlight

# Richie's Garage

By Dave Petersen

---

**R**ich DeFabrizio was 26 years old when he first began vending his 1955-57 new old stock Chevrolet parts at Carlisle. That was 20 years ago—1974. Today, Rich's line has expanded to include first '58, '59, '60, then he added '53-'54, and finally in the late '70's he started selling all Chevrolet lines, Corvair through Chevy Truck. Then, just four years ago, Rich decided to tap into the Volkswagen market as well. He hasn't missed a single Fall Carlisle, and has been vending at Spring since its inception in 1977.

Of course, Rich was there with the rest of the original vendors when they were honored at the 20-year kick-off party during Fall Carlisle '93. He knew all of the vendors present. "We reminisced with some of them about what we did, how we sold stuff like emblems for 53-57 Chevys out of the trunks of our cars... There were a lot of stories from the original vendors, but they are pretty much all the same. Just a few differences here and there. Things you could consider rare today were commonplace for us in the old days. The old days were something else, I tell you."

Carlisle is a family time for Rich—his father, Al, has always come with him—and Rich's two sons, Richard and Paul, (24 and 22 years old) have been with them for at least the last 10 years. So, altogether, there are three generations of the DeFabrizio family here at the shows.

The family hails from Mickleton in southern New Jersey, about 15 miles south of Camden. The family business, Richie's Garage, is not a full-time business. It's a hobby. It has always been a hobby, but quickly turned into more of a "business hobby" because the proceeds do completely support the hobby. "We started the business in 69. When people were racing 55-57 Chevys, we were restoring them. In those days, all the parts and accessories were laying all over the place, dirt-cheap. Like, you go to look at parts for your car, and the dealer says he has some odd stuff, and he doesn't know what it is. If you wanted the whole lot for a hundred dollars, you could take it. In the old days, we could fill up my buddy's one-ton van right up to the top. Sometimes for a cheap as 75 dollars."

For his full-time vocation, Rich is a Civil Engineer in construction project management. He does things like building refineries and petroleum chemical plants, though he has recently been laid-off from DuPont after 7 years there. Rich designed and built labs and experimental facilities for them.

Rich reminisces about his early days at Carlisle: "When we came here the first time, this space (A75-76) was more like ten by fifty feet. There was a white picket fence around the track, right at the entrance to the show. Everyone parked in the infield and walked down this little walkway here. We had running water at our stand, and had to dodge the telephone poles to get into the stand with our truck.

"The first 5 years we slept in the van (nearly froze our butts off). I remember jumping out of the van in the middle of the night because we had one of those Coleman heaters, and the window vents weren't open, so we were gassing ourselves out. But it was the only way to keep warm. We always had vans, and the old ones had pop-open doors. When it would rain during the day, we took Corvette hoods and spread them across the tops of the open doors so we could stand under them, out of the rain.

"We used to eat at Duke's all the time. The best thing we remember about the first couple years is eating all those chickens that they cooked up in the back. Just over 3 bucks a dinner. I had a partner back then named Robby who doesn't come any more, just because he found other interests. We've enjoyed it here ever since, and we keep coming back. We love this place, and there is nothing we'd love to do better in the Spring and Fall than come here.

"We used to use a Coleman stove to cook some meals in the back of the stand along the race track. We remember people racing around the track at 2 a.m. waking us up. We remember hearing Duke (Carter) at 3 in the morning laughing and carrying-on. That would wake us up, so we'd go get a shower at 2 or 3 in the morning. At least we could get some hot water at that hour.

"We have pictures of all the early shows, even some panoramic views. I also have every piece of

---

literature from day one, associated with each show that was sent to me. I always kept everything, even the windshield stickers.”

According to Rich, this is the only place to sell Chevrolet N.O.S. parts, accessories, and literature. “Here, you don’t get the kind of hassles that you get elsewhere. And the people who come here appreciate new old stock. And that’s the key word, they appreciate it. Anyone can have reproduction parts—N.O.S. is a whole other story. And that’s all I have, new old stock.” In fact, N.O.S. is sometimes very hard to come by, so Rich tends to have just as many vendors buy from him as regular patrons.

Look for Rich at Spring Carlisle spaces NZ8-12.  
During Fall Carlisle he is at A75-76.