

About Mark Wade:

I started my automotive career in high school. I was working at a Mitsubishi/Nissan/VW dealer detailing cars and helping in the body shop. I went to Kent Career Technical Center my Junior and Senior years of high school to take auto body repair and refinishing courses. I spent my 2 years there making straight A's and was also student of the month a number of times. I continued to work at the dealership for 3 years until I went to college at Ferris State University for their 2 year auto body program.

During college I continued forward in the auto body field. Unfortunately, I worked at a couple of different body shops after college that were less than reputable, and eventually got out of body work as a trade. I got into car audio from there which allowed me to learn more about another aspect of cars that I had great interest in. I did a lot of custom installs and my previous bodywork experience allowed me to create some pretty cool custom enclosures and interior panels. I enjoyed the work quite a bit, but after 4 years of installing, I needed to make more money, and was able to get into a tool and die shop owned by a family friend.

I worked my way up in Tool and Die and my employer put into an apprenticeship program to become a moldmaker. I completed my apprenticeship and spent most of my 12 years in tool and die running a CNC mill cutting cavity on plastic injection molds for the automotive industry. During my time as a machinist I was also able to work up not only into being lead machinist, but also was a shift supervisor for a while. The work was challenging and rewarding. It also taught me a great deal about model making, CAD designing, and fabrication in general. Cutting my teeth in the "Tool and Die Capitol of the World" of Grand Rapids, Michigan taught me a great deal. Sadly, when things started taking a turn for the worse in 2001, the Tool and Die Capitol of the World became everywhere overseas and the trade began to collapse in my area. After a couple of layoffs due to business closures, I decided it was time to move south to warmer weather and a stronger economy.

During my time in tool and die, I was able to afford to buy some project cars and begin tinkering with all of the body work and car audio work I enjoyed so much as a hobby. I was able to build a few cars for myself as well as do a little work for friends. This is when I began to experiment with doing some custom body modifications and I also began playing around with custom painting. It was very enjoyable to be doing that type of work again, and my "hobby" also helped me to make ends meet when times got lean in Tool and Die because I could do some paint work, car audio or detail work to earn some extra cash.

After moving to TX in November of 2007, I had planned to go back into machining. Instead, I stumbled across Chopped and Diced in Seguin, which is a custom hot rod shop. That kind of job sounded much more enjoyable to me than machining widgets for oil refineries, so I told them what I could do and showed them some of my work. The pay was less than for machining, but it was much more enjoyable work. I was hired in to work in the body shop and I also helped out with running a small manual machining center they had. I also had a chance to perform some of their car audio work. I was fortunate enough to work on some pretty cool projects, including a 1960 El Camino extended cab that we built for PPG's Paint Your Ride contest. This car was one of the 12 contest finalists out of 3500 entries and is in PPG's 2009 calendar. That car also showed at the Goodguy's Nationals and won awards at the Austin AutoRama. I also worked on a 1964 Chevy Pickup that has won awards at both San Antonio and Austin's AutoRamas. While at Chopped and Diced I did about everything body-wise, from rust repair, metalworking and metal fabrication to filler work, prepping and painting. During my time at Chopped and Diced, I also went to PPG's paint school to obtain my first level of PPG paint certification.