



PATTI RICHTER/Daily Courier

Murphy residents Diane and George Graham pose next to their 1956 Chevy Bel Air 4-door post. The Grahams spent three years restoring the vehicle and usually take it for a spin at least once a week. They are part of the Rogue Valley Classic Chevy Club and will have the car in Saturday's cruise around downtown Grants Pass.

Three days of '50s fun are coming your way

Thursday

■ 6 to 8 p.m. — Diner Night and Poker Run at Jimmy's Classic Drive-in, Sonic, Bob Drake Reproductions, Ric's Corvette Bar and Grill, Rivertown Auto and Dairy Queen (south), finishing at the Town Center Plaza. Participants can start at any location.

Friday

■ All day — Sidewalk sales, dinner and lunch specials. Downtown merchants will have specials and longer hours.
 ■ 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. — Back to the Museum, featuring "Thirty Years of Art."
 ■ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. — Classic Car Pre-Show in Growers' Market parking lot downtown. Hosted by Rogue Valley Classic Chevy Club. Music and prizes will be offered.
 ■ 5:30 p.m. — Ice cream social at Grants Pass Historical Society, located at Fifth and J streets.
 ■ 5:30 to 10 p.m. — Classic Car Line-up, with special parking on Fourth and G streets to show off the cars.
 ■ 7 p.m. — "Lost in the '50s," will feature a Best Dressed '50s competition with several categories, a Hula Hoop competition and sock-hop dance. Also, Elvis Presley's "Jailhouse Rock" will be shown. Events at Town Center Plaza parking lot. Sponsored by Southern Oregon Audio/Visual and Jimmy's Classic Drive In.

Saturday

■ All day — Sidewalk sales, dinner and lunch specials. Downtown merchants will have specials and longer hours.
 ■ 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. — Back to the Museum, featuring "Thirty Years of Art."
 ■ 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. — Classic Car Show, hosted by Rogue Valley Classic Chevy Club at Riverside Park.
 ■ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. — Free children's games in the Daily Courier parking lot (Seventh and J streets), inflatable games and a climbing wall. Sponsored by Rogue Federal Credit Union, Logan Design, Dutch Bros. Coffee, Active Club and Northwest Insurance Agency.
 ■ 7 to 9 p.m. — Classic Car Cruise in downtown Grants Pass, with about 550 pre-1975 classic cars on Sixth and Seventh streets.
 ■ 9 p.m. — Free concert, which will be featuring Jamie's Rock & Roll Legends. The concert will be held at the Town Center Plaza.

Heap of junk now a Bel Air beauty

George and Diane Graham spent three years restoring 1956 classic

By Patti Richter
of the Daily Courier

Being able to transform a rusting piece of metal into a showroom beauty gives George Graham a sense of satisfaction and pride.

Looking at his teal and white 1956 Chevy Bel Air 4-door post, no one would believe it sat in a field, rotting away, for 20 years.

When he found his pride and joy, the faded paint hid a body that was rusted. The windows were halfway down, letting rain seep into the upholstery and rotting out the floor panels. Open windows also let rats and other field critters tear the seats apart to make cozy homes.

Graham and his wife, Diane, spent three years restoring the car.

"It needed a lot of work," Graham said with a smile. "It was fun, an adventure. I enjoyed it a lot and I learned a lot."

There are two kinds of collectors, he said. Those who love cars that are already completely restored and those who love to do the restoring. Graham did everything from replacing the rusted floor parts to painting the car in the original colors.

"I had to spray it three different times to get the paint right," he said. "Each time I didn't get it right, I had to take it back down to bare metal."

The only outside work came from an upholsterer who worked with Diane to get the right look — as close to the original as possible.

"The colors are my favorite," Diane said. "It's the original color. It's just classy."

Graham said he takes the car to lots of different shows and is always honored whenever he wins an award. "I feel blessed if people recognize the beauty of the car," he said. "It's always nice to win trophies but I'd rather have people see how much work we have put into it."

The two have been members of the Rogue Valley Classic Chevy Club for about eight years now, the same amount of time they have owned the car. They both love the 1950s era and will take part in Saturday's cruise around downtown Grants Pass.

"It was a time that was really family-orientated," Diane said. "Things are so different now. We have kids who are raising themselves. Some people are afraid to go downtown."

Both Grahams say being involved in "Back to the '50s" is a chance to be part of the community. Through various activities, the Chevy club members have raised \$131,000 over the last 13 years and given that to community agencies, such as the Inn Between and the Womens Crisis Center.

"I appreciate the opportunity to serve Grants Pass," she added. "And the club is a fun way to do that."



Jon and Kathryn Bowen are the new owners of Jimmy's Classic Drive-in in Grants Pass. They are offering prizes for a hula hoop and best dressed contest and will be offering an outdoor showing of "Jailhouse Rock" as part of a "Lost in the '50s" special event on Friday.



TIMOTHY BULLARD
Daily Courier

New drive-in owners are getting into the '50s spirit

Friday event features contests, showing of 'Jailhouse Rock'

By Patti Richter
of the Daily Courier

Jon and Kathryn Bowen didn't know the first thing about running a restaurant when they purchased Jimmy's Classic Drive-in two months ago — but they have learned fast.

Now they are diving in to help the community celebrate "Back to the '50s" by co-sponsoring a new event on Friday from 7 to 9 p.m. "Lost in the '50s" will feature a best dressed costume contest, hula hoop contests and an outdoor showing of 50's icon Elvis Presley's movie, "Jailhouse Rock." All of these Friday night events are set at the parking lot at the downtown Town Center Plaza near the corner of Sixth and G streets.

The Bowens are offering prizes for the best dressed families and individuals in the costume contest that are \$100 first prize and \$50 for second prize. In the teen category, first place is \$50 and second is \$25. Third places in all three categories get Jimmy's burger baskets. Prizes will also be awarded during the hula hoop competition.

"That period is special to our country," Bowen said. "It was some of the best of what America stood for. It's fun to relive it for a few days or go through it the first time if you weren't old enough back then."

The Bowens developed the idea with Jeff Voigt, the Towne Center Association's president, and agreed to sponsor it. "Jailhouse Rock" was also a natural choice for the movie night, Voigt said.

"It stood out from the rest. Elvis was a cornerstone of the '50s," he added. "It was the choice

for us."

The Bowens gained instant recognition two years ago when they moved to Grants Pass from Southern California and purchased the G Street Palace building in the downtown historic district from Larry Lacey, a businessman intent on opening a strip club. They also own the nearby Rogue Gold Cheese building at the corner of H and Fifth streets.

Both continued working in their careers — Jon is a 30-year veteran of television and video production and Kathryn is a graphic designer.

When Jimmy's became available a few months ago, they decided to take on another challenge.

"We didn't want to see it disappear because it's such a part of the Grants Pass landscape," said Kathryn Bowen. "But it was in a state and needed some

attention. This is something we were always interested in doing. And we love good food!"

Jon Bowen said they also thought the restaurant would be a good vehicle to promote some of their marketing ideas. "It's small enough so it was doable for us," he added. "It's something we can do well."

Their involvement in the restaurant showed them how much Jimmy's and "Back to the '50s" events meant to the community.

For Kathryn Bowen, getting involved in the planning for the "Back to the '50s" was natural. It was the first big community event the couple and their two children attended in Grants Pass, so it holds a special place in their hearts.

"People come from all over for the event," Jon Bowen added. "Classic car culture is important to the community. We wanted to be a part of that."

Classic car culture is important to the community. We wanted to be a part of that.

Jon Bowen
owner, Jimmy's Classic Drive-in