

Interview with RT Plate

A true rags-to-riches story, Robert Plate, owner of Lorton's own state-of-the-art auto body shop Precision Collision (www.pcirepair.com), started his career in the automotive repair industry at the early age of 17. Thrilled to break into the field that he loved, he readily accepted a janitorial job for the local auto body shop. Just six months later, the owner received a death threat and decided to sell his business. Young Robert, the son of a first generation immigrant and whose father died when he was just 11 years old, saw this as his entrepreneurial opportunity for success. Borrowing his mother's life savings with an I.O.U. written on a napkin from the body shop, Robert purchased the shop for \$7,500 and went from sweeping floors to running the business. Within the first year, he had paid his mother back in full (and with interest) and sold it for a whopping 1233% profit.

He subsequently built and sold three more automotive repair businesses and then purchased his first building in 1989 (www.pcirepair.com). He continued to purchase buildings as they became available and two years ago succeeded in purchasing the last portion of the current Precision Collision complex. Located at 7901 Kincannon Place in Lorton, Virginia, Precision Collision, now in business for 27 years, stands on over 50,000 square feet, has 44 full time employees and utilizes only the latest technology for collision repairs. His unwavering dedication and commitment to excellence, has resulted in Precision Collision being heralded as one of the highest rated collision repair facilities for quality and service in the country. His professionally trained staff manages the entire claims process from contacting your insurance, to negotiating the cost, to completing the repairs and necessary paint corrections.

Robert (or RT) attributes his success to hard work, excellent customer service, a steadfast commitment to quality, as well as the support of his employees and family. After 29 years, RT still enjoys going to work each day. "I truly enjoy watching people succeed," RT says and then adds, "also, having an accident is tragic. I truly care about my customers and feel that part of my job is to keep them calm and reassure them that everything will be fine." The current economy has certainly put a strain on all business owners. However, RT comments that he has been lucky in that his commitment to his customers and their total satisfaction has served him well.

When he's not busy at the shop, his secret obsession is collecting Oldsmobile 442s. The 442 was born out of the competition between Pontiac Division and Oldsmobile. It began as a hasty response to the Pontiac Tempest GTO, which had proved to be an unexpected success midway through the 1964 model year. The package was dubbed 4-4-2 based on its combination of four-barrel carburetor, four-speed transmission, and dual exhaust. When he's not focused on tearing up the roads, RT, an avid boater, spends time motoring down the Potomac with his lovely wife, Lori, and their two children. Not to be outdone by his rags-to-riches career history, he has a Cinderella love story. "When I met Lori it was truly love at first sight," RT says, "within a year of meeting her, we were married. She gives me the inspiration that I need to be a successful businessman, husband, and father."