



McLoughlin stands with Melvin Benzaquen (center), owner of Classic Restoration Enterprises, and SEMA President Chris Kersting (right), after presenting Benzaquen with a gift—a cross made from support beams of the Twin Towers.

9-11 HERO HONORED AT SEMA 2007

By: Anthony J. Sellars

Classic Consoles of Cairo, GA was one of 40 specialty equipment companies to honor a 9-11 hero at the 2007 SEMA Show this past November.

Sgt. John McLaughlin, former Port Authority Police Department sergeant, whom Nicolas Cage played in the movie “World Trade Center”, was presented with a fully restored 1955 Thunderbird dream car at this years trade show held in Las Vegas, NV.

Sgt. McLaughlin received a fully-upholstered T-bird Wingrider™ console and a Plug-n-Chug™ drinkholder that matched the original interior, both of which were handcrafted and produced in Cairo, GA by Will

Power Enterprises, Inc. DBA Classic Consoles.

Lacy Sellars, an employee of Classic Consoles, came across an article asking for assistance from the specialty equipment and automotive industry leaders last year from an online SEMA publication and brought it to the attention of her husband, Jason, and Classic Consoles owner and president Jeff Will. It was decided that day, that this was something worth pursuing so Classic Consoles found out how the company could help. In addition to providing the console and drink holder, Classic Consoles also assisted in providing the source for the original vinyl, which came from one of Classic Consoles’ distributors.

The publication stated that Sgt. Laughlin, a 9-11 victim and hero who was one of the first rescue officers to

arrive at the twin towers and the 19th of 20 people to be found alive and rescued from the rubble, brought his T-bird to Melvin Benzaquen, owner of Classic Restoration Enterprises in New York. Once the work requested to be done was considered and after hearing a first hand account of the events of 9-11 from one of the last two survivors, Melvin was moved to do something for him.

An amateur had recently “restored” the T-bird a couple of years prior and swindled Sgt. McLaughlin in the process. The problem is that he had fuel lines running over the top of the exhaust, and many other problems that were not only done incorrectly but made the vehicle life-threatening to drive.

Melvin then volunteered to completely restore the car at no cost. Upon hearing the details of both his horrific survival story and what Classic Restoration Enterprises was attempting to do after discovering the vehicle’s condition, Classic Consoles was among the first group of businesses to lend assistance to Mr. Benzaquen’s mission.

The end product, a dreamy fully restored prime condition 1955 T-bird was then presented to Sgt. McLaughlin at SEMA, (Specialty Equipment Manufacturers Association), which moved him to tears when he saw it. In a turn of events, Sgt. McLaughlin presented Melvin Benzaquen with a cross-shaped piece of a structural beam from the World Trade Center, as well.

Classic Consoles was privileged to take advantage of the opportunity to honor a 9-11 hero that was willing to give of himself so freely in the face of chaos.

Additional information is available at:

http://www.sema.org/Main/ArticleDetail.aspx?fc_c=1063029x2204401x55954129&contentID=58611.