

Round peg, round hole

In a lease deal that falls into the category of a round peg finds a round hole, PJ's Classic Stop has moved into the former home of Suburban Recreational Vehicles at 6022 Second NW, north of Montañó.

A classic car and truck restoration business, PJ's had outgrown its 3,200-square-foot shop at 4107 Lomas NE, plus another roughly 1,300 square feet in part of a nearby building. The company had a two-year backlog of custom restorations for owners and needed "elbow room," said Phil Fachan, who co-owns the business with wife, Jana.

"We've been busy since we opened our doors," he said about the more than three-year-old company.

Pat and Richard Branda had closed Suburban in April after more than 50 years in business. The location was originally the Branda family farm in the post-World War II years, and the couple didn't want to sell the property.

On a Saturday late last summer, Pat Branda recalled, "I was over there cleaning out a garage — we had so much stuff it took forever — and saw a couple looking in the windows. It was Phil and Jan. I let them in."

Marketed by Tim Townes of Metro Commercial Realty, the two-acre property has 13,600 square feet of assorted showroom, warehouse and shop space plus another 9,800 square feet under a canopy. It attracted a variety of interest from both potential buyers and renters.

"We wanted to find the right fit, preferably from a locally owned business," Pat Branda said.

PJ's was the right fit, quickly expanding to fill the building with a parts warehouse ("Most customers refer to it as the candy store," Fachan said.), a "clean room" for seven or eight vehicles in various stages of rebuilding, a shop area for vehicle maintenance or disassembly, and a showroom for some of their finished projects.

The canopy area isn't in use, although Fachan plans to host car shows and hold open houses there in the future. He estimates 60-70 vehicles can fit under the canopy.

Customers come from all over, including Europe, Fachan said. The company, which has seven employees, did a complete overhaul of a 1954 Chevrolet pickup for radio personality Don Imus, who wanted the vintage look of an old truck with the high performance of a new truck.

"That's a lot of what we do today," he said.

That kind of comprehensive overhaul can cost tens of thousands of dollars, but there appears to be plenty of old car buffs willing to spend it.

"It's kind of addictive. You get one and decide you need another," Fachan said. "Between my wife and I, we have five including a 1966 (Ford) Mustang."

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PJ's focuses on cars and trucks built in 1972 or before. Most of its custom restorations are on vehicles built in the 1930s through 1950s, he said.