



ENGINEERED FOR SUCCESS

As test supervisor for Fiat/Chrysler, Dalton Curtis makes his living testing cool cars

By Buck Dopp

Growing up in Idaho Springs, Colorado, Dalton Curtis spent his summers wondering about those camouflaged vehicles that passed by his house. He lived near State Highway 103 which eventually reaches an elevation of 10,000 feet and becomes part of the Mount Evans Scenic Byway, the highest paved road in North America.

That's why every carmaker tests their new cars on SH-103.

That experience planted the seed which took root in his dream to work in the automotive industry and led Curtis to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering. Graduating from Arizona State University in 2009, he hit the streets job hunting during the Great Recession when unemployed engineers were as common as white cars in Arizona.

"I was asking anybody and everybody," he said. "I started with my dream job and relentlessly pursued it and would settle for nothing less."

In the next eight months, he submitted more than 2000 resumes to companies in the U.S., Japan, Germany and Australia. Nothing. Then a friend directed

Curtis to the plant manage Fiat Chrysler Automobiles the Arizona Proving Grounds. When hired as a durability engineer, Curtis had \$200 in his bank account.

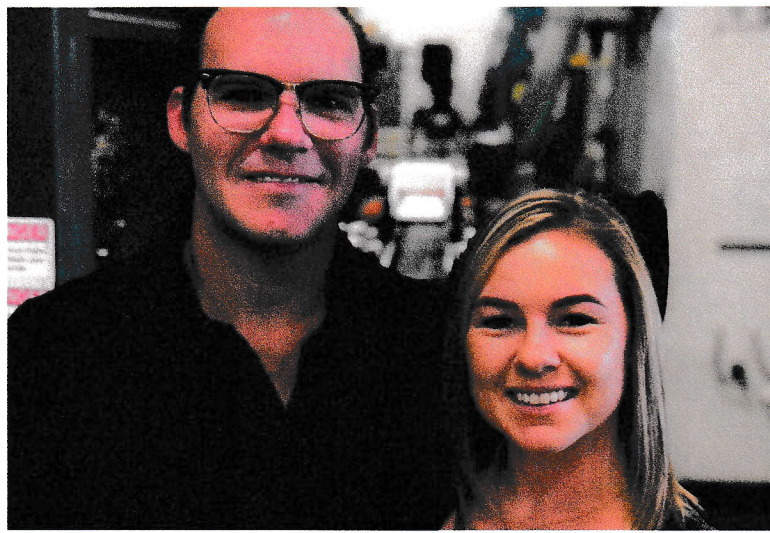
Now in his ninth year at the proving grounds, Special Test Supervisor Dalton Curtis oversees the group that test and develops brakes and certifications. "I like working on prototype vehicles and being on the cutting edge," he said. "I was one of the first persons to drive a Hellcat. It's insane to get paid to do that!"

The 32-year old believes that the connections a person makes with other people are a critical key to personal and career growth. "Success is

about the one who is the best or most qualified, but one that has the most connections with different types of people. Every job I've gotten through a relationship I've had." He points to Google as an example. "It may not be the best search engine, but it has the most connections."

Applying that principle in life, he believes his growth and success are proportional to the number of people he knows. "It's definitely not the only driver for why I want to be involved with the community. But it has opened doors to new opportunities that may have otherwise presented themselves. You never know when you're going to meet someone who will be able to help you or someone you can rely on."

board secretary of Only



Dalton Curtis with his wife, Kylee Curtis.

Orchids, he tries to focus the creative chaos of the group, which provided 1,500 turkey dinners last Thanksgiving. "It's a group of very energetic, intelligent people who are all bound together by the common goal to serve the community with fun and positivity."

Curtis, who graduated from Lake Havasu High School in 2005, joined all the clubs he could. He fondly remembered his biology teacher Karen Kyle (formerly Gifford) as a "fun" teacher. "You always felt she had your best interests at heart." He knew Dustin Run-

yon in high school, but they ran in different circles. It was after a board meeting of Only Orchids that Runyon, a fellow board member, asked him to check out a Creative Comrades meeting later that night.

"It was cool from the first meet up in October 2016," Curtis recalled. "I knew it was something I wanted to continue to be a part of. I'm captivated with its direction and the level it has achieved in the community. In engineering, we're data-driven. I have a creative side and wanted to network with more creative people."

The thing Curtis likes most about Lake Havasu is the lifestyle—within 10 minutes he can be in his boat on the lake or cruising in his Jeep Wrangler. "It's always easy to come home from vacation when you live in paradise."

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"My home away from home is the Crystal Beach cliffs on the north side of town off London Bridge Road. The cliffs range from six-feet to 65 feet high." While a student at LHHS Curtis and his friends would leap off the cliffs doing flips and

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— Dalton Curtis

gainers. "I only coughed up blood one time," he said with a smile. "I still go there once a month and jump off the cliffs. I like having that talent and don't want to lose it."

A big fan of wake-boarding, he endured many sprained ankles. Knowing Kylee Nusbaum was a physical therapist assistant, he asked her about treating sprains. They started hanging out together and married in 2015.

Mayor Cal Sheehy inspires Dalton because he has a calm demeanor and really listens to people. He also shared a memorable moment with the mayor. When an injury sidelined their wedding coordinator on the morning of the big day, "Cal took over and even carved some prime rib. That shows true leadership."

Kylee's cousin Tina and her



Dalton Curtis speaks to Creative Comrades.

husband Scott Stocking own the Mudshark Restaurant and the Public House. "I love Dalton to pieces," Tina said. "He's such a devoted and committed

young man—not only to his wife but himself, his job, his community and their future."

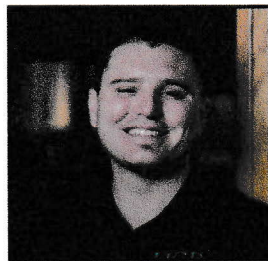
Scott said Dalton is a smart guy and noted that he earned his master's degree while working fulltime. He remembers the time Dalton dressed up as Tom Cruise in Risky Business for Halloween. "He's definitely a risky business. Anyone who can wear a costume like that has to have a lot of confidence," Scott added. "And he's the guy I know who competed the bike portion of a triathlon with a one-gear beach cruiser."

Dalton Curtis is now working on secret prototypes like the camouflaged cars he saw traversing SH-103 as a kid. He's also making connections and developing relationships with other young leaders who are working to make Lake Havasu City a better place to live.

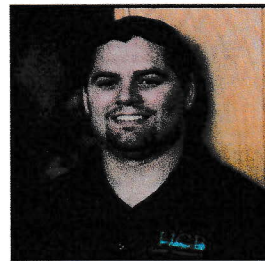
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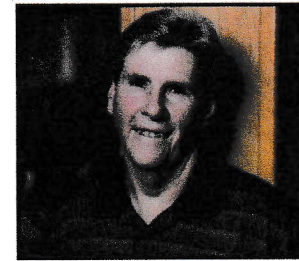
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