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Hills car town counters national trends

By MARY GNIEWEK

Farmington area car dealers are doing a boom business and putting a financial stake in the future of the industry, despite a downturn in the sale of American-made cars nationwide.

Dealers are moving into the area. Others are expanding operations and reporting higher sales figures over last year.

A Buick dealership is moving from Redford to a new \$1.4 million facility in Farmington Hills Jan. 15. A Chrysler franchise is closing its east-side Detroit showroom this month to consolidate with its Farmington Hills store.

Oldsmobile and Pontiac dealers in town are planning expansions. There are rumors Ford and Chevrolet dealers are looking for west Farmington Hills locations.

"A lot of people are reading of a downturn in car sales, but they're seeing an average," said Alex Poirier, sales manager at Bob Sellers Pontiac. "In this location, the economy is so strong we should look at the figures with an optimistic point of view."

Bob Sellers Pontiac celebrated its first anniversary at its 10 Mile-Grand River location last week with the announcement that new car sales are up 35 percent over last year.

The company just purchased two acres of land for future expansion needs.

"WE'RE PRESENTLY at full capacity in the body shop and we're approaching that in the service shop," Poirier said.

Just a year ago, Sellers Pontiac was housed in seven buildings along Grand

River in Redford. Part of the reason for the move was consolidation, but the main reason was relocation to a better market area.

Bill Cook, whose Buick dealership is scheduled to open here next month, is moving for the same reason.

"This is where growth is — new housing starts, expressways, population movement and an expanding market," Cook said. "We consider Farmington a super area."

Like Sellers, Cook is another Redford refugee, with several buildings along Grand River in what he calls an antiquated facility.

The new operation will consolidate inside of a 35,000 square foot building, also in the Grand River-10 Mile corridor.

Since Bob Saks Olds opened its doors on Grand River east of Drake Road in 1973, it has bloomed from a five-acre operation in one building to 17 acres worth of car business.

The company just expanded its used car sales operations and a Toyota franchise is in its future.

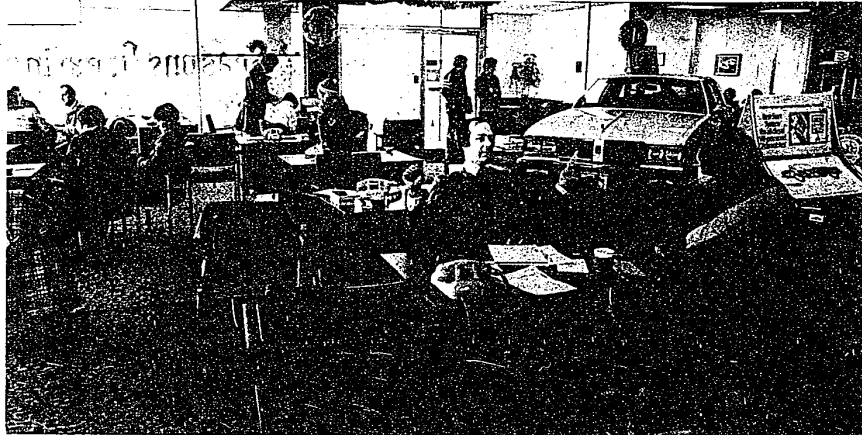
"We're expanding to penetrate more car business. We don't have a Toyota-size car," said Kenn Elliott, sales manager.

Elliott said about a year's worth of negotiations with Toyota are complete. The dealership will open by the spring.

ELLIOT EXPLAINED why Saks chose to take on a foreign car franchise.

"It's a matter of taking on a market people want," he said.

The Olds market is "not booming, but we're doing good. We don't see any reason why the car business won't con-



Salesmen chat with customers in the Rob Saks Oldsmobile showroom. Saks is currently undertaking major expansion projects which

include used car sales and a Toyota franchise. (Staff photos by Randy Borst)

tinue to be good for us."

Elliott said the north-west suburban market, including Novi, Walled Lake and environs, is a healthy one.

"People here are not as economically hard hit as others. We don't see any reason why the car business won't con-

Green Chrysler West, calls the Farmington area a rich market.

"It's the place to be," he said. "And I think it will be another four or five years before it's really booming."

Dick Green East, on Gratiot near city airport, is closing at year's end to

consolidate with the facility on Grand River and Middlebelt.

The comfortable suburban sanctuary sought by dealers here, far from the problems of Hamtramck, could be a key to their optimistic attitude about the future.

One dealer believes the economy is

just a momentary setback. He is looking for a good spring market. Several said they are ready to take the foreign car market head-on.

"The devaluation of the dollar is making imports more expensive and American manufacturers are hitting them head-on," said Poirier.

Firefighters win honors for life saving heroics

When George Hume and Charles Scheer arrived at the fiery accident scene in the early morning hours of Sept. 22 they were trying to cheat death of one more victim.

Two teenagers had died when their yellow two-door 1969 Buick was hit by an 18-wheel tractor trailer hauling steel on eastbound Grand River. The Buick was hit as it went through a traffic light on northbound Haggerty, according to police.

Flamed underneath the twisted wreckage of his cab was Hubert Coryelle, 40. Seven feet from his head, the Buick's gas tank had exploded into flame.

"When we first pulled up the car was completely engulfed in flames. Someone screamed that the trucker was still in there. My first reaction was to grab a hose and go in there," said Scheer, an 11-year veteran of the Hills' volunteer squad.

For their actions during that early morning mission, Hume, 55 and Scheer, 42, will be cited for bravery by the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

IN SPITE OF a broken neck, Coryelle managed to remain conscious during the ordeal.

"I tried to keep up a conversation with him so he wouldn't pass out. I tried to keep up his spirits," Scheer said.

The two firefighters placed themselves between the burning gas tank of the car and Coryelle, who was surrounded by leaking fuel from his truck.



Displaying the watches awarded them for their heroic act which saved a life, are (from left) Captain George Hume and Charles Scheer. (Staff photo)

"We all busted our necks," said Hume. "It was a real dangerous situation. Three gas tankers had rolled over in that same area."

"We were scared to death."

After cutting away seats which pinned the trucker into the overturned cab, the two were forced to slide the man out of the wreck in spite of his broken neck.

"We didn't know it was broken. We couldn't get in there. There wasn't any room to slide in a backboard," said Hume, who works for the Farmington Edison office.

"He was real lucky he wasn't paralyzed with that injury."

Coryelle pulled through without serious injury although he wore a neck brace for a while.

WHEN HE WAS discharged from Botsford General Hospital, he invited Hume and Scheer, a teacher at North Farmington High School to lunch.

"He kept saying, 'I owe my life to you guys,'" said Hume.

"And he said, 'I'm not a rich man. I wish I could do more.'"

To thank his rescuers, Coryelle presented them with engraved digital pocket watches.

Inside the cover is engraved "In gratitude, Hubert Coryelle, Sept. 25, 1979."

"We were too late for the other two. But we saved one man. We did everything that was possible," said Hume.



Douglas Bacon and Lane Trubey work side by side in their new shop in Farmington designing original jewelry. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Farmington duo strike custom jewelry designs

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

The interior of Allan-Kimball Ltd. in Farmington is decorated in a simple, laid-back style with soft couches and teakwood coffee tables.

Not only does such modern, no-fuss styling reflect the jewelry created in the store, it also sets the tone for the business manner of the shop's partners, Douglas Allan Bacon and Lane Kimball Trubey.

Business-like and comfortable is the tone the partners try to set for persons who walk into the shop at 3305 Grand River for a look at the original jewelry designs.

Starting a new partnership in such a setting requires a sharp eye for budgeting and bargain hunting as well as a commitment to make the business pay for itself.

Bacon and Trubey, both of whom have worked for commercial jewelers, began toying with the idea of starting their own jewelry design business in May.

In beginning of the partnership they took each decision one step at a time. They were managed to open their shop and still remain friends.

"Sitting together on the bench is like being married," said Trubey.

THEIR PARTNERSHIP involves more than two craftsmen working closely together. Large and small business decisions had to be ironed out between them.

"The big decisions were clear cut. We knew we had to do certain things," said Trubey.

"With the little decisions, we tossed a coin," he added.

As with any partnership, the little decisions were the ones most contested. Decisions involved such issues as where to hang the pictures and how far apart the showcases should be placed.

The larger decisions concerning capital and expenses involved a little bit of agony.

Since they wanted to avoid beginning their business with a large amount of debt, the partners concentrated on cutting costs but not quality.

They searched for a wholesale lumber supply which sold teakwood at prices they could afford. They then proceeded to make the coffee table/display cases in their shop. The showcases and workbench in the front of the shop also were made by the partners.

The hanging rings used in the window display are made

from the same tubular material as the legs of the coffee tables. Ingenuity and a few carefully placed plants help fill out the shop.

BEHIND THE shop's carefully chosen, cozy modernness there lurks a self-discipline on the part of its owners. It has carried them through college, apprenticeships and commercial work.

The regimen convinced them they would like to try their hand at business.

In addition to working for commercial jewelry stores and private commissions, Truby studied at Wayne State University and Cranbrook.

Bacon began as a philosophy major at Michigan State University. He eventually switched to the art department, specifically jewelry making.

"I didn't like the sculpture professor," he explained.

He went on to earn his master's of arts degree from Cranbrook in 1978.

Although he changed his major during his undergraduate years, Bacon still uses a philosophic approach to his work.

"I wanted to learn to think in college, so I took philosophy. I never expected to use it in my living," he said.

"Philosophy is concerned with understanding how ideas are manufactured. It (jewelry making) can be a real spiritual exercise."

IT HAS HELPED him cultivate, his own attitude toward his work, he said.

"An idea that has enough energy will find its own manifestation," Bacon said.

While Trubey doesn't couch his attitude toward his work in the same terms, a similar feeling is evident.

"I worked in the trade. I hated it. It's so damn crass. They pushed so hard. Do you have any idea of the markup? They triple things," Trubey said.

While Trubey doesn't have the retail experience Bacon has, he has experience as a supervisor for a commercial jeweler's back shop.

Both say they intend to help the customer make the best choice in design and stone, through sketches as well as showing samples of their workshop, while taking into account personal taste.

Rezoning battle spawns lawsuit

By MARY LOU CALLAWAY

Developer Max Sheldon, acting as agent for landowner Rose Berg, is suing West Bloomfield for refusing to rezone the northeast corner of 14 Mile and Drake roads.

No date has been set for the civil case to be heard by Oakland County Circuit Judge Alice Gilbert.

Sheldon is asking the court to award him \$500,000 damages and to rezone the 2.5 acre parcel from residential to office zoning.

Last week, Sheldon asked the West Bloomfield Planning Commission to withdraw his earlier petition to qualify 11 acres adjacent to the disputed site.

National Bank of Detroit has indicated they wish to build a branch on the small parcel.

The issue has brought out objecting residents from Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield to several township meetings.

Represented by his attorney son, Michael Sheldon, the developer maintains after the West Bloomfield Planning Commission recommended the rezoning (5-3 vote) the township board's (5-2

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BIBLICAL FASHION

A one-of-a-kind fashion show is in the area. Slaying away from Paris trends and New York or California fads, it sticks with the totally unexpected — Biblical, women.