

Switches, nuts and bolts are her business

By LOBAINE MCCLISH

A young woman who says she is "driving something with a motor and four wheels since the time I was 6" is now one of the few female car parts managers in Michigan. She works for Bob Saks Olds handling a \$200,000 monthly inventory.

Nancy Smith, who grew up in the country north of Battle Creek, marks the beginnings of her career at 17 when she couldn't get a job after high school graduation.

She was offered a free course in foreign car repair and took it to "fill up the time." That led to her first job as a car mechanic. That was in 1966, before the advent of "The Feminine Mystique," "Women's liberation" and NOW.

"It took a lot of nerve for him (the owner) to give me that chance. The same kind of daring a must have taken for Mr. Saks when he moved me from assistant manager to manager," she said.

(Of her boss she says, "He's a good guy to work for. He lets the managers manage.")

INTERIM JOBS found her driving couter cars, working as a service writer, working as a pit mechanic and singing in a rock and roll band.

Mrs. Smith earned her living for two years as a singer, which she refers to as a competitive art form and not the most secure business in the world.

Bringing four people together to render a creative offering is a far cry from bringing many times that many together to render a specific service, she explained.

She has hired the majority of her own crew of seven who work out of the Farmington dealer's lot on Grand Ave.

"My crew is young, but they perform and that's all that counts," she said.

Her young crew and Saks' daring apparently paid off because last February Mrs. Smith was named manager of the month demonstrating from a high in sales of \$91,000.

about \$20,000 higher than could be expected for a February.

HER FEELINGS about this is that she is selling a service, and parts are but a by-product of that service. She followed up this feeling by rattling off a string of instances where members of her crew would be sent to as far away as Howell or Lansing in order to give on-day service.

"If a part is tying up a car for someone, we'll do it. We do it constantly. We're going to be here next year and for years after that. It doesn't make much sense not to do a good job for our customers," she said.

She suspects she works an average of 11 hours a day, often takes work home with her, but that is necessary to do the job. It comes with the territory, she says.

The service she renders, she believes, goes hand in hand with that of the service mechanic, whom she calls a trained technician.

"We don't have a heavy turnover at all of the men who service the cars and they are constantly being sent out to the GM Tech Center just to keep up. A tune-up used to be a simple operation, but cars are getting so complicated now, all part of our complicated society. I guess basic inventory is just not what it used to be," she said.

"A dealership just keeps playing catch-up with supply and demand and it seems everybody wants all the goodies they can load onto a car. Selling a basic car is practically unheard of. Most of the cars sold here are sold fully loaded and that means more switches and nuts and bolts for me."

Keeping all of the switches and nuts and bolts in their proper place comes easy for her because "I like things in order. I like things to be where they're supposed to be," she said.

Mrs. Smith lives in Plymouth with her husband Dan who is drummer for the Tom Powers Trio now playing at the Peppercorn.



Nancy Smith, one of the few women parts managers in Michigan, juggles a \$200,000 monthly inventory in Farmington's Bob Saks Olds.



Tony Bennett pulled an attendance-setting crowd at Meadow Brook's jazz concert. (Staff photos by Tracy Baker)

Everything's melodic with Tony Bennett

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Just after being interviewed in his dressing room at Meadow Brook, Tony Bennett strolled on stage for rehearsal, put his hands behind his back, and began to sing. The words came out — gorgeous.

It was Bennett's rendition of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," with the familiar rough-edged sound and the place where his voice almost catches.

"When I come home to you, San Francisco, your golden sun will shine on me."

The song was one of the many Bennett hits he would sing that night at the Friday jazz concert with Woody Herman and His Thundering Herd, plus orchestral strings, on the Oakland University campus in Rochester.

BEING USED to hearing such a signature song as "San Francisco" only after you've had to wait with mounting suspense, it was a surprise to hear it right off the bat, even though this was a rehearsal.

During the interview, Bennett explained, he was playing the Fairmont in San Francisco when "a special song was recommended to me."

The song was "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," and Bennett said he expected it to be a hit only with San Francisco audiences. He recorded it on a single, with another song, and favored this other side to make the disc a big seller. "I really bet on it," he said with a smile. "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" broke as an international hit.

BENNETT ARRIVED for rehearsal at Baldwin Pavilion dressed nattily in a lightweight beige business suit, white shirt and geometric patterned tie. He wore a fine link chain bracelet.

His more formal attire was in contrast to that of musicians in Herman's Herd, who wore jeans and T-shirts. But Bennett was also being photographed that afternoon for promotional pictures as national chairman of the United Fund.

While being interviewed, Bennett fingered a Sony tape recorder in his lap. He was agreeable, perhaps somewhat distracted (as most artists are at rehearsal interviews).

Bennett said he enjoys having his own record company, called Improv, which he started with a partner, who owns the Statler Hilton in Buffalo. Bennett is from New York — not San Francisco — and has a hint of that city in his speaking voice.

Bennett said they have signed "quite a few artists." His own songs on Improv include two records, one titled "Love Is Beautiful," a tune written by Fred Astaire, and the other of Rodgers and Hart.

BENNETT BEAMED if most when asked how he feels about the popular music scene of the last few years. "They're getting back to melody," he said. "I was turned off musically the last 15 years." Bennett found the rock musicians "very immature."

In Herman's band, he declared, "no one's over 23, but they play a mature music. They know how to read music — I mean they know how to read words."

He appeared a bit irritated as he looked back on the recent past in the music world. "If you showed up as a professional, you were really out," he classified acid rock as "angry music."

Now Neil Diamond has recorded a tribute to Tin Pan Alley. That's shocking!

They don't come any more professional than Tony Bennett. What areas has he been working in? TV, recording, film, personals, everything," he answered.

How does he like performing with Woody Herman? "I've appeared the last 20 years with the Herman group, all over the world and in the United States."

BENNETT HAS JUST signed a long-term contract to star in Las Vegas. He is slated to appear on NBC-TV's 50th anniversary show this fall in a section called "Show Stoppers."

Also on NBC's fall season, Bennett will play himself in a three-and-one-half hour production "The Life of Martin Luther King." Bennett said he "was very close" to the late civil rights leader.

The program will probably run in two installments, according to Bennett.

Bennett sees himself as "a very nice person." He also doesn't talk much about his private life. "I'm a very private person," he said firmly.

At leisure, he loves to paint, in oils, and he plays a lot of tennis. Does he like the simple life? "Yes," he said, "although I do live in Beverly Hills, but I'm surrounded by a lot of artists."

Off stage, Bennett was observed to have a cool, quiet manner. There's something wistful about his smile. On stage, during a show, is another story.

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JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT WE UNDERSTAND HIM, TONY BENE...
UP A SOMETHING NEW.

There you go, Tony Bennett, the man who has been singing "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" for years, and now he's singing "Love Is Beautiful" — a tune written by Fred Astaire.

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Troy, Somerset Mall, Big Beaver at Coolidge