

# Service garage --An idea whose 'time' has come

By DELL McCLOY

Those of you among us who reached the age of majority before the United States plunged into the self-service syndrome will probably remember what a service garage was like.

For the uninitiated, a service garage was a place that repaired cars and trucks.

Period.

There was no gasoline, no bread and milk, no frisbees, no razor blades.

What it did have were an abundance of parts for your vehicle and, hopefully, some skilled mechanics to install those parts in order to get your heap back on the highway.

The garage would provide such diverse services as tuning engines, changing spark plugs and electrical components, packing wheel bearings, changing mufflers and tailpipes, etc.

It probably even had people who specialized in determining trouble with vehicles... and correcting it.

If you thought the service garage went the way of the dodo bird and hula hoop, guess again.

It's in the process of making a major comeback.

THERE ARE TWO major factors behind the proliferation of the service garage:

- The growing number of self-service gasoline stations where owners pump their own fuel for a savings of a few cents a gallon, but are offered no service.

- Traditional pump-and-bay service stations are too busy pumping fuel to offer service... or they're too busy providing service to sell fuel.

Lots of station owners are taking one tack or the other. They're either selling gas or repairing cars.

One of those who decided to concentrate on service is Arnold Garrett. He gave up gas-and-oil and went into service — only in a big way.

A really big way. Garrett is a veteran of nearly 20 years in the gasoline station business, but he got out of it last year and opened his own service garage at Ten Mile and Industrial Park in Farmington Hills.

The garage is officially known as Garrett Auto and Truck Service. It's housed in a rambling brick and wood building and contains 15 work areas, with six containing high-pressure hoists for lifting vehicles.

Garrett opened the doors last August and has been exceptionally busy since then.

HE EXPLAINED the decision to move into the service-only business this way: "It's very hard to do both and do them right. Service is a full-time business and we decided we wanted to get into service."

He employs four full-time mechanics at the modern structure. All of them, as well as Garrett, are state-certified in their particular areas.

Garrett said business has been excellent. He added that he did carry over some customers from his former business and has gained some new ones.

"We've done no advertising since we got into this, but we've been full from the start," he said.

Asked to explain the success of the business, he said: "Did you ever try to get your car fixed? Did you go back? We want the people's money, but our service has got to be good if we want them to come back."

TO DATE, GARRETT'S investment in the business stands at about \$310,000, without considering the tools and inventory which are involved.

He said he doesn't consider the investment a gamble.

"It's a profitable business and I sleep better at night," he said, explaining that it was becoming difficult to find reliable help for the gasoline station operation.

Garrett and his mechanics will tackle any job from a lubrication service on up through engine replacements.

A check with other sources indicated that a great many service station operators are getting out of the trade.

That's not to say that all of them are converting to service-only garages.

But something's certainly happening.

CHARLES SHIPLEY, executive director of the Michigan Service Station Dealers' Association, said there were 220,000 service stations in the United States in 1972.

Today that number has plummeted to 170,000, Shipley said.

"What you are seeing is specialty repair shops which were not successful as gasoline stations," he said.

That falls in line with Garrett's estimation of the problem of trying to run dual-service operations.

Service dealers are finding that they have to choose between the two methods.

A growing number, like Garrett, are glad that they chose to give up gas and go for service.

## Computer — next auto?

In the 1990s, the automobile revolutionized life in America.

Another innovation — microcomputers — will just as radically change our lifestyles over the next 20 years.

Computerland, a Southfield based firm, specializes in these microcomputers for homes and businesses.

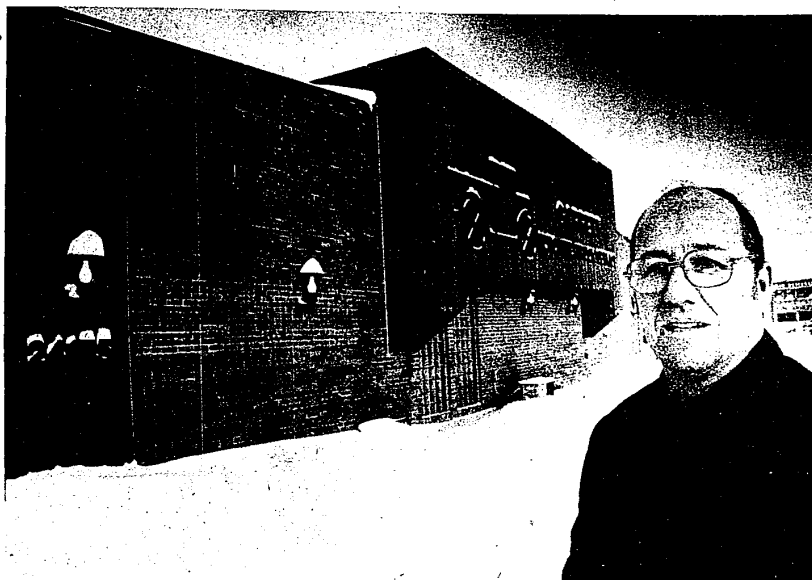
"The people in the metropolitan area are sophisticated consumers. They understand that computers are a part of the future and are interested in learning to use them," said William Fischette, president of Computerland.

"We've been open less than a year

and have had to increase our staff from two to six full-time and two part-time employees just to handle the local demand for these microcomputers."

When the company opened for business last March, Fischette expected a strong, small business market — those concerns that were in need of a computer system in the \$16,000 or less price range. These computers could handle the basic needs of small service firms, retail shops and medical practices.

Computerland meets those needs by stocking several lines of computers.



Arnold Garrett and his new garage.

(Staff photo)

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Now In Farmington Hills

## SELLERS PONTIAC SETS GRAND OPENING

By ALEX POIRIER

Bob Sellers Pontiac, Inc. is announcing its official Grand Opening Celebration to be held during the week of March 12-15. Visitors to the new dealership on Grand River at 10 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, will receive a free gift and have a chance to win the use of a new 1979 Grand Prix SSJ for one year. For the kids, there will be free balloons, and a chance to win a mini-Grand Prix with a one-cylinder engine. On Monday and Thursday evenings, March 12 and March 15, television's Picky, the clown, with his wife, will put on a special musical show. Everyone is welcome!

THE NEW, ULTRA-MODERN Pontiac dealership opened for business in November, 1978. The handsome, brick architecture is in keeping with the tradition and good taste of the adjacent Farmington Hills Industrial Park. Three hundred cars on the nearly eight acre site provide the customer with an excellent selection. The 38,000 square foot building houses the beautiful showroom, plus the efficient service department and body shop with the very latest equipment. The dealership carries a large parts inventory, has a large selection of good used cars, and maintains a separate leasing department.

Currently, Bob Sellers employs 60 people, most of whom worked at Bob's former dealership in Detroit. "At the rate we are growing, I expect that we will soon have 80 to 100 individuals on the payroll," said Bob Sellers, President.

DURING THE FIRST MONTH of operation, Bob Sellers Pontiac won a special sales award from Pontiac Motor Division for the best sales performance in relation to quota of any dealer in a three state area. "It is an indication of the strength and economic vitality of the Farmington Hills area," said Sellers. "The corner of Grand River and 10 Mile is a very dynamic place to locate a new business."

Prior to the move to Farmington Hills, Bob Sellers Pontiac was located in Detroit on Grand River near Lahser. The Detroit facilities included seven different buildings, spread over 3 1/2 miles. "We gained a tremendous increase in efficiency by putting the business under one roof," stated Sellers.

Bob Sellers became a Pontiac dealer in 1972 after buying out Clohocy Pontiac. Before 1972, Mr. Sellers was associated with Dean Sellers, Inc., a northwest Detroit Ford dealership, now operated by his brother, Tom. Tom's and Bob's father, Dean Sellers founded that dealership in 1948. Bob considers himself a local product. Raised in northwest Detroit, he was graduated from Redford High School and the University of Michigan.

Bob Sellers is the type of dealer who believes in good customer service after the sale. Mr. Sellers said, "When you buy a new Pontiac from Bob Sellers, you've not only bought a very fine automobile at a very competitive price, you've bought Bob Sellers. After you buy that car, you and I are partners in it, and I will be your representative at any time in the future that you need my help — especially in the service department."

And, where do you think you will find Bob if you visit the dealership? Yes, he will probably be right out in the bright, new service reception area with the customers. You see, Bob Sellers is a dealer who really cares.



Bob Sellers, owner of Bob Sellers Pontiac, said, "after you buy that car, you and I are partners in it..."

Bob Sellers  
Pontiac



This ultra-modern dealership is located at the key junction of I-96, I-275 and I-696 in Farmington Hills. Located at 38000 Grand River and 10 Mile in the hub of a very active, economically strong area.

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