

Suburban Life

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Persistence helped Vicki Galloway Burr land a sales position.



In the driver's seat

By Marie McGee
staff writer

VICKI GALLOWAY Burr is all revved up about her job. So is Lucy Wheeler, Jill Bernardi, Robin Frankowicz and Tina Ostach plus a growing number of other women who make their living selling cars.

They're in the driver's seat, they feel, at a time when auto manufacturers are finally beginning to recognize the role women play in car sales — both from the standpoint of buying and selling.

NEW STATISTICS show that women buyers may soon account for half the new-car purchases in America. The potential of that new market has prompted the auto industry to shift gears in that direction.

Many of the companies have formed special internal task forces bent on studying women buyers. Chevrolet, for instance, has a Women's Marketing Committee to provide strategic direction for the company's effort to increase Chevrolet's market share among women.

The upshot is that new marketing programs are being developed by all companies to target women buyers.

Chevy, for instance, has taken on exclusive sponsorship of "Strategies for Success," a two-day women's career conference scheduled in 10 cities between November 1985 and November 1986. It will take place in Detroit Jan. 31 and Feb. 1.

BUT NOT ONLY do auto companies want to sell to women, they are encouraging them — and logically so — to enter the sales field.

That was the case for Tina Ostach, a 21-year-old Livonia resident, who applied for a clerical job at Holiday Chevrolet in Farmington Hills and wound up on the sales crew.

During the interview, Ostach was encouraged to think about joining the sales staff despite the fact that she had no sales experience whatsoever.

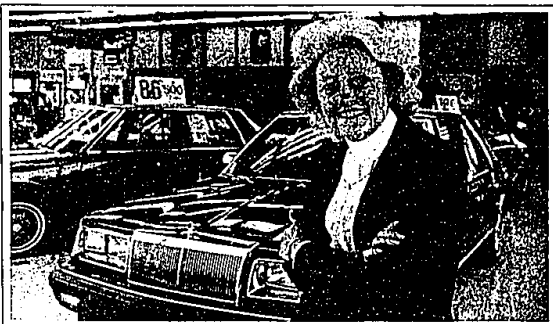
In fact — with the exception of Burr — none of the five women interviewed had any knowledge about cars other than basic facts, fueled perhaps by a keen interest in them.

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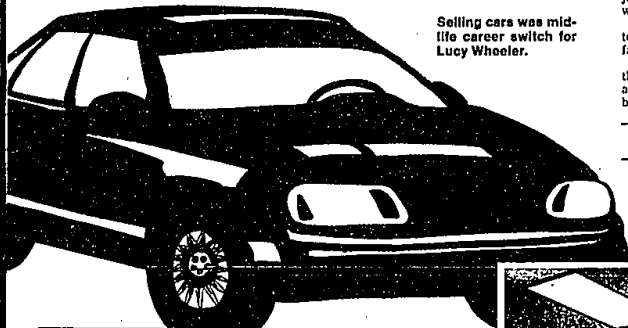
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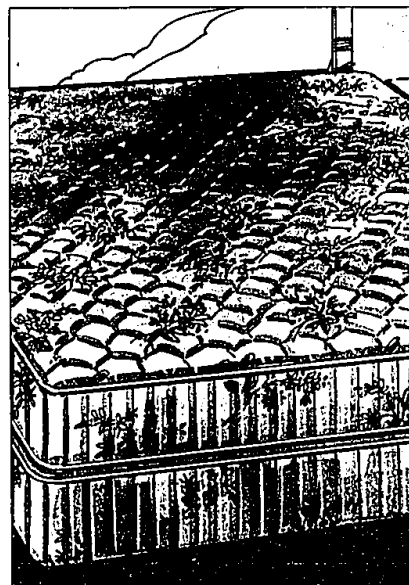
Car selling was not the chauvinistic rat race Jill Bernardi thought it would be.



Selling cars was mid-life career switch for Lucy Wheeler.



A sales job came easier for Tina Ostach (above) than it did for Robin Frankowicz (left). Ostach was encouraged to join the sales staff after she applied for a clerical job at a new Farmington Hills agency. When it appeared that dealership management was dragging its feet in granting a personal interview after completion of a sales training course, Frankowicz "bugged" them for a week before she was eventually hired by the dealership in Wayne where she is now one of the top producers.



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