

This column highlights promotions, transfers, hirings, awards won and other key personnel moves within the suburban real estate community. Send a brief biographical summary — including the towns of residence and employment and a black-and-white photo, if desired — to: *Movers & Shakers*, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Our fax number is (313) 591-7279.

### Bowling recognized



**Rick Bowling**, owner of the AmeriSpec Home Inspection Service franchise in Plymouth, has been recognized as North American Franchisee of the Year at the company's annual convention in Texas.

Bowling, a former Rookie of the Year, has been part of the AmeriSpec team for almost five years.

### Kushmaul joins up



**Zan Kushmaul** has joined Red Carpet Real Estate as a recruiter and director of career development for both the Livonia office and a new office in West Bloomfield.

He lives in West Bloomfield and has been involved in management for 27 years.

### Rzepka promoted

**David Rzepka** has been promoted to division area manager at Perini Building-Central U.S. Division in Southfield.

He will be responsible for project delivery systems, labor relations, safety and loss control, cost control and equal employment efforts.

Rzepka graduated from Lawrence Institute of Technology with a bachelor's degree in construction engineering.

### Stockton hired

**Janet Stockton** of Re/Max 100, has been hired by Long Lake Building of Farmington Hills to handle sales in its residential locations.

Stockton lives in Farmington Hills.

### Reggio joins Axiom

**Theresa Reggio** has been hired into the Axiom Real Estate office in Southfield as portfolio manager for the 26 Prudential properties in Michigan, many concentrated in Livonia and Troy.

Reggio, who previously worked as a pension funds adviser at Acquest Realty Advisors, brings an extensive background of real estate, portfolio management and financial analysis experience to Axiom.

She holds a bachelor's degree from Walsh College and a master's from Central Michigan University.

# REAL ESTATE

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## Remodeling pays off for auto dealers

By Susan B. Taubert  
Special Writer

Auto dealers have unique problems when it comes to renovating their buildings. What do they do when there is no showroom to display new cars and trucks? Bill Brown Ford in Livonia solved that problem by renting a vacant building next door. Sales representatives and customers can walk to the new car lot in a matter of minutes.

Not having vehicles in a showroom was good for Jack Cauley Chevrolet Geo in West Bloomfield. "We had one of the best Junes in the history of this business, and we didn't have a car on the floor," reported Jeff Cauley, president. His business on Orchard Lake Road just underwent four months of renovations.

Other auto dealers find the hardships of construction worthwhile in return for better workspace and a more customer-friendly environment.

Renovations at Jack Cauley Chevrolet Geo led to several new customer services. These include a new customer waiting room that contains nothing automotive. "It is a place for our customers to come and relax," he added. The customer waiting room doesn't contain one thing related to the automobile industry. The dealership collaborates with Objects of Art in West Bloomfield, which fills the waiting rooms with art objects such as a copper and brass fountain, wall hangings and unusual tables.

"We already had one customer buy a table that was in our showroom. This arrangement is good for us, good for the art gallery and good for the customer," Cauley added.

When customers bring in cars for service at Cauley Chevrolet, they aren't bothered by sounds and smells of service workers doing their job. Instead, the newly installed glass partition between the service area and write-up area make the area more comfortable for the customer.

And once they've bought a new car, they get a double-dose of customer service. "When a customer walks into the showroom for his or her new car, we have a surprise. The car is in a special area of the showroom, highlighted by special lights shining on it. It's a real surprise for the customer."

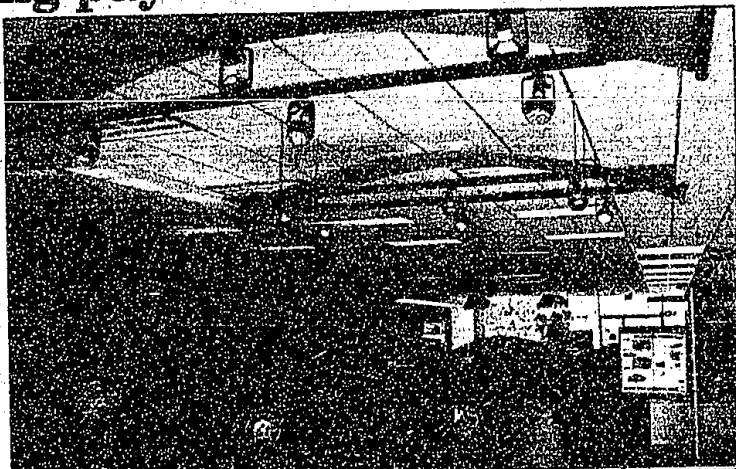
Another unusual feature at Cauley Chevrolet is the location featuring convenient items for sale.

"We are one of the largest Corvette dealers in the nation. So we added a small Corvette museum and feature a 1969 white Corvette with red interior slowly revolving in the showroom," added Cauley.

The showroom interior was refurbished in gray, accented with Chevrolet-blue chairs and maple-topped work tables. "But the bathrooms are decorated in racing colors: red, white and black." The showroom also has a new section where children can play with educational toys while parents meet with sales representatives.

Why did Cauley Chevrolet undergo the renovations when it did? "Actually, we were a year later than we'd like. We had to wait until we had time to spend on it," said Cauley.

The customers loved the changes, Cauley said. The renovations went so



Remodeled showroom Jack Cauley Chevrolet and Geo in West Bloomfield, like many other dealerships in the area, makes better business use of a good real estate location by remodeling.

well that he is already considering changes for the repair shop.

Bob Gunigle, general manager of Bill Brown Ford, can't think that far ahead. The Ford dealership is still undergoing renovations. In fact, the new car showroom was demolished.

"We're having a new one built with the help of Bill Brown Ford in Troy. It will expand our space from 3,000 square feet to 6,000 square feet and add a second floor for our general offices," he said. "This building will take us into the 21st century."

Where are the salespeople working in the meantime? Bill Brown Ford rented the vacant Livonia Parish Credit Union next door. Customer can look outside and see what cars are for sale.

"It's working out well," said Gunigle. "We think we'll get into our new building in the early part of 1996."

Some may question why the dealership didn't move from its location, instead of enduring the temporary hardships of no showroom. "We're committed to this community and wanted to stay where we are," he explained. "In 1990 we doubled the size of our service area, and now we're improving the customer parking, signage, giving each sales person a more private and more comfortable work area, adding a separate customer lounge, improved climate control equipment, new lighting and new handicap accessible."

The renovation hasn't hurt auto sales, either. "New vehicle sales volume haven't suffered at all. We get customers walking in all the time, making positive comments about what we're doing."

Renovations brought an extra bonus to Bruce Campbell Dodge dealership in Bedford. It recently received the

annual Beautification Award from the Bedford Township Chamber of Commerce. "We gave the award to the dealership because of the beautiful job it did fixing up an old building," said John Hosen, chamber secretary. The chamber also honored 10 other Bedford businesses for their beautification projects.

"What we did was buy the building that was the original Fetter's Appliance Store. It is right next door to our dealership," said Michele Johnson, general manager of the dealership on Telegraph Road. "The building was being used as a repair shop."

Renovations began in October 1994 and were completed in April 1995. The results gave Bruce Campbell Dodge a new, 21,000-square-foot building for new car sales, for business offices and a space to get a new or used car ready for delivery to the customer. Dots Scrase from Benchmark Group in Grosse Pointe was the contractor.

That left Campbell Dodge's other building, which is 19,500 square feet, for used car sales and for the service and parts area.

"We designed the new building with many things in mind, growth being one of them," said Johnson. "We added electrical outlets and wiring wherever we thought it might be possible to add another work station." The dealership has 71 full-time employees.

Employees really appreciate all the changes, according to Johnson. "Our nine general office people were just crammed into a tiny office. Now they have an area about three times as large to work in. Also, we had to store old business papers in the parts department. Now we have all our records in the business area where they belong."

Other changes include the eight

working service bays and three wash bays for car delivery, partitioned work spaces for the sales staff, a showroom that can easily display 12 cars and trucks on the showroom floor, new landscaping, increased parking, brighter and more efficient lights, water-saving washroom appliances and more.

"It was muddy, messy and somewhat miserable," Johnson added. "But it was worth it. Many customers have said it's about time we did something. Sometimes people walk in to look at the changes in the old Fetter building and end up buying a car from us. Seeing the changes is a pretty 'wow' experience."

Although Crestview Cadillac Inc. chose to move from one location to another, it found its customers were devoted enough to follow the business to a different city.

"My brother, Lee, and I bought the former Arnold Jerome Cadillac dealership that had been in Pontiac for 50 years," said C.J. Ghesquiere. "We found we needed much more land than we had. We found the perfect spot in Rochester on Rochester Road. We bought seven acres and haven't developed it all yet."

When the Ghesquiere family built on the new property, they designed a showroom that doesn't resemble a car dealership. "We have a colonial style building that reflects the uniqueness of the Cadillac automobile. The interior of the 30,000-square-foot showroom is decorated with dark oak paneling and dark green carpeting. Frank Rawl was the contractor for the construction."

"We found it was easier to start fresh and design exactly what we wanted than to try to renovate an existing building or property that didn't serve our needs," Ghesquiere added.

## Snow removal company is responsible for actions

REAL ESTATE  
QUESTIONS



**ROBERT M. MEISNER**

**A.** In a recent court of appeals decision under similar facts, the snow removal contractor argued that it had no duty to the plaintiff based, in part, on the contract between the snow removal contractor and the premises owner. The court held that regardless of the contract, the snow removal contractor had a common-law duty to the plaintiff that arose out of defendants' undertaking to perform the task of snow plowing.

The court basically indicated that even though the plaintiff was not in privity of contract with the snow

removal contractor, she was owed a duty of ordinary care by the defendant. Under these circumstances, it would appear that the snow removal contractor is liable to your co-owner.

**Q.** We own one of several cabins in a resort area in northern Michigan where we share common grounds and a well. We have what we believe is a master deed and bylaws, but we are not sure we are a condominium.

One of our provisions in the bylaws regarding resale requires that any prospective seller reveal price and terms to all the association members and any other member may match that offer and thereby be able to buy the property.

Is this provision legal? Is it advisable for the association to discontinue the practice? Additionally, what recourse does an individual owner have in order to protect themselves in the event he may have to sell his property?

**A.** You have asked a very interesting question which requires that I respond without the benefit of reviewing your documents. It would appear, however, that what is contained in your bylaws is a "right of first refusal," which is disfavored by secondary mortgage lenders, to VA and HUD in regard to providing

any mortgage insurance since the "right" is a basis by which discrimination can be utilized.

It is also disfavored by many courts in the sense that it is an impairment on the transferability of property. On the other hand, it may be enforceable in certain circumstances as long as it is not used for discriminatory purposes and is used uniformly and consistently.

I would recommend, however, that you have your documents reviewed by a knowledgeable real estate attorney familiar with this type of law which will no doubt lead to a total revamping of your documents, perhaps with a deletion of this clause.

If the association does not change the provision, you as an individual co-owner may be in a position to contest it should you wish to do so.

**Robert M. Meisner** is a Birmingham area attorney concentrating his practice in the areas of condominiums, real estate, corporate law and litigation. You are invited to submit topics which you would like to see discussed in this column, including questions about condominiums, by writing Robert M. Meisner, 30300 Telegraph Road, Suite 437, Bingham Farms, Michigan 48025.

This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.



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