



# A family tradition thrives in Farmington

By HY SHENKMAN

When four generations have the same occupation, it can be a family's thing.

With the Salome family, it's a great-grandpa, grandpa, father and son who have operated service stations in an unbroken chain.

Peter Salome opened a service station in the Farmington area 14 years ago. His father operated a station in Harper Woods before the family business moved. His grandfather and great-grandfather were service station operators in Detroit for more than 23 years.

"I'll put it bluntly," 37-year-old Peter said, "the initial investment for a dealer is relatively small and the return is great. It is a lucrative business for a small businessman provided he is willing to put in long hours and give of himself all he's got."

GAS STATIONS used to be thought of as a "greasy place on the corner," Salome says.

"The oil companies have recognized the fact and through their schools and new training programs are cleaning up that image."

Consumers now buy gasoline whenever they run low, Salome says, but will usually stick to one garage for service.

"From over 22 years in this business I found that gasoline is gasoline and the sales of brand names depend on the ads and the amount of credit cards issued."

Salome stresses personal service. He says he's glad to tell a customer if a repair which appears to be major is really minor.

"I always consider myself an automobile doctor. We check the body, make a diagnosis and we do the correction."

The Farmington Hills businessman feels gasoline price wars are on their way out.

"The public is tired of it. It was just a mass

of confusion to everyone. We had too many angry customers."

GASOLINE SHORTAGES also caused problems, he added.

Customers with whom we have been dealing for years drove away fuming when turned down because of a gas shortage.

Some customers reacted with threats. Motorists offered bribes, up to \$1,000, to save gas for them.

"Of course we turned them down and this caused hard feelings."

Salome says most service station employees won't go as far today to accommodate customers as an employee would have 10 years ago.

"In those days, a factory worker who would work part-time at the gas pumps would really put in an evening's work just as if the business was his own."

Through the years, Salome has found an irony in hiring an aggressive worker.

"If he is too ambitious, he wouldn't stay long on his job, he'll go out on his own. You can sense it."

Salome says he takes time to relate to his two employees, each of whom has worked for him for more than seven years.

BESIDES his employees, Salome has a 17-year-old son Scott starting out in the business. He is wiping windshields, checking tires and pumping gas.

"It was of his choosing. We offered to send him to college."

Salome hopes his family tradition will carry into the fourth generation.

"I like to work in Farmington Hills as long as my health will permit me. Then I hope my son will take over and carry on with this business..."



Photographed by Craig Newman

