

# Dealer POINT

www.watda.org ■ Published by the Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association ■ 1928-2008 ■ Vol. 23 Fall 2008

inside |

## An interview with Gary D. Williams

*WATDA staff was invited to ask the questions for this interview.*

### What is it about you that few dealers know?

My life is pretty public, so I'm not sure. So here are some things you may not know about me and LuAnn:

I once was in the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant Academy.

I'm allergic to black pepper, pineapple and lemons.

I still play full court basketball.

We have two children, Shelly and Dan, and three grandchildren, Jill, Melissa and Zachary.

We enjoy our place on Planting Ground Lake, Three Lakes, where we will eventually live.

I helped to create the Association of Wisconsin Lobbyists and the Conference of Retail Associations.

My grandfather played baseball for the Cubs and Phillie's for 17 years, won four National league home run titles, and was the first in that league to hit 200 career home runs.

I like the fact that LuAnn likes to mow, rake, shovel snow. (I married well!)

### Tell us about your life before you were hired at WATDA in 1971.

Immediately prior, for two years I was in graduate school at UW Madison in journalism and mass communications, primarily for public relations. I also had an amazing job in the administration's news center that put me in the middle of every crisis, every major discovery, riot management, Regents Board – you name it.

Before going to the UW Madison, LuAnn and I lived in Wausau for four years while with Northwestern Mutual, and some military time. I had graduated from UW Stevens Point with a double major, English and American Civilization. I chaired the Young Republicans organization there.

My dad's side of the family is from Three Lakes in Oneida County. I grew up in the western suburbs of Chicago.

### How did you wind up at WATDA?

The dean of the UW graduate school of business introduced me to

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## Your WATDA officers welcome Bill Sepic



From left, Secretary/Treasurer Dick Stockwell, Bill Sepic, Chairman Bob Pietroske, Gary Williams and Chairman-Elect Todd Reardon.

The WATDA board officers introduced WATDA President Gary Williams' successor, Bill Sepic, to the staff on Oct. 1. Sepic, of Lansing, Mich., has served as CEO of the Lansing 3-County Area Chamber of Commerce and has also held chamber positions in Minnesota and Kansas.

"Bill has proven himself to be a professional leader who advances each organization he has served," said Williams. "Bill will start Nov. 3, and I will continue until Dec. 31 as planned. This will allow time for transition matters between Bill, myself and the executive staff."

Sepic and his wife Rhonda have three

daughters: a freshman at Michigan State, a high school junior and a seventh-grader. The family hopes to move to Madison by Jan. 1.

"A special thank you to all of the dealers who served on the search task force chaired by Ken Vance: Ron Boldt, Pete Dorsch, Bob Hudson, Vern Trecek, Roger Kriete, Chris Miller, Mike Schlossmann, Larry Skartvedt and Jim Tolkman," said Williams. "The professional search firm did a great job. The dealers put in a lot of days of work. The position is of huge importance to us. Bill is a great find, and we welcome him to WATDA!"

## "Don't Tax My Trade-in!"

CAMPAIGN AIMS TO PRESERVE VEHICLE TRADE-IN CREDIT

BY ERNIE STETENFELD

Next year's state budget process could find vehicle dealers and buyers in Wisconsin facing a serious public-policy threat. There is a significant chance that there may be a push to repeal Wisconsin's vehicle trade-in allowance in the next legislative session.

The dealer community calls this

taxpayer benefit an "allowance" or "credit." That reflects the significant value this long-standing Wisconsin tax policy provides this state's consumers when they trade in one vehicle against the purchase of their next. The difference in value between the vehicles is the amount subject to sales tax.

### THE HUNT FOR REVENUE

Wisconsin has treated trade-ins this way, as do most states, since the

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Ron Murphy of Cernohous Chevrolet in Prescott was the winner of the iPod Nano drawing held Sept. 1. Thanks to over 200 respondents, we can now tell our advertisers that over 90 percent of our dealer principals open the *Dealer Point* within one week of receiving it!



**6 | Saving Junior's ride: Race car saved from shredder finds new life in Bloomer**



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## FROM AROUND THE STATE | Changes

**Bergstrom Automotive** moved its Bergstrom Hummer Milwaukee dealership on Highway 45 in Milwaukee into its Bergstrom Chevrolet dealership, both located on Metro Boulevard. The Hummer store will be converted into a used car store and the quonset-hut style roof removed. The Bergstrom organization also plans to open five used vehicle showrooms across the state.

**Bergstrom Ford** of Rhinelander was sold to Rick Karcz.

**Everhart O'Leary Motors** in Janesville has closed and sold its Mazda franchise to Gordie Boucher Ford-Lincoln Mercury and its Volkswagen line to Frank Boucher

Chrysler Dodge Jeep. The Everhart O'Leary Pontiac franchise has been sold to Dick Stockwell, owner of Rock County Buick Honda GMC. All dealerships are in Janesville.

**Holiday Automotive** of Fond du Lac has purchased the Stark Chevrolet-Cadillac dealership, also located in Fond du Lac. Mike Shannon, president of Holiday Automotive, said this will expand his current Buick, Pontiac, and GMC and Mazda dealership. Holiday will continue operating as one corporation with three distinct product-specific locations. New and pre-owned Mazdas will be sold and serviced at the Stark location.

## CENTER STAGE | Awards, honors, milestones

**Stephanie Soerens** of Brookfield's Soerens Ford, and **Craig Kari**, Kari, Inc. of Superior, graduated from the NADA/ATD Dealer Candidate Academy in December. Both plan to use what they have learned at the Academy to prepare for further management responsibilities at her family-owned dealership. Kari received a Bachelors in Business Management from UW-Superior. The Academy is an intensive 12-month apprenticeship course in dealership management. Six weeks of classroom



Stephanie Soerens



Craig Kari

study are combined with 45 weeks of in-dealership training to prepare students for dealership management positions.

**Fillback Ford** in Highland celebrated its 60th anniversary with a customer cook-out in September. On Aug. 1, 1948, George Fillback obtained the Ford franchise. His grandson Mark Fillback now operates three stores: Fillback Ford in Highland and Richland Center and the Boscobel store, which carries the Chevy, Pontiac, Buick, Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep franchises. Congratulations to the Fillback family.



Mark Fillback

Chrysler has recognized **Rahn Pischke, Pischke Motors, Inc.**, West

## OBITUARIES |

**Roland B. Day**

Editors note: The obituary of Judge Roland B. Day has particular interest for WATDA. "Judge Day was your outside counsel for many years, a friend of Louis Milan," said Gary Williams. "Roly brought on Paul Norman, just out of law school, to work in the firm. Roly was exceptionally important in my development. He was far more than only a lawyer. We were all quite proud, both when he first went on the Supreme Court, and later when he became chief justice."

Judge Roland Day, age 89, died Saturday, July 26, 2008, at Oakwood Village in Madison. He was born June 11, 1919, in Oshkosh, Wis., and was raised in Eau Claire. He received



his bachelor's and law degrees from the University of Wisconsin in 1942 and 1947, respectively. He served overseas in the U.S. Army during World War II. On Dec. 18, 1948 he married Mary Jane Purcell. He was a law trainee in the office of the Attorney General in 1947, and was the first assistant district attorney for Dane County from 1949 to 1952. From 1957 to 1958, he served as legal counsel to Sen. William Proxmire in Washington, D.C. Upon returning to Madison, Day resumed law practice until 1974. During this period, he was chair of the Madison Public Housing Authority, which during his tenure built the first public housing units in Madison; served as special counsel to

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From left are Chrysler Corporation dealer network manager John Pascutti; Rahn Pischke, owner; John Mulawa, dealer operations manager-Wisconsin, Chrysler Corporation; and Gary Pischke.

Salem, as a 75-year Chrysler dealership. The dealership also carries Dodge and Jeep lines and has been family owned and operated since 1920. Rahn is the owner and grandson of the dealership's founder.

**Richard Walsh** has been selected as the DuPont Performance Coatings/

ASE Refinish Technician of the Year. He was chosen based on his outstanding performance on the ASE tests that he took in the past year.

DuPont will honor him at a ceremony and dinner to be held on Nov. 19 at the annual ASE board of directors meeting and technician awards

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# Dealer POINT

A publication of the Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association focusing on the human side of the membership and trade.

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## GARY'S BRIEFS | Gary Williams, WATDA president

## Look Forward. Act Forward.

This is my final "Briefs" message in your *Dealer Point* quarterly newspaper, now is its 23rd year. It is a fun project because it is all about the human side of your WATDA.

Sure, our primary focus for WATDA is on affecting legislation, agency rule-making, court decisions, enforcement policies, critical member services, teaching and coaching, serious advocacy.

But isn't it nice to have *Dealer Point* remind us that this Association is one of real people, with many interests, having marvelous achievements, doing unselfish charitable acts, receiving awards and recognition?

As you migrate from one CEO to

the next – for the first time in 37 years – it will be wise to keep in mind just how essential our humanness is to all that we attempt to do as an Association.

The people who come into WATDA leadership are dealers who are people first. Dealership organizations are of people. The people on your WATDA staff are not just "staff," but individual humans who each serve with a certain zeal.



LuAnn and I have been blessed to have gained so many friendships with dealers and their families throughout the state and over the years. The same is true with friendships of legislators, governors, U.S. senators and representatives, justices, agency officials (especially in our DMV), other lobbyists and association execs, industry vendors, and manufacturers execs. Human beings one and all.

We have had mountains of accomplishments together. Each and every accomplishment was with and through real people.

With new leadership, you will have a pause to think anew. You will come together as members, as people with shared needs, shared goals, shared des-

tiny. You will build new trust and affirm your values.

You will think forward.

And you will act forward.

You have for 80 years.

There is no other way.

At the pinnacle of our beautiful Wisconsin Capitol building, perched atop the great dome, is a wonderful gold statue. A woman is holding a globe, "Hope," in one hand, and pointing out with the other hand. The statue, named "Wisconsin," challenges our human spirit, and I believe WATDA's spirit as well. The statue represents our state motto, "FORWARD."

May you go "forward" all together with great hope and trust in one another.

## CENTER STAGE | Awards, honors, milestones

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Technician Richard Walsh, left, is the DuPont Performance Coatings/ASE Refinish Technician of the Year. He is standing with his proud employer, Lee Baird of Baird GM, Ripon.

in San Diego, Calif. About 40 other technicians from around the country receiving awards from different sponsor companies.

Walsh was selected based on a search of all technicians in the United States and Canada who took the ASE tests in the last year. To win this award the technician must have received the highest score on the B2 Painting and Refinish test taken in the last four

test admins (CBT & written testing) from July '07 to May '08 and must be employed by B Series (Domestic New Car), C Series (Imported New Car) or K Series (Collision Repair) shop. The shop must use DuPont, Standox, Spies Hecker or Nason products.



WATDA members from the Janesville-Beloit area take time for a photo with Congressman Paul Ryan after discussing dealership business. From left are Jim Fagan, Fagan Chevrolet Cadillac, Janesville; WATDA's Lee Bauman, Congressman Paul Ryan; Dick Stockwell, WATDA board secretary-treasurer, of Rock County Buick; Gary Dencker, Finley-Dencker Buick Pontiac GMC, Beloit; and Bob Clapper, WATDA board director, of Fagan Chevrolet Cadillac.

**Bergstrom Automotive's Saturn of La Crosse** is partnered with the Make-A-Wish Foundation to raise money to help grant wishes for children with life-threatening diseases. Throughout September Bergstrom donated \$5 for every test drive and GMAC donated \$10 for every vehicle it finances.

## RAWHIDE PROFILE | Wesley

My name is Wesley and I am 17 years old. I am from Sheboygan County and have been at Rawhide for nearly three months. I enjoy longboarding, playing football and basketball and hanging out with friends.

Working with Captain Melton on job training and also social studies class with Coach Andy are a couple of my most enjoyable times. My hope is to get my HSED after leaving Rawhide and then go to college to be an architect.

One of my goals is to graduate from the About Face program with at least the rank of corporal. I came to the About Face program ready to change my life. My first day here was on a Friday, right at the beginning of Straight-up (weekly chapel time). The first people I met at the main office were Vince, Billy, (students) and Ben Schmidt (senior resident instructor). After being at Rawhide a short time, it started to get fun. A few people who have made a big difference in my life are Gary Winston and Ben Schmidt (resident instructors), Ma and Pops Dedmon (houseparents), Shane Urban (social worker), and Major Schmoll, Captain Melton, and Captain Guerin (job trainers).

The one person who made the most impact on my life is Captain Melton. Any time my day is going bad or if there's a problem, Captain Melton can be counted on to make me laugh. If there's a need, Captain Melton is always there to give me advice. All the staff at Rawhide are good people and they all seem to care about our welfare and how we do when we leave. Gary Winston helped me with finding God and having a good relationship with Him. Ma and Pops Dedmon are always there for me too. With all the knowledge from all of these special people at Rawhide, I will be able to achieve my goals in life and make the right choices when I leave.

Thank you, Rawhide.



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# Learning never ends – and that includes summers

BY BILL NELSON

You won't find more eager learners than high school auto-tech instructors. That eagerness is apparent even during the summer break, when golf courses await, walleyes prowl Wisconsin waters and backyard hammocks might seem irresistible.

Forty-five auto-tech instructors attended this year's Team Wisconsin Summer Training Institute, a week-long session held in mid-July at the Horizon Center of Kenosha's Gateway of Lynch GM Superstore in Burlington.

"It's a great opportunity to network with your peers," said David Dixon, an auto-tech instructor for 34 years at Racine's Washington Park High School. "You check out what works well and you share new ideas. You always come across something that might be helpful to your classes. We're all in this for the kids, and the institute helps us do the best job possible."

This was the eighth year for the teacher institute, which this year was co-sponsored by The Foundation of the Wisconsin Automobile and Truck Dealers, the Horizon Center of Gateway Technical Institute, Snap-on, the Northwestern Mutual Foundation, the Automotive YES program (Youth Educational Systems), the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, G-W Publisher and Cengage Learning.

Dixon and a Racine auto-tech colleague, Gottfried Georgi, stress the career-building value of high school auto-tech classes.

"The old-time sequence for an auto technician was much different than today," Dixon said. "Guys would work first in a gas station, then graduate to a muffler or tire store, and, probably in their mid-20s, move on to a better-paying auto-tech job at a dealership."

Now, he said, young people get a head start of five years or more, thanks to high schools offering automotive programs. The classes turn out well-grounded, home-grown technicians – or young men and women who go on to other careers in the automotive field – or simply young people well versed in how cars and trucks should be maintained.

The AYES program offered at select schools stands at the head of the class. It's a rigorous program, with high standards, and it acts as a fast-track for young people passionate about the automotive industry. Upon high school graduation and receiving AYES certification, students – if they so choose – are ready for a full-time entry-level opportunity as a dealership tech or to pursue additional high-tech automotive training.

The concept of teachers gathering for

a week in summer to share ideas and successes is a winner, said Carl Hader, Grafton High School auto-tech instructor for 29 years. "Why not share what works?" Hader said. "What value is there in keeping good ideas secret?"



From left, AYES Manager Jeff Dowd, John Lynch and Nick Dulisse of Lynch GM Superstore in Burlington.

Hader noted that school instructors refine their classroom curriculum each year. Automotive technology is a dynamic, always changing subject, he points out, and it's essential that instructors keep up-to-date.

"It's also important that your students know that you care," he said, and incorporating material from summer training opportunities gives teachers added credibility.

Eric Varrelmann, Arrowhead High School auto tech instructor beginning his 15th year at Hartland, agreed. Not only is the idea-sharing helpful, the institute speakers inspiring and networking with fellow teachers useful, the five-day Summer Training Institute happens to be lots of fun, he said. "We're all friends and we enjoy getting together in an educational setting."



Auto Tech teacher Matt Janisin, Elkhorn High School, shares his knowledge on Snap-on diagnostic certification with fellow teachers at the Foundation of WATDA Summer Institute at Gateway's Horizon Center.

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A collage of three black and white photographs. The left photo shows a man and a woman sitting at a desk, looking at documents. The middle photo shows a man and a woman sitting at a desk, looking at a computer screen. The right photo is a close-up of a car's side mirror.

The logo for American Financial & Automotive Services, Inc. features a stylized eagle icon to the left of the company name, which is written in a serif font.



## Saving Junior's ride

**Former Bloomer auto dealer steps in to keep a race car once driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr. from going to the scrap yard in North Carolina**

BY JOE KNIGHT  
EAU CLAIRE LEADER-TELEGRAM

BLOOMER – Somehow, Grant Southworth and mechanic Tim Ludwigson were carrying on a conversation above the roar of a car engine that reverberated throughout the garage.

It clearly needed a new muffler, but Ludwigson explained after turning off the car that it didn't have a muffler. It never did.

"Just pipes on either side," he said. It also lacked license plates and headlights.

Southworth said he has driven it a short distance, but not too fast.

The car's last regular driver was Dale Earnhardt Jr. during the 2004 NASCAR racing season.

This weekend, it was headed for the Jim Falls Sturgeon Festival and the Eagle Valley Speedway at Jim Falls on Sunday night, but not for racing.

Part of the deal that spared the red No. 8 Budweiser-sponsored Chevrolet Monte Carlo from the shredder in North Carolina and brought it to Bloomer was that it never would be raced again.

It came within three days of being scrapped. The car was rescued this spring by Grant's grandfather Jim Southworth of Chetek, who was touring the Dale Earnhardt Inc. shop in Mooresville, N.C., when he noticed workers taking instruments out of the car.

He asked what was going on, and Jim Southworth was surprised to learn the race car was about to be destroyed.

"I said, 'Wow, you can't do that!'" Southworth said in a phone interview. "But they said 'Yea, that's what it's destined for.'"

Southworth asked if there was any way it could be saved. The first response was no – the Earnhardt cars are never resold.

But Southworth had a personal connection with the company. His daughter, Marie, and son-in-law, Henry Dana, both work there. When the boss in the garage, Randy Earnhardt, learned Southworth was Marie's dad, he set up a meeting.

The result was that Southworth bought the car – he won't disclose what he paid – with the stipulation that he would not resell it or race it.

**The red No. 8 Budweiser-sponsored Chevrolet Monte Carlo was rescued from the shredder in North Carolina and brought to Bloomer. The car's last regular driver was Dale Earnhardt Jr. during the 2004 NASCAR racing season.**

The car was not in working condition. It was retired after a crash in 2004 and had spent three years on display at SeaWorld in Orlando, Fla. Being outside in that salty, humid climate without being driven for three years corroded the engine.

Southworth brought it back to Wisconsin and worked on it with Mark



Tim Ludwigson, left, and Grant Southworth, looked Thursday at a race car once driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr. Ludwigson was tuning up the engine at his Bloomer garage, Tim's Automotive Machine. The car, which was scheduled to be scrapped in May, has been refurbished and will be on display at the Jim Falls Sturgeon Festival this weekend and then permanently at Southworth Chevrolet in Bloomer.

Photo by Joe Knight, Eau Claire Leader-Telegram, reprinted with permission.

Lenbom of Chetek.

"They thought the engine would never run again," Southworth said. "We just had to take everything apart. The oil pump was stuck – everything was stuck," he said. "We had it running within three days."

The car still could have been displayed without a working engine, but it's better to have a functioning car,

Grant Southworth said.

"It makes it easier to move it around, for one thing, but we want to know that it's all

in good working order," he said. "It's a lot neater if you can start it up and make some noise with it."

The car spent most of the summer at the Southworth Chevrolet dealership in Bloomer and appeared in a Chetek parade.

Jim Southworth started the business in 1955 and sold it to his son, Greg, in

1990.

Grant, Greg's son, now is general manager.

Some NASCAR fans have dropped in over the summer to look at the car, Grant Southworth said. They learned of it from local media reports when the car arrived and from word of mouth.

After the Sturgeon Festival, the car will be back at the dealership on the north side of Bloomer, either on the lot or in storage, Southworth said. They don't have the room to display it in the showroom.

"If anybody wants to come up and see the car and get their picture taken with it, they're more than welcome," he said.

Jim Southworth said there won't be anymore Dale Earnhardt Jr. cars from Dale Earnhardt Inc., because he now is racing for a different team, Hendrick Motorsports.

"I don't think there's another out there like it," he said. "Junior's not driving for them anymore. It's unique."

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OBITUARIES |

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Gov. John W. Reynolds in the reapportionment case before the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which became the first state court in the nation to reapportion legislative districts on the basis of one person, one vote. He also represented the mayor of Madison in a civil action challenging his right to go forward with the building of the Monona Terrace Civic Center and served on the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin system from 1972 to 1974. In 1974, while a partner in the law firm of Wheeler, Van Sickle, Day and Anderson, he was appointed to the Wisconsin Supreme Court by Gov. Patrick J. Lucey. He was elected in 1976 and was re-elected in 1986. He became the chief justice Aug. 1, 1995 and retired a year later, at the end of his second term. While on the Supreme Court, Day was a member of the Judicial Council and the Council of Criminal Justice. From 1986 to 1991, Day served as state chair of the Wisconsin Bicentennial Committee on the U.S. Constitution. His name appears on a Bicentennial commemorative plaque in the capitol rotunda, along with an original copy of the Wisconsin Constitution of 1848. Day was a member of the Supreme Court's Sesquicentennial Committee.

Roland is survived by his wife, Mary Jane Day of Madison, and his daughter, Sarah Day of Spring Green. Memorials may be made to the UW Comprehensive Cancer Center, 600 Highland Avenue, K4/658, Madison, WI 53792, or the American Players Theatre, P.O. Box 819, Spring Green, WI 53588.

**Kenneth R. Kimport**

Ken (Kenny) Kimport, retired dealer of Kayser Ford in Madison, died Aug. 6, 2008. Ken was born July 10, 1919, in Manchester, Iowa. After graduating from Manchester High School, he entered the University of Iowa, receiving his degree in Business Administration in 1941. In August 1941 Ken joined the Army Air Corps. He earned his pilot's silver wings, was promoted to lieutenant and for his first duty, was assigned to the 4th Ferry Group of the Air Transport Command. In April 1943, Ken was promoted to captain and assigned to Air Transport Command in the CBI-China, Burma, and India Theater. The route from India to China became known as the "Hump," a particularly dangerous route due to the severe winds and weather encountered over the Himalayan Mountains. Many of his fellow pilots were lost because headwinds consumed fuel prior to reaching their destination.

After completing his missions, the Army Air Corps assigned Ken flight instructor status in India until the war ended. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal for his service.

Several years later, Paul Kayser, his mentor in the auto business, hired him as general manager of Kayser Ford,

then Wisconsin's largest Ford dealership. His friend Paul died unexpectedly in 1956. Ford Motor Company, recognizing Ken's capabilities, provided financial backing and Ken became sole owner of Kayser Ford. Leveraging his auto dealership success, he started Kayser Leasing, and with the help of his friend, Ray Stolowski, built Kayser Leasing into a large regional car leasing company, ultimately selling it to the Associates of North America. In 1985, Ken retired and sold Kayser to Pat Baxter who was vice-president of Kayser Leasing.

During his 35 years as a Ford dealer, Ken served on five national dealer councils as the elected delegate representing the Ford dealers from the Midwest. He was a member of the Downtown Kiwanis Club for 40 years. Ken also served Madison in many civic organizations as: chair-

person of United Way, a member of the Bascom Hill Society, a member of Alex de Tocqueville, and a director on the boards of Mautz Paint Co., Badger Chapter of the American Red Cross and the Wisconsin Auto Trader Association. While Ken was a member of the University of Iowa Alumni Association and the Iowa Presidents Club, he was also a strong UW backer and avid Badger fan. Ken participated in the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, and was a longtime member of Maple Bluff Country Club and Madison Club.

Ken was a good athlete and particularly enjoyed golf and tennis. Ken and Martha both loved to travel and enjoyed many wonderful trips, some to reunions with the Hump pilots. Ken was intensely fond of and loyal to all his friends, and particularly his World War II buddies. He kept contact on a regular

basis until the end of his life.

During the past 20 years, Ken and his wife, Martha Moore Kimport, have spent seven months each year in Florida, recently moving to Oak Harbor at Vero Beach, Fla. He is survived by his wife, Martha; four of his five children: Janet Zimmerman, Nancy Hylbert, Ken Kimport Jr., and Hattie McLean; and his stepson, Kevin Wright. Ken is also survived by nine grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife Julia and son Charlie, his brother Donald and his twin sister Dorothy. A memorial service will held in Vero Beach at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Indian River Medical Center Foundation, 1000 36th St., Vero Beach, FL 32960.



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## Grafton's winning tradition continues

BY BILL NELSON

Winning has long been a tradition for Grafton High School's automotive technology classes. And for longtime instructor Carl Hader and his 2008 team, Christopher Cheek and Paul Bretl, this year is no exception.

For the two graduating seniors, a string of victories and high finishes started in mid-February. That's when the students teamed up to win first place in the Wisconsin finals of the annual Technicians of Tomorrow Automotive Technology Competition staged by ADAMM, the Automobile Dealers Association of Mega Milwaukee.

That win qualified them to compete in the Big Apple, at the National Automotive Technology Competition, part of New York's glamorous International Auto Show. Going up against almost 40 regional winners from around the nation, the Grafton team finished an impressive third. It brought scholarship offers, Snap-on tools and cabinets, and a \$1,000 grant for their school as well as tools and software for Grafton's auto-tech program.

And more success – much more – was ahead.

In June, the Grafton pair took top



Grafton winners Christopher Cheek and Paul Bretl and Carl Hader, auto tech instructor.

honors in the Ford-AAA National Automotive Competition held at Ford's world headquarters in Dearborn, Mich. That meant the young men were national champs in that elite competition, the first time ever for a Grafton team in the Ford-AAA contest. Their prizes included scholarship offers, diagnostic equipment and tool sets, plus a flight to and from Charlotte, N.C., to watch the Roush-Fenway

NASCAR race team of David Ragan in action. Still another honor was the "AAA Quality Automotive Teacher" award given to Carl Hader for his role

in helping his students prepare for the competition.

Then a few days later came the frosting on the cake. Cheek won the bronze medal in the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference's Automotive Service Technology Competition held in Kansas City. Competing in the rigorous eight-hour contest was one automotive service technology student from each state. Cheek received more scholarship offers, diagnostic equipment and a laptop fit for automotive diagnostics, plus software.

It was noted, too, that Hader, who has taught at Grafton for 29 years, is the only active high school auto-tech instructor whose teams have won all three major national automotive competitions: the Greater New York Auto Dealers Association national competition (in 2006 and 1997), the Ford-AAA national competition (2008); and the SkillsUSA national automotive service technology competition (2006 and 2003).

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Meet your directors | profiles of your WATDA directors

Jerry Brickner III

BY SHARYN ALDEN

When you grow up practically in the driver’s seat of interesting automobiles, you can’t help but be inspired to live a life around cars.

That’s exactly what describes the career path Jerome “Jerry” Brickner III, co-owner of Brickner Family Auto Group in central Wisconsin, took. This enterprising auto dealer actually owned his first car when he was 12 years old.

It’s hard to say what was the catalyst for Brickner’s passion for cars. But those seeds were probably planted because he has been around everything and anything having to do with cars since he was a young boy.

Brickner, who owns the dealerships in Wausau, Antigo and Little Chicago, with his father, Jerome Jr., and his brothers Michael and Steven, didn’t just grow up around cars, he grew up literally at the dealership.

It was 1945 when his grandfather Jerome, started a Chevrolet dealership on the famed northeast side of Little Chicago and the dealership was on one of the corners. Our lives centered around the dealership, and we were in and out of there all the time.”

Little Chicago is an unincorporated town of about 75 people, about 20 miles northwest of Wausau. “At one time there was a feed mill, bank, two saloons, a dance hall, box factory, and a car dealership,” notes Brickner.

By the late 1950s, when Brickner’s son Jerome Jr. was running the dealership, they switched from being a Chevrolet store to a Chrysler dealership. “The family dealership didn’t just sell cars,” said Brickner. “They offered a wide range of services, which included a body shop and junk yard.”

But back to that first car that Brickner had at 12. “I couldn’t drive it on the highway because of my age, but I did fix it up with parts from the junkyard and then I sold it for a profit,” he said.

By the time he was 16, Brickner owned several cars, but his first car as a legal driver was a 1966 Dodge Charger. Interestingly, Brickner still has that car, which was restored by his brother Michael.

Brickner is proud of his service on the WATDA board. Before his current board membership, now in his second year, he served about five years as a WATDA director.

Brickner is very proud of the fact that under his guidance, Wausau East High School was recently AYES-certified.

“This was profoundly fulfilling,” he says. “When we first approached them, they were unsure of the commitment and interest from students. Not only has it been a success, they need more room to accommodate the growing interest of participants.”

That brand of enthusiasm for motivating others has also rubbed off on his activities with his family. Brickner and his wife Jane have two children, Janessa 17, and son Jerry IV, 11.

His son has taken after his father, riding snowmobiles since he was 12. And Jerry IV may have even beaten his father’s record for early involvement. “He has been racing snowmobiles since he was 6 years old,” said his dad, who is his son’s “pitman” when he races. Brickner says this winter sport speaks to his love of solving problems, and working with his hands is part of the equation. “You have to love to love all aspects of getting outdoors and riding a snowmobile, because you drive for an hour, then fix the sled for two hours,” he joked.

Snowmobiling is just one outdoor sport the father-son duo enjoys together. Brickner is also a coach for his son’s baseball and football teams.

“Our family enjoys doing a lot of things together,” he said. “Janessa is involved with dance and theater so

there are many opportunities to see her perform. Next year she will be cheerleading for St. Norbert’s College and for the Green Bay Packers. Overall, as a family, we like to spend time outdoors when we can,” he said.

Brickner also enjoys an interesting variety of reading material. And while he doesn’t have time to do a lot of reading, he does enjoy reading “Automotive News.” He’s also inspired by reading “Daily Guideposts,” a popular book compiled of daily devotionals. The Guideposts publishing group, founded in 1948, publishes a variety of books and magazines focused on positive thinking. Brickner, who reads the Daily



Guideposts every day said it is his favorite book.

One of the country’s most famous no-nonsense leaders is a person Brickner would like to get to know. “I admire Lee

Iaococa, the former Chrysler Motors chairman because he was an extraordinary business person. He understood sales, service and how to get things done. I also admire the fact that he stood in front of Congress and asked for a loan, then paid it back three years later,” said Brickner. “You can’t help but be inspired by someone who really knows how to lead. Iaococa’s famous words, ‘Lead, follow or get out of the way,’ really does say it all.”

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## Meet WICRA | David Cuene

I'd like to thank WATDA for the opportunity to introduce the Wisconsin Car Rental Alliance (WICRA).

We're a statewide trade association dedicated to legislative and regulatory representation on state issues affecting the vehicle rental business. That's our niche and our members include rental car franchisees, independent operators and yes, auto dealers like us. While our primary focus is Wisconsin, we have worked closely with the American Car Rental Association (ACRA) on some federal legislation. We have developed an excellent working relationship with WATDA in those areas where our interests overlap. In terms of the outstanding job that WATDA does in Madison advocating before the Legislature and state agencies, WATDA has definitely been a role model for our organization.



an important part of what we do. A look at one of our recent legislative engagements bears that out:

### KRM COMMUTER RAIL

Sometimes it seems like everyone with a civic project in need of financing is looking to tax car renters! This has been a trend nationally and here in Wisconsin the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail proposal is just another example.

Our organization spent the last eighteen months (this entire legislative session) arguing to the Legislature why a 650 percent increase (from \$2 to \$15) in the rental car transaction fee in southeastern Wisconsin is not a good local funding source for this project. To date we have prevailed, thanks to the support of the Assembly Republican majority and allies like the National Business Travelers Association (NBTA) the Wisconsin Tourism Federation, WATDA, Wisconsin Club for Growth, and others. We expect this proposal to be back next session and if it is, we hope it will be with a more broad-based and equitable form of financing.

### OTHER ISSUES

WICRA supported a bill to clarify the use of credit cards for unpaid non-moving traffic citations involving rented or leased vehicles. This legislation (2007 Wisconsin Act 207) was effective Aug. 1, 2008, and establishes the ground rules and process for charging a renter's credit card when there is

an unpaid parking ticket.

This same legislation also specifies that if, for any reason, the charge cannot be processed and the citation goes unpaid, that the rental or leasing company's ultimate liability is for 50 percent of the original amount of the forfeiture rather than the escalated amount. This has been an issue in the past with some municipalities.

For more background on WICRA's activities or membership information visit [www.WICRA.org](http://www.WICRA.org). If you have a rental department, you may be interested in what we have to offer. WICRA has an impressive record of accomplishments that have enhanced each and every one of our members' bottom lines. Here are a few examples:

- Preservation of our right to continue to sell damage waiver protection to our Wisconsin customers
- Elimination of the 10-day waiting period to report a stolen vehicle
- Defeat of an ill-advised agency proposal to license all counter personnel as insurance agents
- Passage of legislation to allow vehicle title and registration fees to be itemized.

For questions on legislative or regulatory issues contact legislative representative Brian Mitchell directly at [blm@mitchellgov.com](mailto:blm@mitchellgov.com) or call (262) 244-0045.

David Cuene is currently president of the Wisconsin Car Rental Alliance (WICRA) and a managing partner of Broadway Enterprises, Inc. in Green Bay.

## WISCO | John Hackman

### Tax savings available for dealers

Congress recently passed the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008, which is designed to stimulate our economy through tax incentives aimed at encouraging businesses to increase their investments in equipment by the end of 2008.

The 2008 Act increases the speed at which the cost of new property may be recovered by allowing for an additional deduction ("bonus depreciation") equal to 50 percent of the cost of qualified new property purchased and placed in service during 2008. Regular depreciation then can be claimed on the remaining 50 percent of the cost not deducted under this rule.

Or, in lieu of depreciation, businesses may elect to expense (within certain limits) the entire cost of equipment purchased during the taxable year under the so-called "section 179" expense. Using these benefits may reduce the effective cost of equipment purchased in 2008.

Now is a good time to check with your tax consultant and review your equipment needs. Wisco's equipment lineup includes names known industry-wide. In lifts we carry Challenger and Manitowoc. We have Hunter and Snap-On alignment systems, wheel balancers, tire changers, and brake lathes. Pro-Cut, Ammco, and Accu-turn brake lathes are also part of the Wisco offering.

We have Coats tire changers and wheel balancers, Borroughs, Shure, and Equipto shelving, bins, and work benches, Orion energy saving indoor lighting, and Purigen98 nitrogen machines. Save money on this winter's high heating costs with a Black Gold waste oil furnace. The list continues. Check us out at [www.wisco.com](http://www.wisco.com) to view our entire product offering.

Wisco's reason for existing is to save its members money on their purchases. We have several excellent equipment programs in place. Call 800-274-2319 for information, demos, or pricing.

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### DID YOU KNOW...

Of the 826 new and used vehicle dealer members of WATDA, there are 870 owners of record in our database. Of that number, we found 77 dealership owners who are women. That translates to nearly 9 percent of all of the owner members of WATDA, most of whom are active in the operations of the dealership.



# Smart Motors – a century of operation

BY J.R. SMART

Only a handful of dealerships in the entire world can lay claim to remaining in operation for 100 years. If we counted the business that we evolved from, it would be more like 150 years, as my great grandfather sold Studebaker wagons (pulled by horses) from his livery business in Waukesha, Wisconsin in the 19th century.

If you think today’s business environment is challenging, let me share with you some of the “bumps in the road” of the last 100 years.

First was the overall uncertainty of the automobile business. In 1908, it was estimated by Charles Duryea that more than half of the 515 American automobile manufacturers in operation went out of business. Just finding a manufacturer with staying power was a challenge. Twenty-five of our 28 franchises went out of business!

O.D. Smart, my grandfather and our founder, wore many hats as an entrepreneur, one of which was a chauffeur’s hat as he drove gubernatorial candidate Francis McGovern 3,000 miles around the state of Wisconsin on his seven week campaign trail (there were no paved roads) in 1910. O.D. kept the lights on at the shop while promoting this new form of transportation, and McGovern went on to win and became our next governor.

Being resourceful had drawbacks.



Avis Smart poses with sons, Brian and J.R. Smart, overlooking the showroom of their new 100,000 square-foot dealership in Madison. The Smart Family celebrated 100 years in business during the grand opening this summer.

Photo by Joseph W. Jackson III, copyright Wisconsin State Journal. Reprinted with permission.

Acting again in his role as a chauffeur, O.D. was driving some people to New York. On Aug. 20, 1912 near Batavia, N.Y., they encountered an oncoming vehicle on what was little more than a dirt path (still no paved roads) and had to veer to miss it. Their vehicle flipped and somersaulted a number of times, pinning O.D. underneath. A newspaper article reported that he was not expected to survive. Our family business had a very close call that day and I’m thankful that no one was seriously injured and that O.D. survived.

In 1912 Smart Motors moved to

Madison from Waukesha and set up shop at 617 University Ave. in the Gay Garage. A few years later that building burned down. Smart Motors relocated to 601 University (where the UW Fluno Center now stands) and the Gay brothers built the Gay Building on the square.

Our next move was to 437 W. Gilman St. in 1929. The Great Depression took its toll on many (including us) as we “lost” that building but we were the only dealership in Madison that did not declare bankruptcy.

O.D. later relocated to 2608 University Ave. in 1939 where we faced two more major hurdles – World War II and a devastating flood. Civilian automobile production ceased as factories were converted for the war effort.

O.D. worked as a machinist at Gisholt at night in order to supplement the family income. He also performed wedding ceremonies in his home as justice of the peace for returning servicemen and women. A knock on the door in the middle of the night was the signal to get his wife and daughter out of bed to act as witnesses and play the wedding march on the family piano as O.D. performed the service. Chauffeur, machinist, Justice of the Peace, notary – I often wonder how many of us today would go to these extreme measures to ensure the survival of our business.

The last 60 years have been much kinder to our business. Failing manufacturers, economic downturns, regulations, oil embargos, and a recession or two – they all seem like minor “bumps” when compared to the early days of being a car dealer.

Today many of us are feeling the impact of the economy. This is not anything we haven’t seen previously; it’s just another cycle – the ebb and flow of the automobile business if you will. When preparation and opportunity meet ... well, you know the rest.

## INTRODUCING THE “NEW” ENDORSED SERVICE PROVIDER WE’VE WORKED WITH FOR 25 YEARS.



John Gillespie, of Gillespie Group, is pictured with one of 19-Gift Catalogs offered to members for Customer and Employee Appreciation-Motivation. Catalogs are priced from \$20 to \$750 each offering 50 or more quality items.

Many of you will remember John from our 25 years of support to Rawhide. John and his wife Jan founded the Boys Ranch in 1965. Since then our members have collected over 150,000 vehicles providing \$100 million of income for Rawhide’s program for court-placed teenage young men.

Chuck Olsen, corporate sales manager, The Boucher Group, Milwaukee, is pictured next to his selection of an 8 X 8 foot tent redeemed from the \$50 gift catalog.

“The first of our 17 dealerships have ordered a set of Ribbon gift catalogs which we will present to our customers after their vehicle purchase. We know they will enjoy the great selection of quality items, and it will give us additional after sale touch-points. This is a very cost-effective way to show our appreciation without burdening our managers with extra work.” Chuck Olsen



John Gillespie and Barb Kolosso, owner of Kolosso Toyota Scion, of Appleton, are pictured with three gifts from the \$20 gift catalog of a GE speaker phone, a 52-piece socket set and a 10-knife set.

“I am very impressed with the quality of the gifts in the \$20 catalog. Shipping took only a few days and was free. I will use the catalogs personally for family and friends and we are planning to use them for our employees and customers.” Barb Kolosso

### Customer Appreciation

The gift catalogs contain brand name inexpensive items, and provide a unique way to promote good will with customers. They will enjoy making their own gift selection. Dealers have no responsibility once the catalog is given out.

### Employee Motivation

Gift Catalogs can be used for employee sales awards, years of service, employee of the month, etc. There are also specialty catalogs for weddings, baby arrivals, men’s gifts, women’s gifts, gourmet foods, chocolates, children’s games, and more.

**For more information contact John Gillespie at [jgillespie@wwdb.org](mailto:jgillespie@wwdb.org), or call direct: (920)-427-9000.**



# An interview with Gary D. Williams

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Louis Milan, WATDA's leader for over 40 years, who wanted to retire.

But I had my eyes on PR opportunities in Florida. LuAnn and I were "houseparents" for 150 female students in a five-story private dorm on Langdon Street. At semester break we were packed to leave by car at 5 a.m. for Florida for interviews. At 2 a.m. a terrible three-alarm fire broke out on the third floor. We almost lost four girls. One I carried out unconscious, blackened with smoke. Firemen, crawling with oxygen tanks, got to others before they leaped. There was no trip to Florida.

Louis stayed connected. Then C.J. Thorstad and Jerry Holz connected. (These are two of the finest people God ever created). There was a board meeting and a convention. Shortly after, we said "yes." We were young, in debt, but happy about joining the dealers.

## What was it about your past that qualified you to be a trade association leader?

Nothing specific as far as direct experience. I had developed political awareness. My interests and experiences were far ranging. I was always organizing something. I had worked since five years old, when I sold vegetables out of a wagon I pulled around the block. Being the oldest of six boys in the family maybe lent something. My formal education was solid for this work. I genuinely liked the legislative process.

## Did you have a mentor who helped you in your career? Who was it? How did they make a difference in your career?

Yes. Louis Milan was always a welcome nurturing visit. Our attorney, Roland Day (later Supreme Court Justice), kept me on the straight and narrow. My major professor at the UW Madison, the famous Scott Cutlip, took a chance on me, and we developed a strong professional relationship lasting many years.

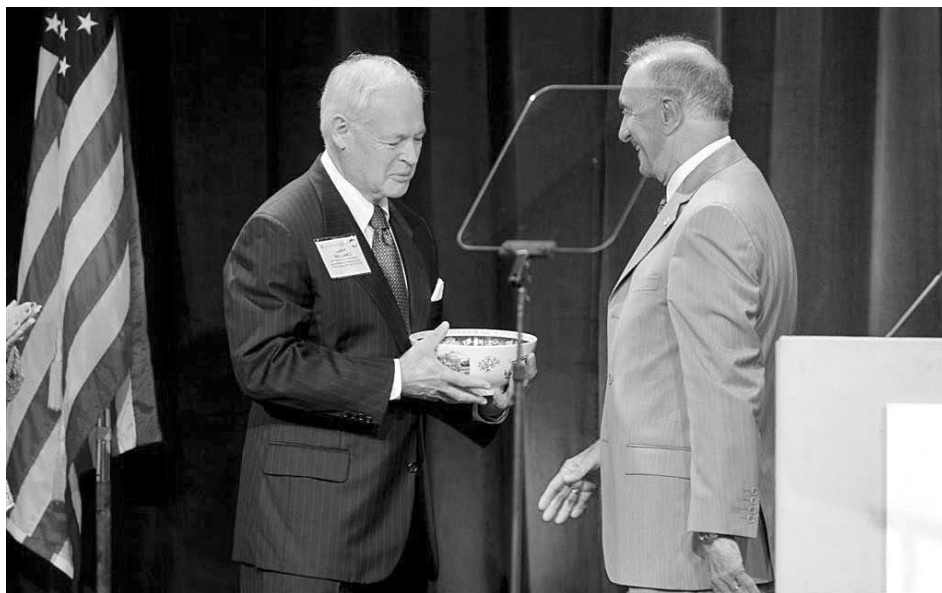
But there was also a group of us new to the association management world in Madison. Six of us pulled together to earn "CAE" designation, Certified Association Executive by the American Society of Association Executives. We mentored one another then and still do.

However, the most "formative" persons in my life were my grandparents in Three Lakes, Cy and Vada Williams. They are a great story.

## What dealer had the most impact on you during your tenure at WATDA?

How can you choose one when so many have committed so much to make this Association what it is: strong and forward?

So, even if it is unfair, I will give you an answer that is more of an example among many. John Zimbrick, while an officer, convinced the board and me that more investment was necessary for employee continuing education. He felt that our strength must come from



Surprised and honored, Gary Williams (left) accepts a "Washington D. C." Wedgewood bowl from Ray Ciscola of Boston, chair of NADA's Government Relations Committee. Williams, only the fourth recipient ever of the Capitol Achievement Award, accepted to a standing ovation before over 500 dealers and association executives from all states.

a smart, committed staff...something more professional than was being provided for up to that point. That change in mindset created the most profound change over time. It allowed us to leap forward in effective service and productivity. Those investments continue today. One other thing about John—when he learned later that the staff had no money for an office holiday party, he and Pat invited everyone to their home for our party. And then again the next year! Talk about a morale booster.

## What was the most difficult decision you ever had to make?

Firing or terminating positions is always tough. I was fired once, by an uncle of all people, so I know how it feels.

Around 1992 we lost a major income-producing P&C insurance program. The officers asked that I come up with a plan to respond. I did. It called for the elimination of seven positions in short order. One third of our staff at that time was affected. Following the board meeting when the plan was adopted, there were a lot of tears all around. It was my blackest day.

## What do you think was your greatest achievement at WATDA?

Ranking right up there is building a terrific staff of service minded achievers. That in turn has allowed us to provide an extraordinary level of programs of value to our dealers. Because of the knowledge base here, we can provide members insights when facing complex matters. I appreciate the support of all who have served as directors and officers to make sure that we can have the resources to excel.

## What was your most memorable experience at WATDA?

Sixteen of us were at an NADA national conference in Washington D.C., near the White House, when the 911 terrorists high-jacked and crashed the planes. We did not know what else to expect, such as a biological attack. Telephones were down. We were separated. We were lucky to rent a bus and get out of town that Tuesday at about 4 p.m., ending up in Columbus, Ohio about 1 a.m. Cars from home came

down to meet us. Others at the conference were not so lucky, some took a week before they could get home.

## What was your greatest legislative victory?

The override of a governor's veto of a regular session bill has happened only once in about 50 years. Lee Dreyfus was governor. We got the relevant market area bill through the legislature. The manufacturers were in an uproar. GM got to Dreyfus over Janesville plans. Dreyfus vetoed the bill. We went after the override. We needed two-thirds support in each house.

The Senate Republican Caucus was the key hurdle. They would try to protect the governor of their party. In a most unusual move, I was called in to their caucus room where the GOP senators sat around a large oak table. An attorney from the governor's staff was also called in. Amanda Sheedy, a lawyer/lobbyist on our staff stood with me as we presented our respective positions. Then there were questions. The drama was high.

After being excused, the door closed. A while later the Senate gavelled into session, a role call was taken, and just enough Republicans voted with us for override. We had done it! The year was 1982.

## What do you think was the most significant change in the retail automobile and truck industry that occurred while you were WATDA's president?

If you look at a list of changes, how do you choose one?

Total dealerships are less than half. Dealer principals are less than one-fourth.

Franchises are doubled.

OPEC arrived.

Consumerism, Clean Air and Water Acts arrived.

Foreign manufacturers have taken huge market share from domestics.

Dealers have had to embrace technology for communications and administration, along with costs.

Internet marketing broke through.

Public companies are holding dealerships.

Multi point ownership. Multiple franchises owned by same dealer.

Product-wise, there is more of everything.

I think that one of the biggest changes is in who is a dealer. There are more second and third generation dealers who are more highly educated and sophisticated in business.

There are more persons who were professionals, e.g. CPAs, entering.

## How have you adjusted to those changes in your 37 years with WATDA?

Everyone on the staff must keep parallel to the members with education. That is continual. As dealers employ professionals, we keep pace to assure linkage not just with the dealers, but with the professional managers they employ.

On a personal basis, I seem to anticipate emerging trends and changes. I simply deal with the realities. Where WATDA needs to change, we engage the board. This has been a good formula for success.

The art of keeping up with change is all about dealer input, manufacturer input, vendor input, other association input, trade press input, and more. Member meetings, surveys and phone visits are indispensable. Staff needs to be engaged asking questions. We must constantly share what we learn. We must regularly ask ourselves what change is hitting dealers? What does WATDA need to change in order to stay relevant?

Strategic planning with the board must be regular. Clearly planned changes or adjustments ease the pain.

## Did you ever run for political office?

No. LuAnn had me promise, as a condition of marriage, that running for political office would be verboten, naya, nada, whatever. OK. So be it. So the closest I got to serving Democracy was not only voting in every election eligible, but to be a lobbyist. An advocate. A proponent for the good. A defender against the worst. HIGHYAAH! You gotta love it! The dealers were my Excalibur.

## What was your favorite trip and why?

If you are asking about our past convention trips, I would say that our first Hawaii trip was most memorable. It was in the late '70's when we took 550 dealers and family to the new Sheraton Waikiki for a full week. We had fabulous speakers, and the big banquet was once-in-a-lifetime. A 10-course Chinese dinner served on the hotel's most exquisite china was followed by a spectacular stage show that included all the operatic portions of "Jesus Christ Superstar." Many new friendships were made.

Over the years we were in Acapulco twice, Hawaii three times, the Bahamas and Disney World once each. All were special times. By the way, no matter where we held a convention, I lost six to eight pounds.

## Where do you think our industry is headed as new communications



### technology like the Internet changes the classic marketing boundaries of the individual franchise?

Technology is not something to fear for dealers. All new ways for dealers to compete, attract customers, serve customers, save time, be smarter are emerging. The upside is huge for both new and used vehicle dealers. I'm optimistic.

Your WATDA, working with other state associations, will soon have an absolutely fantastic Internet program to assist dealer/customer linkage. By the time you read this, Wisconsin ICARS and Trucks.com may already be on the street.

With technology, the trick for dealers will be to assure some personal aspects of the customer experience are maintained. People need personal relationships.

### All things being equal, what would you have done differently if you had to do it all over again?

I'm not one to do a lot of second-guessing. The dealers, working with staff, have made good decisions consistently through the years. We have been experimental, but always with sound reason. If anything, I wish I would have incorporated certain current internal management systems sooner.

### What is it about you that government leaders will remember?

I take my role of representing dealers in the public arena very seriously. My credibility is the credibility of the

Association. I would hope that I will be thought of as trustful, constructive, forthright, fair, and even "sheltering" especially for elected officials. We want to be winners for the right reasons, where the public interest and common good is served through our efforts. We've had our share of wins together, that is for sure!

### What Wisconsin legislators and/or governors stand out as true leaders?

Patrick Lucy consolidated power and used it aggressively. Tony Earl was highly trusted, and that trust carried him through a tough vote for a temporary income tax increase, which he ended on time as promised. Lee Dreyfus led by warmth, idea flow, and remarkable speaking skills.

Tommy Thompson led by sheer energy, resolve, and getting very talented people to work for him, usually at wage reductions. He was tough, but he knew when to compromise. Today Jim Doyle leads by staying focused on a few specific areas, the first of which is education.

In Congress, where I have known many good ones, it may be a surprise that I really admired Henry Reuss, a Milwaukee area Democrat, who chaired the House Banking Committee. He led by his gentleman demeanor, and by being totally prepared. He expected the same in return.

### What is it that you plan to spend more time doing next year?

I have a drawer full of innovations.

Enough to keep me hopping until age 105. Maybe I will open the drawer. Maybe I will keep the drawer closed. What do you think?

Going forward, I will really appreciate more control over my time. Maybe 25 percent personal, 15 percent charitable and 60 percent productive. No rush. We'll see. Right now my number one concern is that the Association is in as good a shape as possible for this transition to a new CEO and the volunteer officers and board directors going forward. This has been my personal mission for more than three years.

### What was your favorite Badger game of all times?

So many. Basketball. Rowing. Volleyball. Hockey championships. Once when we were still in grad school, we had lost 23 straight football games. The marching band was great with a new conductor, Mike Leckrone. A running back, self-described as "effervescent," parentally named Rufus Ferguson, "The Roadrunner" to fans, came on the scene and ignited the place. He created the first ever end zone dance, the "Roadrunner Shuffle." He had a lot of them. He was 60 percent thighs and 40 percent smiles.

Unexpectedly we beat Indiana one Saturday, and State Street came apart. These were the days of the Vietnam War, the campus protests and riots, burnings, disruptions, confrontations, National Guard interventions for weeks on end. It was tough.

Then this spark happened at the foot-

ball stadium. Rufus ignited it. The party on State Street got crazy with happiness. LuAnn and I were there to see the new athletic director Elroy "Crazylegs" Hirsch scale a 10-foot wall to save himself from a cheering, beering crowd.

It seems that in the deepest, darkest hours, we find something to celebrate, if only for a precious moment.

A couple years ago I happened to meet up with Rufus and his wife. Along the way he had been a Chevy dealer in Pennsylvania. We had him as a guest at our Wisconsin breakfast at NADA one year. Now they were proud of their Olympian son who excelled in martial arts. Rufus' effervescence could still warm any room – just like he did Camp Randall.

### Pet peeve?

Sneaky behavior. Nasty behavior. Whatever behavior by whomever that precipitates mistrust. And dissention.

### Do you have any words of wisdom for your successor?

Louie Milan had a card that said, "Don't let the past be a hitching post." My advice is:

Know your values. Let others know your values.

Trust your values. Trust your gut.

Lead your staff. Trust your staff.

Advise your board. Trust your board.

This is more of an observation I would pass on: The dealers are wonderful to work with. The job is exciting. Enjoy every day of it.

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# Hybrid guru Schneider is recharging the future

**The Honda Motorwerks dealer in LaCrosse is making a case for dealers and consumers to get in the green zone**

BY SHARYN ALDEN

The transportation sector accounts for about 28 percent of greenhouse gases in the U.S., but Chris Schneider, owner of Honda Motorwerks, a certified Honda Hybrid dealer in LaCrosse, is determined to do something about that.

The company has helped people in 23 states connect with fuel efficient hybrid vehicles. In fact, the LaCrosse dealership is the No. 1 Honda Hybrid dealer in the U.S.

When it comes to motivating drivers to get behind the wheel of hybrids and electric cars, Wisconsin has its own secret weapon. Schneider is that well-known globe-trotter and educational guru. He has been working hard to help reduce U.S. dependency on foreign oil by educating consumers about their options.

His father’s influence made a difference from the time his son started cleaning cars at the dealership when he was 9 years old.

“I was paid 25 cents an hour for work on Saturday afternoons,” he said. “I still have my first paycheck for work in 1966 for \$1.25. The reason I still have it is that my dad didn’t want me to spend it.”

That type of strong work ethic has played a strong part in Schneider’s life. But now he’s known as the “hybrid guru,” a name he does not take lightly. This LaCrosse leader has a passion for increasing energy efficiency and educating people about how they can make a big difference in preserving energy by driving a “green vehicle.”



Last year he gave 140 presentations to groups ranging from middle school kids to students on college campuses, as well as numerous media interviews such as appearances on Larry Meiller’s program on Wisconsin Public Radio.

“I’ve been thinking about the need to preserve an energy efficient economy since the 1970s,” Schneider said. “It’s part of my heritage. My father talked about the need for energy conservation all the time, going back to the 1960s.”

But that was then, this is now. With the instability and war in the Middle East, and increased demand from growing economies in China and India, and the decreasing supply of oil in the Earth, the long-term trend for oil prices is up, not down.

Ten years ago, Schneider said, “We took the first deposit on a hybrid car 14 months before delivery. We told our customers that if they didn’t like it, we would refund their money. No one asked for a refund. With that early success in getting people behind the wheel of a hybrid, I became even more determined to help people see how they can benefit their neighborhood and the world.”

Fast forward to a decade later. The LaCrosse dealership has won several awards for its role for promoting environmentally sensitive, energy efficient education and transportation options.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

While the U.S. government has relied heavily on ethanol and diesel from renewable sources to compliment fossil fuels, many experts feel electric vehicles are the long-term solution.

If you were ask Schneider what he likes to drive, chances are he’ll tell you it’s his Neighborhood Electric Vehicle (NEV), made in Reedsburg – a car he’s been driving for about a year and a half.

“How many people do you know that drive a car 200,000 miles on the original battery?” asked Schneider. “In LaCrosse I know of four people who have that many miles on the battery of their gas-electric hybrids.” It’s just one reason Schneider is spreading the word about fuel efficient vehicles.

One way Schneider is making big educational strides is by talking to young people about fuel efficient vehicles. This past spring Honda sponsored

“Earth Day Odyssey (with a nod to the Honda’s Odyssey vehicle) at Hawkeye Community College in Iowa. “We encouraged everyone there to bring as many people as they could. The one who rounded up the most attendees won a PHIL system for their home.” Honda Motorwerks also has a PHILL system installed on a wall and it taps into natural gas lines for efficient (and less costly) use of compressed natural gas.

## BRANDING THE GREEN MOVEMENT

For dealers who want to get on the bandwagon and become a “green dealer” Schneider has some valuable insight.

“We can lead people to water, but we have to help them drink,” he said. “You need to educate people about the benefits of going green. When you successfully do that, they’ll see you as a ‘green brand’ leader.”

Schneider also says that it helps to get involved in community outreach, and take advantage of educational opportunities that involve young people. Then market yourself to local media so that they see you as a green spokesperson.”

Schneider, who is very involved in the annual HybridFest in July, sees it as an exceptional opportunity to educate people as well as showcase his own dealership. “Don’t underestimate the business opportunities available to dealers who want to be known as a green leader,” he said. “Consumers are looking for guidance when it comes to getting in the green zone. We’re very grateful that so many consumers have been eager to learn more what they can do to conserve fuel and have fun at the same time. It takes a little education but these are people who now value and understand the philosophy behind buying and driving green.”

# In his mid-20s, and already a “world class technician”

BY BILL NELSON

A dream was born more than six years ago, when Jon Brand began his career as an auto technician. Fast forward to this summer at Ewald Chevrolet Buick in Oconomowoc.

Two General Motors reps were on hand to celebrate a franchise high point, along with Ewald service director Gary Rynders and Ray Pedersen, executive director of The Foundation of the Wisconsin Automobile and Truck Dealers Association.

Brand was congratulated on becoming a “GM World Class Technician,”



Gary Rynders, Ewald Chevrolet Buick service director; Ursela Szumski; district service manager, GM Milwaukee zone office; Jon B.; Rhenea Culp, service development manager, GM’s north central region; and Ray Pedersen of the WATDA Foundation.

putting him in an elite group nationally. The dealership has a number of talented technicians, but for the moment, Brand is its only “world-class” designate. In fact, of the 60,000 GM technicians in the U.S., only 1,375 have ascended to what ranks as a technician’s pinnacle of success, and Brand has worked his way to the top 2 percent.

And he achieved his dream at

age 26. He’s had six and a half years of on-the-job experience, first at Brookside Chevrolet in Brookfield, then at Ewald.

To reach the world class distinction, he completed more than 450 hours of training and assessment. For certification, he demonstrated technical competency in a wide

range of automotive work, including engine mechanics, steering and suspension, brakes, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, electrical systems, diesel engine performance, transmission and drive train.

To be GM world class, technicians must complete eight of nine GM master-technician certifications, along with accompanying ASE (the National

Institute for Automotive Service Excellence) certifications. His journey involved computer-based curriculum along with hands-on classes at the GM training center at Hinsdale, Ill.

At the Ewald ceremony, Ursela Szumski, GM district service manager, Milwaukee zone office, and Rhenea Culp, service development manager of GM’s north-central region, presented the young tech with a world-class plaque, a statue and a uniform patch, plus 400 merchandise points toward purchases from a GM catalog. Ewald also received a plaque to be displayed in its service department waiting room.

Brand is a 2002 graduate of General Motors’ ASEP program, Automotive Service Educational Program – GM’s technician-training initiative.

Besides the pay increase the world-class designation will bring – what was Jon’s motivation to log all those extra hours needed to win the ranking?

“I just wanted to prove to myself I could do it,” he said.



# “Don’t tax my trade-in!”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

state first implemented a sales tax in 1962. The trade-in credit is now worth more than \$100 million per year to Wisconsin taxpayers. Repealing the credit would constitute a major tax increase.

Gov. Jim Doyle will introduce his next budget in first quarter of 2009. The Legislature will be asked to pass that budget by mid-year. That will be no easy feat. Reduced tax revenues and advance budget commitments for which there is no projected revenue (i.e., the “structural deficit”), mean Wisconsin is likely to face a funding gap of more than \$2 billion for the next two-year budget. That means lawmakers will be looking for dollars wherever they can find them.

“We’re taking very seriously the possibility that the search for state revenue could threaten the vehicle trade-in credit,” said Jim Tolkman, president of Bob Tolkman Buick Pontiac GMC in Milwaukee. WATDA formed a Dealer Trade-in Defense Task Force in summer to strategize action around the issue; Tolkman is serving as the group’s chairman.

“We are prepared to fight this,” Tolkman said. “Taking away the vehicle trade-in credit would hurt our customers and our businesses. We are mobilizing to make sure that doesn’t happen.”

**WATDA formed a Dealer Trade-in Defense Task Force in summer to strategize action around the issue; Jim Tolkman is serving as the group’s chairman. “We’re taking very seriously the possibility that the search for state revenue could threaten the vehicle trade-in credit. We are prepared to fight this. Taking away the vehicle trade-in credit would hurt our customers and our businesses. We are mobilizing to make sure that doesn’t happen.”**

— Jim Tolkman

### DEALERS STEER THE EFFORT

Joining Tolkman on the task force are: Pat Baxter, Jerry Brickner, Pat Donahue, Mike Hutson, Keith Kocourek, Don Morrison, Todd Reardon, Roger Schlegel, Jim Tessmer, Dennis Trecek, Geoff Wheeler, Gary Williams, Mary Ann Gerrard and Chris Snyder. The task force has been developing plans for preserving the trade-in credit as the 2009 legislative session approaches because the prospect of eliminating the credit came up in each of the last two sessions. Task force members, as well as WATDA’s Board and staff, have committed your Association to leading a focused and effective campaign to preserve the trade-in credit.

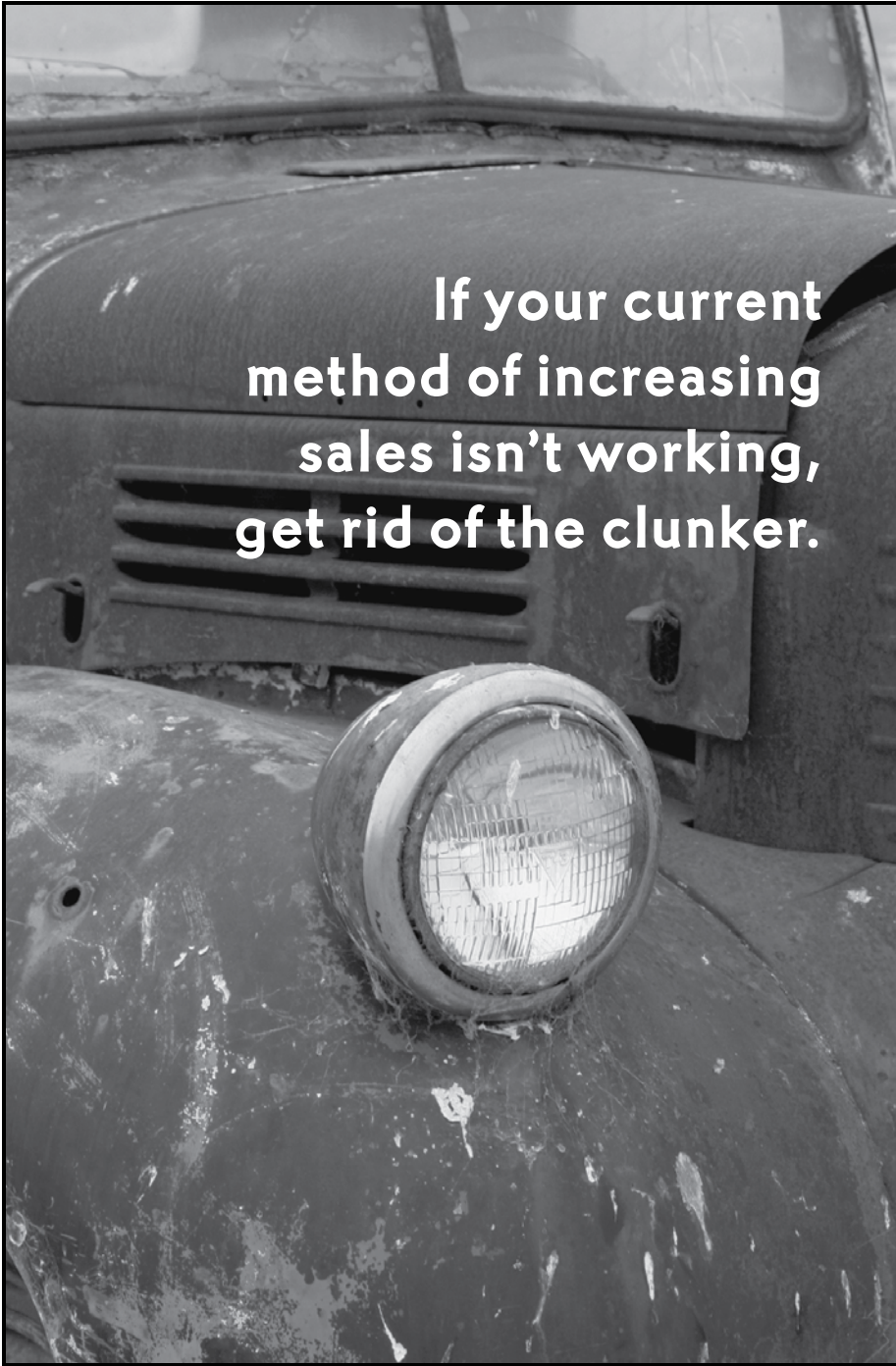
Mike Hutson, president of Ray Hutson Chevrolet Nissan in La Crosse, suggested the “Don’t Tax My Trade-in!” campaign theme WATDA and allies will use to help focus education of the public about the issue. The campaign will involve intensive lobbying by WATDA and a coalition of allies, as well as a multi-pronged, phased communication focused on consumers.

To date, dealers have been sent initial campaign information, a position paper, and template letters to legislators and candidates. Copies of a flier for informing customers about the trade-in credit issue will soon be shipped to dealerships statewide. Allied organizations are being recruited for the Don’t Tax My Trade-in! Coalition, and a

Web site for the campaign has now been established at [www.donttaxmytradein.org](http://www.donttaxmytradein.org).

Especially because of the looming November elections, now is a crucial time for dealers to explain to state lawmakers and candidates just how important this issue is to dealerships and the consumers they serve. Please contact your WATDA staff with questions about making that contact or insights about this issue. Visit [www.watda.org](http://www.watda.org) and [www.donttaxmytradein.org](http://www.donttaxmytradein.org) for more information.

Editors Note: Ernie Stetenfeld, Ernie Stetenfeld Associates, LLC, works a public relations consulting firm and is assisting WATDA in the issue of the trade-in credit legislation.



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