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Special Supplement to the Winchester Press Wed., April 18, 2001



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### PT Cruiser - more than meets the eye

by Lori Gillespie

WINCHESTER — The hottest car of 2001 is, indeed, the PT Cruiser. It's the car that turns your head every time it drives past. It's the car that was built by Chrysler to invoke nostalgia in lovers of cars past and present.

But not only that — this is a car that has the inside spaciousness of a minivan, the pep of a sports car and all of the conveniences of a family vehicle.

And I just had to drive it.

The PT Cruiser sitting on the lot at W.J.L. Boyd and Sons Chrysler in Winchester is a Limited Edition model four cylinders, 2.4 litres, four-speed automatic. The Limited Edition means it's fully loaded with all of the options you could possibly want, including air bags, air conditioning, child-seat anchorage system, chrome door handles, cruise control, remote keyless entry, leather and suede seats, leather interior, and so much more.

Ron Foley, who has been with the dealership for nearly nine years, did his best to sell me on this fine automobile.

We started with a tour of the car. Beginning at the rear of the vehicle, Foley opened the hatch and stood beneath it to demonstrate the height of the opened hatch. It cleared his head by more than a foot, making it possible to fill or empty the back of your vehicle without risking bumping your head.

Next, Foley showed me the rear shelf panel. It acts as a security screen for valuables in the back of the vehicle, much like any hatchback. But the panel can be positioned in a number of ways, depending on what you need it for. You can hook the mesh screen to the panel and keep your groceries from tumbling. Flipped upside down to reveal a plastic top, it will protect your floor from messy cargo. Or, with the hatch up and the panel propped up by a plastic stand, you can have your tailgate party.

The rear seats, Foley revealed, will fold flat or fold and tumble. Folded and tumbled against the backs of the front seats, you can even take those rear seats right out - they fold into a compact case with wheels that makes it easy for anyone to remove and carry.

As we approached the front of the car, Foley pointed out the 16-inch chrome aluminum wheels and the shiny chrome handles that are reminiscent of several of the earliest

He opened the front door and asked me to close it. Holding the chrome handle, I complied and felt the solid weight of the door as it closed. Foley pointed out other features: power seats in the front, plenty of foot room, grab handles for passengers, even a drawer under the passenger seat, using up all of the available space in this vehicle.

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Above. salesperson Ron Foley opens the door to the PT Cruiser to offer a test drive. At right, the spaciousness of the mid-size automobile must be witnessed. Press Photos Gillespie



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#### PT Cruiser

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Under the hood, even I was amazed to see how conveniently everything was laid out. There is no available space under the hood — every inch is occupied. Foley pointed out the 2.4litre standard engine and the 16-valve dual overhead cams.

The salesman opened the rear seat door and invited me to sit inside. Point well received — there was plenty of foot room in the back seat, even with an extremely tall driver with the seat pushed back. And the head room was considerable.

Foley held out the key. "It's an antitheft key, with a special computer chip inside, so you can't hot-wire the car," he explained. "A copy of the key won't work. The only way the car can be stolen is for the thief to have the actual key."

Grasping the key, I climbed into the front of the car, settling into the comfortable leather and suede seat. Taking a look around me, I noticed that the controls were easily accessible and the dashboard featured easy-to-read controls. The digital odometer read, "14"

"The people who built these cars in Mexico were trained for 14 months before starting on the line," Foley revealed, pointing out the exact workmanship in every detail of the car.

The most common misconception of the PT Cruiser is that it's the same as Chrysler's Neon. Foley was quick to dispel that notion. "When people hear that it's built on the same chassis or platform as the Neon, people think it's the same," he said. "It's not the same. The PT Cruiser is even shorter than the Neon.

As I turned the ignition, Foley commented, "This wouldn't be my personal first choice for a car if I was buying, but if I owned one of these I would be very happy with it."

And many are very happy with it, indeed. In North America there are not enough PT Cruisers to go around the waiting list is still considerable. In Winchester alone, Boyd's has sold eight of these cars.

Foley pointed to the dashboard, explaining that the simple design makes it handy for European sales, as the car can easily be changed to rightside driving.

And we're off.

The smoothness of the drive was what struck me first. The quiet engine was barely audible as we headed down St. Lawrence Street. And as we headed onto County Road 31 and I increased speed, I could feel the strong engine (150 horsepower) as the car seemed to want to keep going faster. But I restrained myself from that urge and enjoyed the solid feel to the vehicle.

"A lot of people like the car simply on look," Foley said as we drove. "Then, when they drive it, they're impressed by the way it drives and its space-versatility. Not only that, but when you drive down the highway and you see one of these cars, you notice it. It's not like other vehicles. Most vehicles look similar, but this one really stands out."

He added, "It's almost like going back in time, but with the technology of today. It's a combination of several vehicles from the past — it doesn't resemble just one old car. And I think that's what people like about it, that and it's uniqueness - they know

there's not a lot of them around."

It was easy to see, as Foley pointed out, that the PT Cruiser suits everyone. It has the nostalgia for the older crowd, the sportiness and fun for the younger crowd and the space and versatility for those with young families.

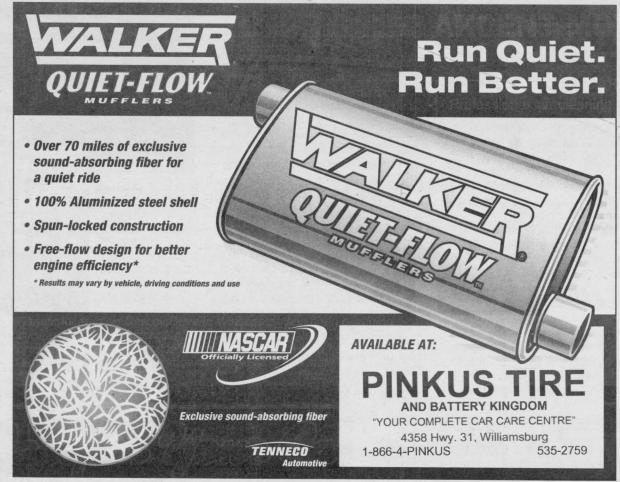
At 33 miles to the gallon (highway driving), the limited edition model of the PT Cruiser will go for about \$30,655.

The average base model with fivespeed and no features, will go for \$25,000, Foley said. A five-year, 100,000-km warranty is also impressive.

And so are the turned heads as you drive by in this mid-size car that offers nostalgia, sportiness, mini-van spaciousness and luxury-



Like going back in time, but with today's technology. Modern accents complement the nostalgic styling of the





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# 'Tis the season for rust, pair

by Colleen Cameron WINCHESTER — D's Collision Centre, located on Dawley Drive in Winchester, has been providing high quality collision repair and restoration services to this region for 13 years.

Owner and operator Dennis Carkner of Morewood moved his business down the street approximately eight years ago when he built this new state-of-the-art facility. Carkner was planning the structure and design of this new facility

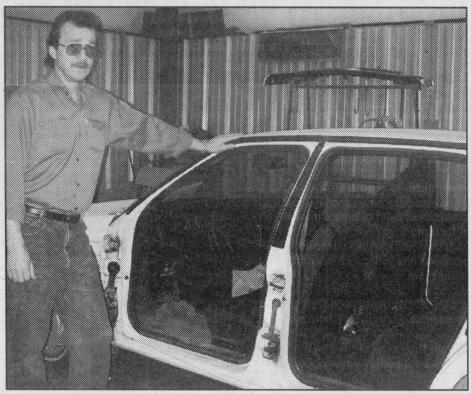
a full two years before it was erected. He visited Europe to scope out some of the latest features in the business so he could stay on top of the latest technology and design his shop with the most efficient equipment.

One of these such features is a laser measuring device, which is reportedly more accurate than other, more primitive methods of measurement. Carkner has also kept

his business equipped with the latest computer software, which is no easy task with the industry's constant upgrading.

"Technology has really changed the way we repair vehicles," says Carkner. Keeping his business technologically advanced helps Carkner reassure his clientele that their repairs will be handled the way they should be.

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D's Collision Center, located on Dawley Drive in Winchester, has been providing high quality collision repair and restoration in this region for 13 years. Dennis Carkner of Morewood can ensure his customers their repairs will be handled the way they should be with the help of his knowledgeable staff and state-of-the-art Photo - Cameron

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#### D's Collision

Compliance with increasingly prominent environment-friendly standards was also taken into consideration when designing D's Collision Centre. Their certifiably environmentally safe "Spraybake" paint booth provides a hard, baked, factory-type finish that gives off few emissions.

"I think my staff also really appreciate working in such a dustfree facility," says Carkner. The benefits to this cleaner

The benefits to this cleaner working environment have also been found to extend into the production of superior paint finishes.

D's Collision Centre provides a number of services on top of collision repair, but anything collision-related continues to take precedence. "Any damage resulting from a collision gets looked at right away here," says Carkner. "Collision repairs are still our priority."

His services extend into car clean-up and detailing, body work, rust touch-ups and paint jobs. Another service Carkner has been providing in recent years has been the photographing of vehicles for the purpose of insurance companies' assessments.

"This is a big change in the business," says Carkner. "It's quicker

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for the companies and the customer. It offers both parties a smooth transition where repairs can be handled properly with fewer hassles."

He continues, "I think we will be seeing more and more of this in the future."

Another change Carkner has been noticing over the years is the increase in older vehicles on the road. "People are keeping their cars longer," says Carkner. "This means they are willing to spend more money on upkeep and are taking better care of their vehicles in regards to rust and paint repair."

The demand for rust and paint repair is at its highest as spring arrives, when people are reminded that the elements have ceased their assault on their vehicles for another season and prepare to assess the damage.

"Business always picks up in the spring," says Carkner. People want to repair minor dents and defects, and rust-proofing and complete paint jobs are in demand.

D's Collision Centre is open Monday through Thursday from 8 am to 6 pm, Fridays until 5 pm and Saturdays from 9 am to 12 pm. Offhour appointments can be arranged. You can also visit them online at www.ds.collision.freeservers.com.



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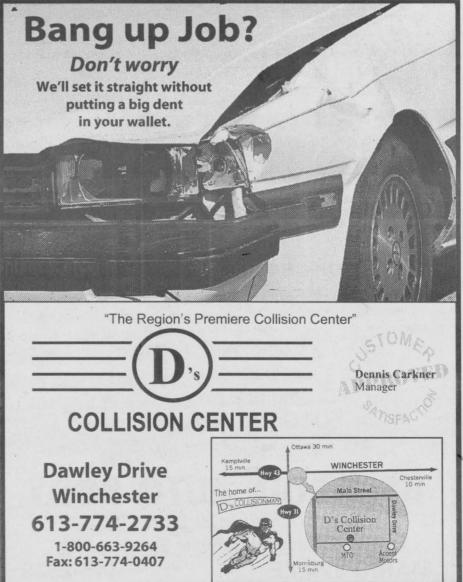
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## Family business changes with the times

WINCHESTER — Located on County Road 43 just west of 31, Winchester AutoPro has been part of our community for 20 years.

A family-run business, Winchester AutoPro first set up shop here on Oct. 1, 1980 under a different name. It wasn't until about 12-13 years ago that the Van Noppens' operation added the AutoPro franchise and it wasn't until seven years ago that they expanded into Morrisburg.

Bob Van Noppen, Winchester AutoPro's original owner and operator, is gradually phasing himself out of the mechanics of the business and deals more with customer service these days. He is currently in the process of teaching his two youngest sons the business, who are in turn preparing to

Van Noppen's eldest son, Bob, is a successful physician. Dave Van Noppen, the second eldest son, has been studying under his father at the Winchester branch of the business for about eight years. Both Dave and Bob expect he will play a major role in the future operation of the Winchester branch. Phil Van Noppen, the youngest son, works as a full-time technician at the business's Morrisburg branch.

The senior Van Noppen says the turn-over of a family business in an "interesting process"

Winchester AutoPro's services



The Van Noppen family takes pride in the fact that Winchester AutoPro has been family-owned and operated for the past 20 years. The first generation, Bob and Jannie, are gradually withdrawing from the business and handing it over to their sons. Dave Van Noppen (left) has been working with his father at the Winchester location for the past eight years. Press Photo - Zabel

include general repairs and automotive service, including brakes, mufflers, front-end suspension and front-wheel drive. Since first opening its doors in 1980, the operation has had to regularly update its technology and even expanded to include a detailing shop about 10 years ago.

"The changes in technology in the last 20-25 years or so have been mindboggling," says Van Noppen.

"Technicians today require a lot more training and the shops need to be well

He has seen the automotive industry become a lot more complicated over

the years, and has watched the dynamics of automotive servicing and repairing gravitate to another level.

Dave Van Noppen, a certified technician for about 11 years, says, "If you don't stay on top of this industry, you can get left behind pretty quick. Dave, who has always harbored a passion for mechanics, took a yearlong automotive course at Algonquin College in Ottawa after high school.

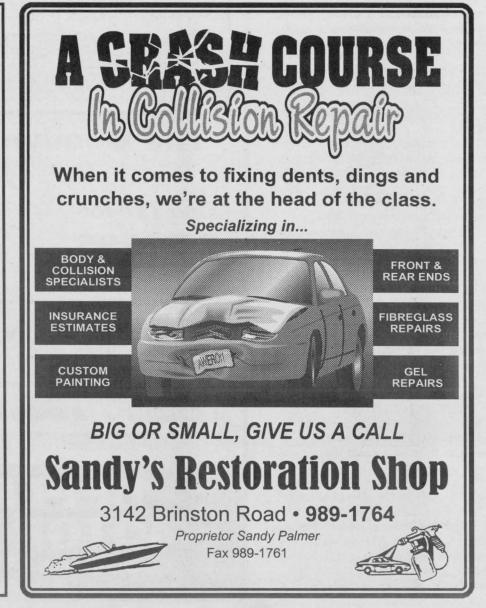
"Cars were the only thing that interested me," he says. "I spent week nights and weekends tinkering around on vehicles." After graduation, Dave he it would be a good idea to pursue work outside of his father's business, and landed a job at an Acura dealership in Ottawa. Dave says working outside the family business was a good learning experience.

After three years of working as a technician at the Acura dealership, a technician position became available at Winchester AutoPro. Dave returned to the area and filled the position. Eight years later he continues to work as a technician here, but has started to also have a hand in the management end of things.

Dave feels that a valuable end of his family's business is their willingness to take on apprentices and co-operative education students. "There's a real shortage of good technicians out there today," he says. "It takes a different mind-set to be a technician today.'

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### Business puts 'akcent' on customer service

by Colleen Cameron
WINCHESTER — Akcent
Motor Sales, located on Dawley
Drive in Winchester, has
recently expanded its line of
services to better serve its
clientele. Owner Derek Taylor
and his son Jansen Taylor have
broadened their business's
horizons to include tire sales and
offer oil and lube services.

"We've been selling tires for the last six months or so," says Jansen Taylor, "but we celebrated the official grand opening of Winchester Tire Sales and our additional services very recently."

Unofficially, they've been at the tire sales business for half a year or so, but when the other services were added recently, the Taylors thought they may as well advertise both services as officially open for business.

"Tire sales have been busy for some time now," says Taylor. "But after we officially advertised all of our new features, things have really been picking up."

Akcent Motor Sales will also continue to offer car cleaning services and extensive carcleaning packages from a basic wash to a complete car-care package including detailing of the interior, vacuuming, cleaning windows inside and out, and a shampoo, buff, glaze and wax.

Akcent keeps two full-time staff members and five part-timers for most of the year, but generally brings in another full-timer when business picks up in the spring and summer months.

"This is the time of year

when we start to get really busy," says Taylor.

Through it all, however, Akcent Motor Sales has stayed true to its primary focus of selling used vehicles, as it has for eight years now. The Taylors attempt to keep about 20 used vehicles on the lot at any given time, but can also be counted on to locate specific automobiles for customers. Akcent carries all makes and models of vehicles in a variety of price ranges.

"Our main business may be selling quality used vehicles," says Taylor, "but our emphasis is on total car care."

With their recent expansions, Derek Taylor feels they can now build on their past successes and truly cater to their customers' needs in overall vehicle maintenance.



Akcent Motor Sales Inc. has added new services to better serve their clients. In addition to their continuing emphasis on selling quality used automobiles, the friendly staff at Akcent is now equipped to sell tires and provide express lube services. Left, employee Tim Gilmer and Jansen Taylor, son of owner Derek Taylor, have seen a real pick-up in business since the recent public announcement of their added services.

#### Van Noppens

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He believes that the youth of today who aspire to be technicians need to understand that this isn't just a job any more — it's a career. "The days of your stereotypical grease-monkey are gone," Dave says. "Every three years we have to learn a new operating system. We are moving as quickly as the computer industry."

Besides attempting to attract young people into this very viable trade, the Van Noppens are also working on a new program intended to standardize the way auto repair shops do business. "It's like a code of ethics," explains Dave.

This program has been gaining momentum in the automotive industry, as it is thought to be a solution to the irregularities in the general cost and service of automotive service. All the people who sign up will have to be accredited on customer relations, presentation, service and more.

"A lot of customers are already on the defensive when they need to have their vehicles repaired," says Dave, "and that makes it hard for us to deal with the customer's repair needs."

While dealing with many of the same customers for a number of years has built up a trusting clientele for Winchester AutoPro, many new businesses and customers have trouble developing that same trust in the beginning.

"This is a good program," says Dave. "It will follow a specific protocol and allow automotive services to build honest relationships with customers."

And that is exactly what Winchester and Morrisburg AutoPro have been about since the start, providing good quality automotive service to the area. Both AutoPro shops have seen a steady growth with time and the region's increasing population, and that has to stand for something.



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