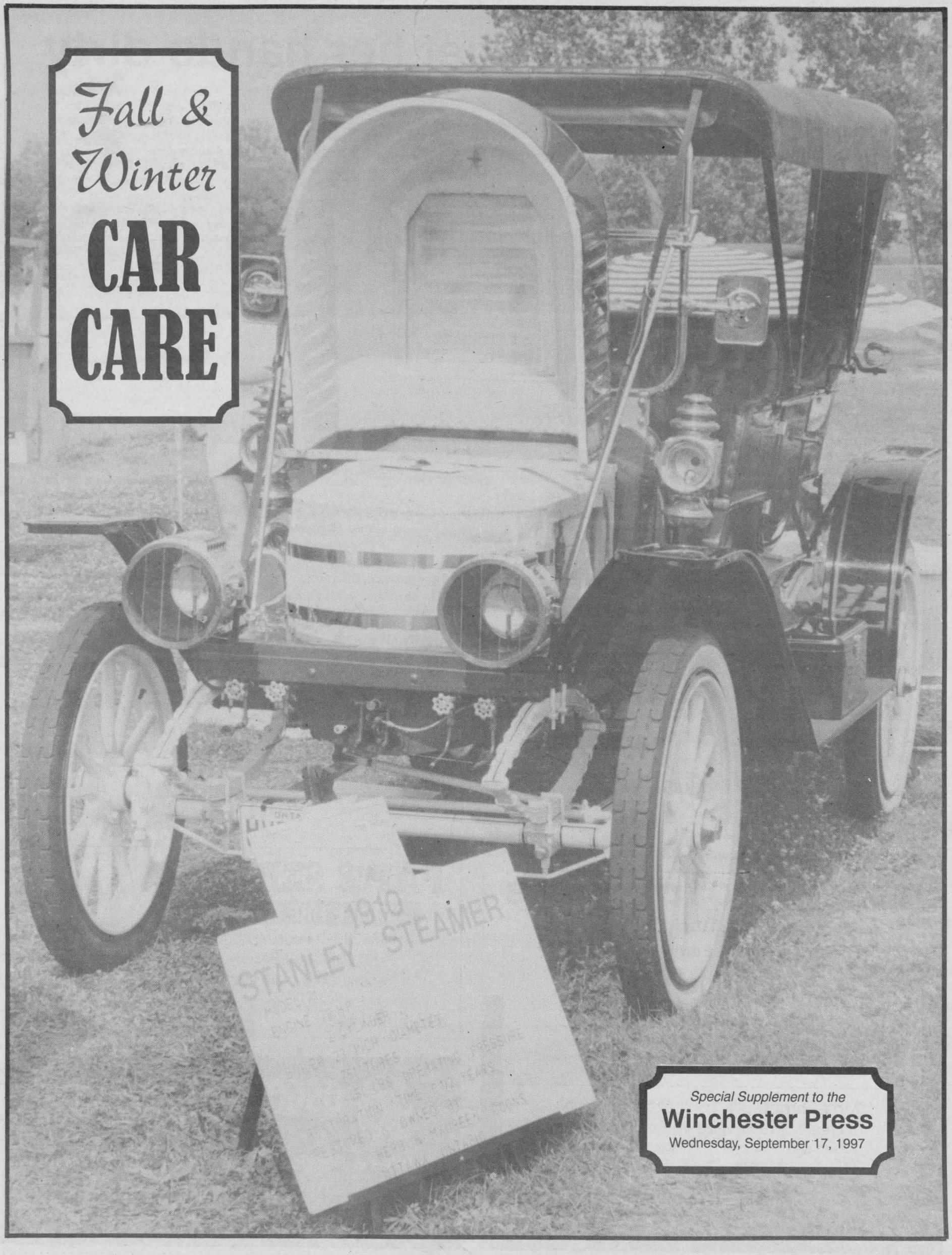
Fall & Winter CAR CARE



Special Supplement to the
Winchester Press
Wednesday, September 17, 1997

Wolfe not afraid to get her hands dirty

by Lori Culliton
Press staff

WINCHESTER — "I always figured I would be a mechanic, from the time I was eight or nine years old. I would always help my dad work on cars when I was a kid. He worked in the auto field, too. When I was a kid I was happier working on cars than playing."

Those words could have been spoken by any mechanic. But when they come from Cindy Wolfe, service manager at Boyd Chrysler Jeep Eagle, they take on a slightly different meaning.

As society turns away from gender-specific occupations, people still do a double-take when they meet a male nurse, or a female mechanic, for example. Wolfe knows. "When a customer comes in, they're like, 'whoa, wait a second, a woman mechanic?'" she smiles.

But Wolfe is accustomed to it. She recently became the service manager at Boyd's after having been the service advisor at the former Drewery Pontiac dealership.

"I was told that I would end up doing this (service manager), because of the people aspect of the job," she says.

Wolfe obtained her mechanic's licence this summer, after having received her training in the Mechanic Apprenticeship Program at St. Lawrence College in Cornwall, and completing an apprenticeship in area garages.

Despite the initial shock customers show when they meet Wolfe in the garage, they generally get over it very quickly, as they realize that she knows what she's talking about, Wolfe says.

"Even when I was apprenticing, I only came across a few people who'd say 'no way' to having a woman work on their car," she says. "And the guys here have been great. I've seen people come in and go right to the guys and ask them a question, and the guys will tell them to talk to me."



Inspection time

Boyd Chrysler Jeep Eagle Service Manager Cindy Wolfe confers with Bill Walsh, mechanic. *Press Photo — Culliton*

Indeed, the other mechanics at Boyd's respect Wolfe, and have had no qualms about working with a woman. Says mechanic Dave VanBruinessen, "It's no different than working for a man. She's a licensed mechanic, and she understands how to relate to customers.

"I've worked with a few ladies before, and it's nothing new. There were some women in my automotive class, too. It's just one of the things the world is coming to." He adds with a grin, "Women are just as smart as men, they can do anything they want to. They just can't lift as much."

"The challenge is that I have to work twice as hard to get people to understand that I know what I'm doing," Wolfe says. "Being a woman, people wonder how I did it, how I got to where I am today."

But she was headed in this direction from the beginning. From when she was very young, she worked on cars with her father, and she was always interested in machinery, taking apart appliances and putting them back together. "It's nice to know what makes something tick," she says, adding "I'd rather be fixing a vacuum than using it."

The job of a service manager is quite widespread. It includes, in no particular order, shop scheduling, seeing to customers' needs, warranty administration, explaining things to customers, and listening to customers, and interpreting the problem after listening to the customer's description of the problem. The service manager also draws up estimates and sticks to them, makes sure a vehicle is ready to go when it is supposed to be, and knows how long a job will take and schedules the job accurately. The service manager makes sure that the customer is satisfied.

"My favorite part of the job is the satisfaction I feel when a vehicle goes out the door and I know that it is running right," Wolfe says. "I love to please people. The customer comes first."

Another advantage to Wolfe's position is that female customers are comfortable talking to her. "They're a lot more comfortable, and they're not afraid to describe a funny noise that their car is making. Describing noises is important, but a lot of people don't want to imitate the noise, because they might sound stupid."

The age-old fear that women seem to have about the mechanical world, Wolfe says, can easily be overcome. "It's the same with everything in the world — if you put your mind to it, you can do it. If you want to do something badly enough, you can learn," she states. "From changing a tire to changing your oil, the more you learn how to do, the better it is for everyone, especially because you can help your mechanic more by pin-pointing the problem."

She adds, "Women have always been afraid of this sort of thing. It's a male-dominated area. But I can do it, so anyone could do it. Once you set your mind to doing it, you can do it."

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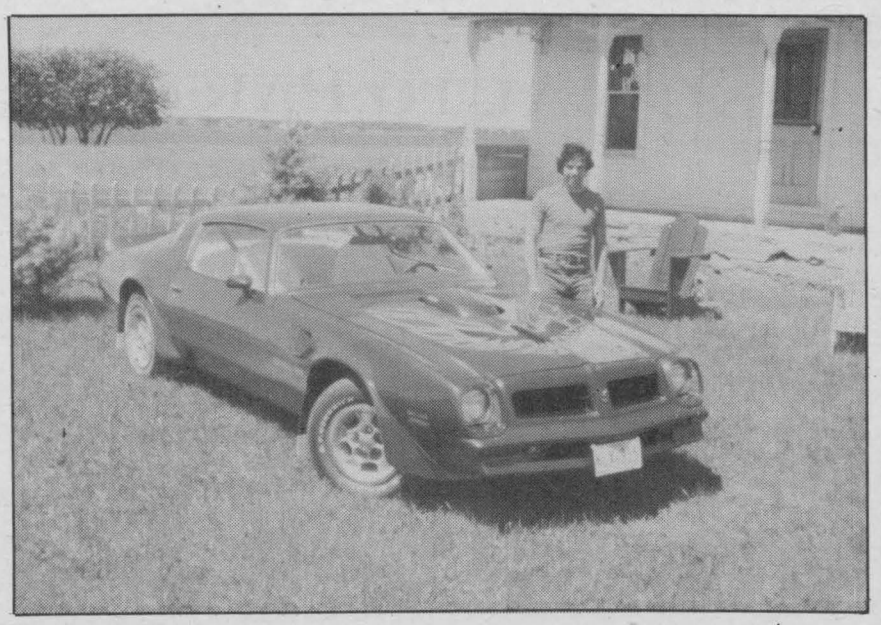
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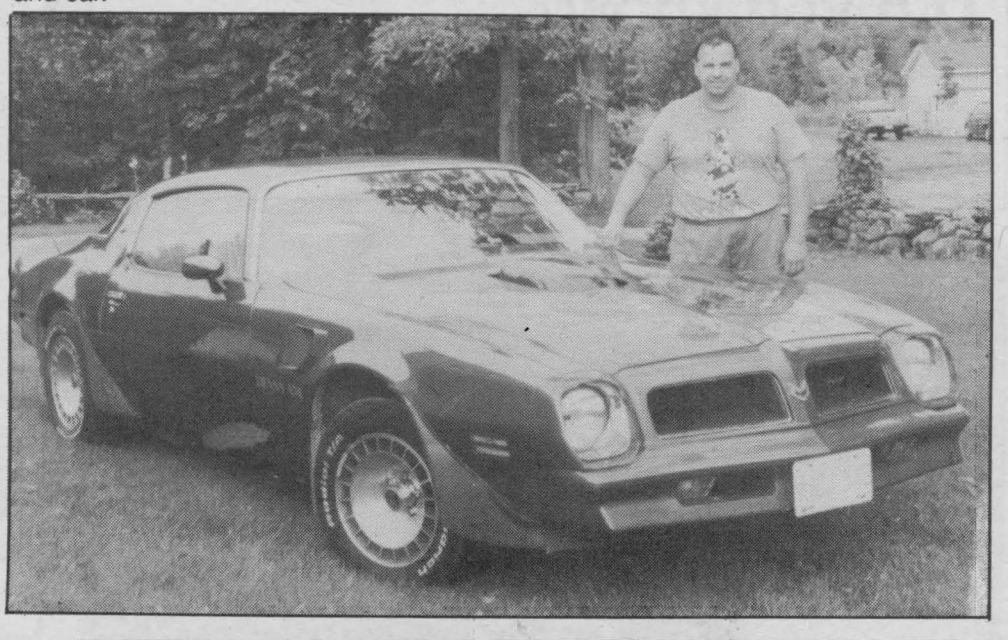
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Photo, left, was taken in 1976 shortly after Steve Johnston bought his '76 Trans Am, the first time. The photo below shows the recently reunited owner and car.



First love restored

by Sandra Dillich
Press staff

WINCHESTER — After selling the first car he ever owned 20 years ago, Steve Johnston is sitting pretty behind the wheel of his 'new' 1976 firethorn red Trans Am.

"I saw the lower model, a '75 Formula, and I just liked it," said Johnston about the first time he bought the Trans Am.

In 1976, after working for a year at Ault Foods and saving all of his pennies, Johnston walked into Angus Pontiac, handed over $5,600 and special ordered the car of his 18-year-old dreams and waited.

"I can remember waiting for it to come in. I'd be looking (for my car) every time a truck came into town," he said.

Three months later Johnston was the envy of his friends.

"Not many people my age owned a car like that."

However, a year later Johnston traded in the Trans Am for a customized van which was then traded in for another Trans Am. Between 1976 and 1980 Johnson owned a total of five different Trans Ams, but none of them compared to his first.

"After 1976 they changed the headlights to square (from round) as well as other little things," he said.

A couple of years ago while he and his family were returning from a visit to Upper Canada Village, Johnston noticed a car that looked exactly like his 1976 firethorn red Trans Am in Riverside Heights. And it was for sale.

"I checked the serial number through the Ministry of Transportation to make sure it was the original one I owned. I made a deal but it fell through," he added. "You don't come across your first car in one piece very often, especially a sports car."

This summer Johnston saw the car again, for sale again, this time parked at Morgan's (C.W.M. Motor Sales) on Hwy. 31. However, shortly thereafter, the car disappeared. Johnston phoned a relative of the person he was going to buy the car from a few years back and tracked it down.

"He said it was going into the Auto Trader but it was sold before the book came out (because I bought it)."

Throughout the 21 years, little had been done to the vehicle. There are only 59,000 miles on it and the car still has its original engine.

"The motor was a Detroit-built motor and that was the last year (1976) they used it," he said.

"I always regretted getting rid of it because they changed the performance of the car a lot after that... I plan on keeping this car forever unless somebody offers me big money. There are four other cars I can look for."

Did you know?

• A survey of Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)-certified master auto technicians revealed motorists could extend the life of their vehicles by up to 50 per cent through regular, routine maintenance.

• Everyone can get better gas mileage by making sure their tires are properly inflated, by observing speed limits, and avoiding sudden accelerations and excessive idling.

SEE AND BE SEEN

Changing weather conditions often affect visibility and perception. Keep your windows clear and free from snow and dirt. Road spray may reduce your headlight and taillight efficiency so clean them often. In fog or a snowfall use low beams to reduce the glare and reflection. Do not take chances in poor weather conditions: plan to stay put or look for somewhere to pull off the road completely until the weather improves.

THE GREATER THE DISTANCE

A greater following distance is needed to bring a vehicle to a halt in wet, icy or snowy conditions. Leave plenty of room between you and other drivers and reduce speed to decrease stopping distance. Winter driving requires different braking techniques.

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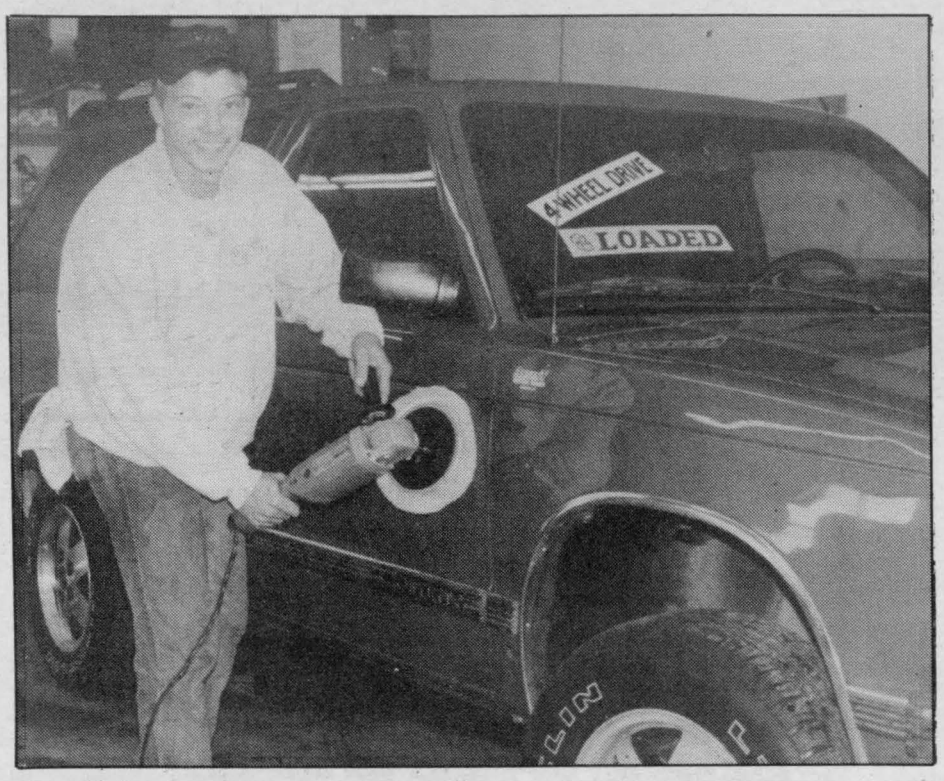
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Did you know?

• Millions of car owner's manuals are printed each year. Most of them remain unread.
•Items vehicle owners most often neglect are oil changes, engine coolant/antifreeze and tire pressure.
• A misfiring spark plug can reduce fuel efficiency by up to 30 per cent.



Buff it up

Professional car cleaning is a small price to pay to maintain the investment you have in your vehicle, says Derek Taylor of Akcent Motor Sales in Winchester. Kevin Scrivener buffed the finish on a sports utility vehicle.

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All quiet on the squeaking front

Making brakes "squealless" is a seemingly impossible task. After all, brake squeal is the sound created by friction, namely that of your car's brake pad against the brake rotor. And, if noise is produced when you rub your hands together, imagine how hard it is to keep metallic and semi-metallic parts quiet when they rub together.

However, there are methods and materials that do succeed in keeping the noise down, if not eliminating it altogether. Noise is by far the most common brake complaint heard by your service technician, experts say, but it also has the greatest possible solutions.

Among the causes and solutions are:

• Outboard pads loose in caliper. Bend the pad ears to tighten.

• Pad-wear indicators contacting rotor. Install new pads in axle sets only.

• Glazed pads. Resurface or replace pads in axle sets only.

Ask your service technician to install friction material that has gone through the post-curing process to minimize the potential for glaze. Post-curing strengthens the friction material and increases its performance in high-heat, high-stress applications. This is particularly important during the initial break-in period.

• Improper rotor finish. Your service technician will make sure the installed rotor has a smooth, flat, non-directional finish to help keep vibrations (noise) down to a minimum. A proper rotor finish also allows better braking effectiveness.

• Insulator shim not in place between piston and pad plate. Disc-brake shims are very effective in dampening pad vibrations; constrained layer shims are even more effective than non-constrained, as they absorb vibrations that cause noise, rather than just dampen vibrations. Owners of light trucks, minivans and sport utility vehicles might consider installing a new line of disc pads specifically designed to eliminate noise without the addition of shims.

• Worn or weak anti-rattle springs. Install new anti-rattle parts.

• Replace brake hardware. No matter how small or indiscrete that rubber bushing or metal clip is, it is designed to absorb energy and prevent vibration. Absorbing energy or movement in the caliper helps alleviate many noise problems, so replacing brake hardware during service is an excellent way to help prevent noise.

• Use EMP to absorb vibration. Your service technician may add an elasto multipolymer compound that helps to absorb noise-causing vibrations between the surface of the disc-pad plate and the caliper.

• Use silicone lubricant. This grease helps to stop brake noise by lubricating components and preventing corrosion, according to Smith, keeping the components moving freely.

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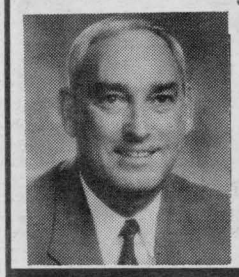
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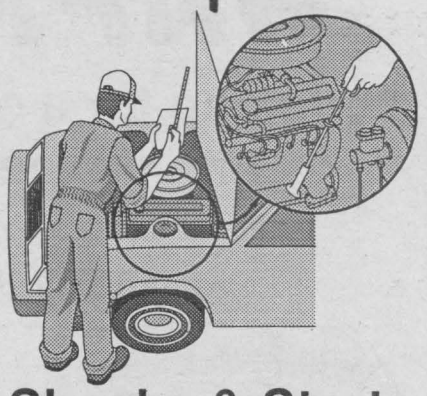
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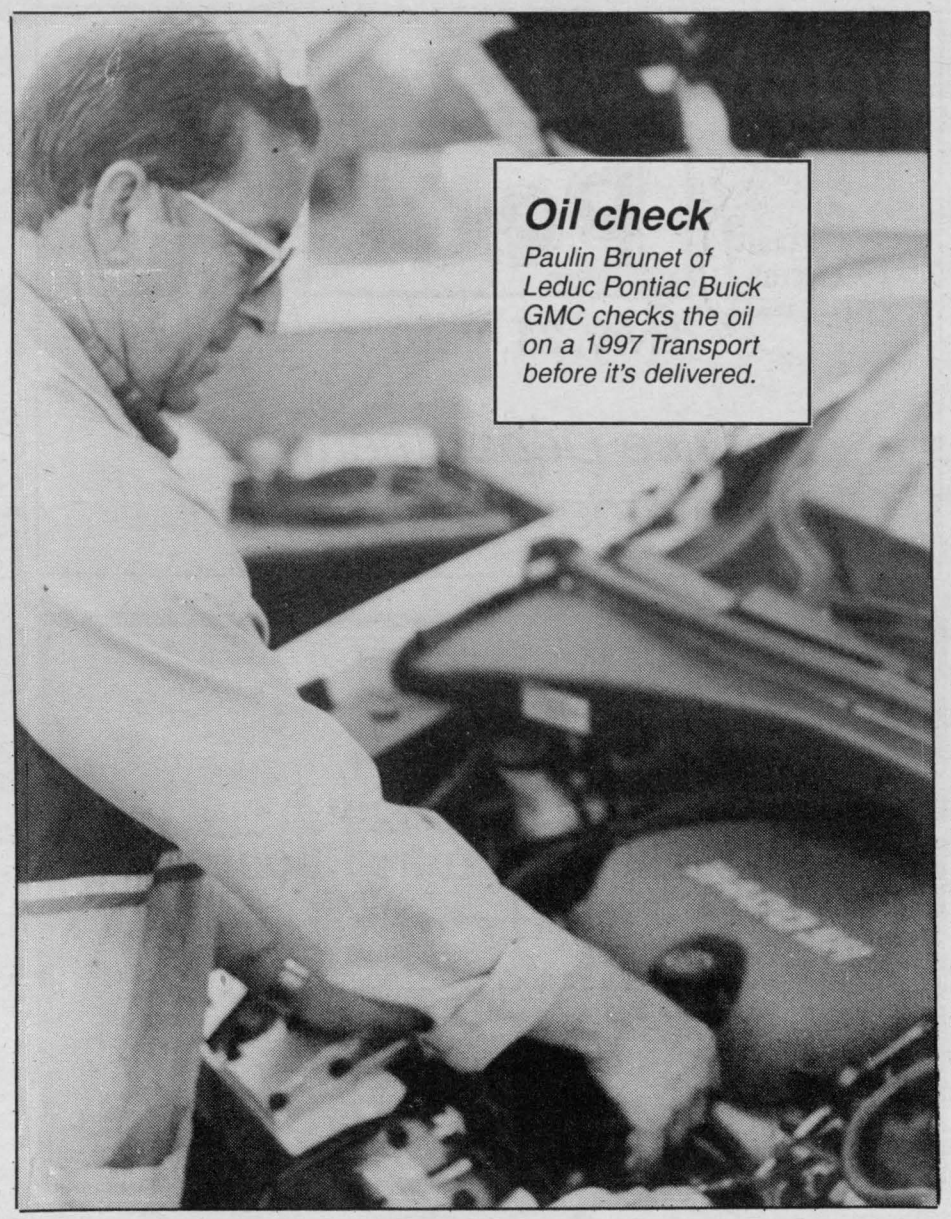
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Oil check

Paulin Brunet of Leduc Pontiac Buick GMC checks the oil on a 1997 Transport before it's delivered.

Shock absorber routine maintenance saves money, improves vehicle safety

Shock absorbers are the glue that helps hold your vehicle's tires to the road, and routine maintenance of your ride-control system is essential to achieving proper tire wear, as well as ensuring overall vehicle safety.

The relationship of shocks and struts to the overall ride of a vehicle is important. Shocks and struts are safety components that maintain the vertical loads placed upon the tires. When a ride-control component does not function properly, the necessary contact between the tire and the road is diminished significantly. This means your vehicle could have premature tire wear, noise and suspension vibration, and increased wear on other components.

If a vehicle's tires are not in proper contact with the road, handling and braking are impacted, which can affect safety. Experts recommend a thorough inspection of a vehicle's ride shocks and struts every 15,000 kilometres to assure they are in proper working order.

Shocks and struts are not easily seen because of their position on a vehicle, and because they are sealed parts, visual detection of improper wear and tear by the average consumer is difficult. Clearly, if oil is leaking from the component, this is a signal of trouble. Having a certified mechanic conduct a complete inspection is the best way to assure everything is working as it should.

Typically, qualified mechanics will conduct some or all of the following tests when inspecting ride-control components:

• Ride test — Professional technicians can tell a lot simply by driving a vehicle. Often, consumers become accustomed to the ride of their vehicle and are not aware that something is wrong. The technician will drive the vehicle to determine any unwanted rolling, swaying or bouncing of the vehicle. When it comes to vehicle maintenance, there is nothing better than the second opinion of a professional mechanic.

• In-depth visual inspection — By lifting the vehicle up on a hoist, the technician will be able to visually inspect the condition of the shock or strut, as well as examine the wear pattern of your tires, to determine if the vehicle is rolling properly.

Depending on the driving habits of a person, as well as the types of roads he or she drives on, wear and tear of ride control will differ. Consumers need to understand that, as a mechanical part, a shock or strut strokes hundreds of times for every mile of rough road traveled. This is one reason why these components eventually will wear out.

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An automotive winter-preparedness checklist

Every fall, a common sight was dad in the driveway, getting the family car ready for winter. He'd be tuning the engine, putting antifreeze in the cooling system and putting on a set of snow tires.

This fall, however, home mechanics with newer cars and trucks will find that several of the tasks they routinely might have done in the past have to be handled in a brand-new way.

Whether you're a home mechanic or prefer to take your car to a dealership for service, there are a number of things you'll want to do so your car or truck is ready for the cold weather.

Winter puts an extra strain on many automotive systems. For the safety of themselves and their families, motorists should prepare their car for the rigors of cold weather.

To be sure you're ready for winter, take a look at this winter-preparedness checklist.

First on the list is tires. For those with all-season tires, switching to snow tires may be a thing of the past. However, most experts agree that snow tires will outperform even all-season tires in most winter conditions.

If you'll be putting on snow tires, remember that, while in the past they might have gone on the rear of a vehicle, it's more likely today that they will be fitted to the front of the car.

In the past, most cars sold in America had the rear wheels driven. However, now, most passenger cars are front-wheel-drive, so you'll need to put those snow tires in the front, even if it looks a little strange. Of course, most trucks are still rear-wheel-drive.

If you own a four-wheel-drive vehicle, it is best to use snow tires on all four wheels. If you have a vehicle with all-wheel drive, but need to economize with just two snow tires, it is best to put them on the front. This will give you better steering control.

If you need to engage four-wheel drive, you may want to keep the snow tires on the driven wheels, which normally will be in the rear. If you're unsure, check with the shop where you purchased the snow tires.

Second on the list is a tuneup. Tuneups were always a normal part of getting a car ready for winter, but today's high-tech autos have changed the procedure. In the past, many people did their own tuneups.

However, most cars sold in the last 10 years, and all cars sold today, utilize engine-management systems, which require very sophisticated computerized equipment.

Should any problems be detected, the technician can quickly diagnose the concern and find any parts that may need replacement. It's a far cry from dad checking the results of his tuneup just by listening to the sound of the engine. Quick, accurate detection is a necessity with today's high-tech automobiles.

All manufacturers today have similar systems for checking computer-controlled engines. You should check with your dealer to be sure they're using such equipment.

While you're at the dealership, be sure to have the technician check some other safety-related items as well. Brakes, exhaust system and suspension all should be examined to assure those are in good operating condition.

Also, have the technician check to be sure the oil is the proper weight for winter temperatures. If you're unsure what type of oil is in your engine now, it might be best to change the oil to avoid winter problems.

Engine coolant should be replaced every two years. It contains an additive that helps lubricate the water pump, and since the additive diminishes over time, it requires replenishment for best results.

While you can replace the coolant at home, it's a tedious job and one most folks leave to their service technician these days. It's also important to recycle the coolant for environmental reasons, and shops are set up to do this. Again, if you're not sure when the last time the coolant was replaced, have the technician check to see if it's time.

There are a couple of tasks on the checklist that you can do at home easily, and doing it yourself will save you at least a little money.

First, replace your windshield wiper blades. After a season in the summer sun, you'll want fresh rubber to deal with the colder temperatures, rain and snow.

Normally, you'll only need to replace the blades, not the entire assembly. Replacement instructions generally come on the box. Old blades usually come off, and new ones go on, using a simple clip assembly on the wiper arm. Replacement is literally a snap!

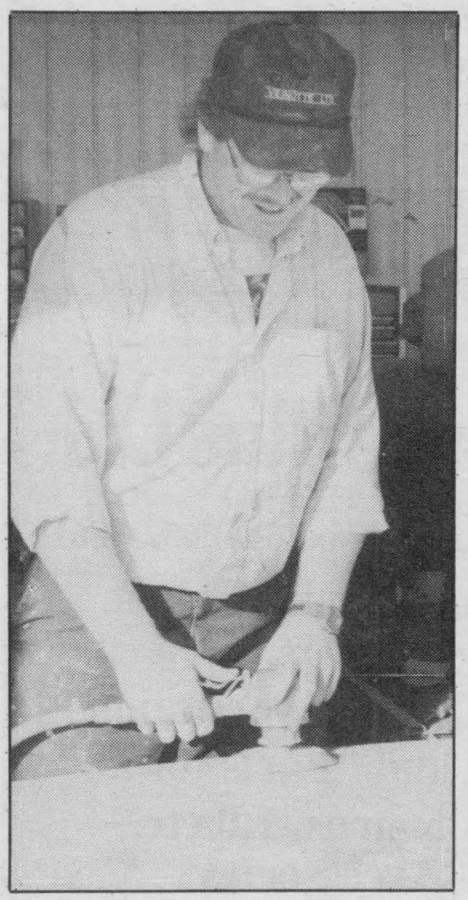
You'll also want to be sure you have a full container of windshield washer fluid with an antifreeze additive. There's nothing worse than being caught in foul winter weather and not being able to wash a dirty windshield while on the road.

You can save a little money by buying the cleaner in concentrated form and mixing your own fluid in a gallon plastic bottle. Most people prefer the ease of buying the pre-mixed variety. It's a good idea to carry the unused fluid in the trunk of the car for emergency fill-ups on the road.

Winter is coming, and by following these tips, you will be ready for the road.

A winter-preparedness checklist for your car or truck

- Snow tires or all-season tires
- Engine tuneup
- Brake, suspension, exhaust system checkup
- Proper weight engine oil
- Engine coolant
- New windshield wiper blades
- Windshield washer reservoir fill-up



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Dave Tremblay of Sandy's Restoration sands the hood of a car in preparation for a paint job.

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Under-used engines?

Fuel stabilizer helps maintain the balance

Winter can devise many problems for dormant engines. After 30 days of going unused, fuel in gas tanks can begin to deteriorate, which can lead to nagging operational and performance problems for the engines.

For example, some car owners have a car that seldom gets driven during the winter months. These cars run the possible risk of developing "stale" gas, and when called upon, their engines may have difficulty starting.

Whether it's very limited use of your car or keeping your marine engine, lawn mower, chain saw or other gas-driven engines in extended storage, there are ways to guard against fuel problems associated with a lack of use during the winter.

The engine's fuel system is often neglected from November through March, and a seldom-used engine can develop gum and varnish in the fuel system. Car care experts recommend the regular use of fuel stabilizer in unused gasoline engines to help keep the fuel intake system in all two- and four-cylinder engines clean and running smoothly later.

A fuel additive helps keep stored gasoline fresh during long periods of engine inactivity. It also will help rid fuel injectors or carburetors of any harmful dirt, gum and varnish deposits in the fuel system that may adversely affect a car's performance.

Many people mistakenly think tough start-ups from stale gas in unused cars are an unavoidable part of winter storage. By keeping the gas 'stabilized,' a driver can usually remove the worry and possible hassle associated with getting the engine started.

A fuel stabilizer is easy to use. Simply pouring the bottle into gas tanks will help prevent any rough starting and idling, irregular hesitation, or stalling caused by residues from stale gas.

Engines can have trouble starting or suffer from poor fuel efficiency and decreased power from deposits.

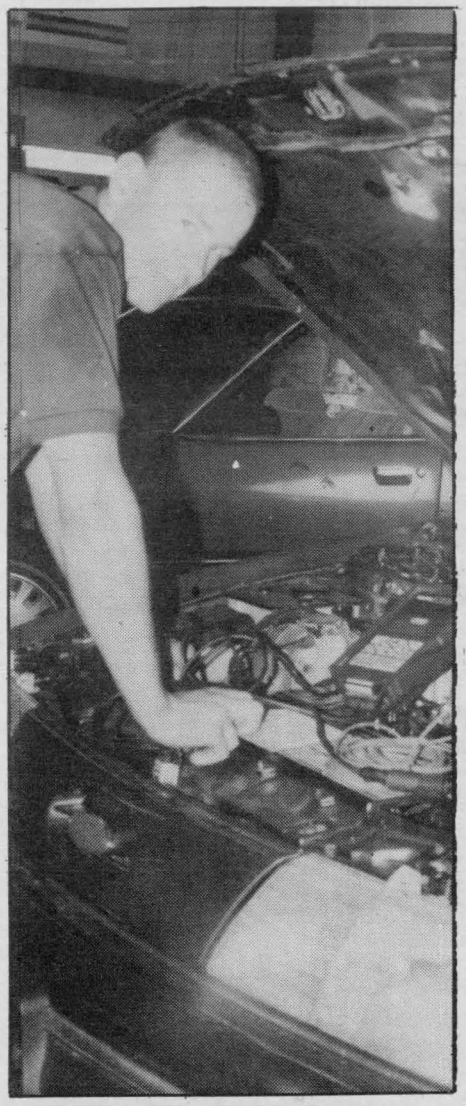
By adding fuel Stabilizer to a seldom-used car's gas tank or to the gas tanks of stored equipment before the winter, engine owners can help ensure productive, fuel-efficient performance when the time comes to use them again.

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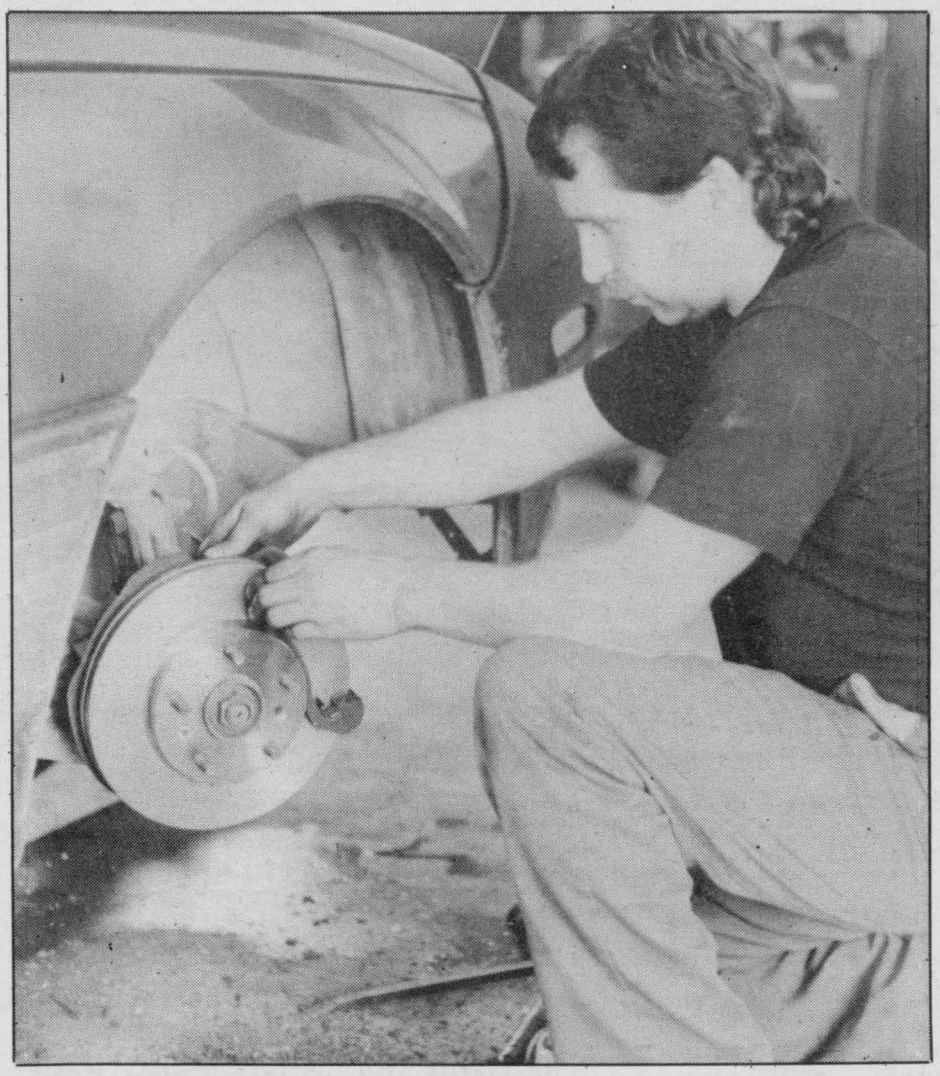
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Brake time

Gary McInnis of Gary's Automotive in Morrisburg works on the brakes during a fall tune-up inspection of a customer's vehicle.

Protect your car's exterior

The fall and winter weather can wreak havoc on your vehicle's exterior — unless you take steps now to protect your car, truck or van from the rain, snow, sleet and salt that you'll be driving through for the next several months. These elements will damage your vehicle if it's not washed frequently.

You can avoid these damaging effects by visiting a professional car wash often, especially immediately after it rains or snows.

According to the International Carwash Association (ICA), having your car washed at a professional car wash is much safer than washing it in your driveway, and a professional car wash can help you protect your vehicle from the harsh elements of fall and winter weather.

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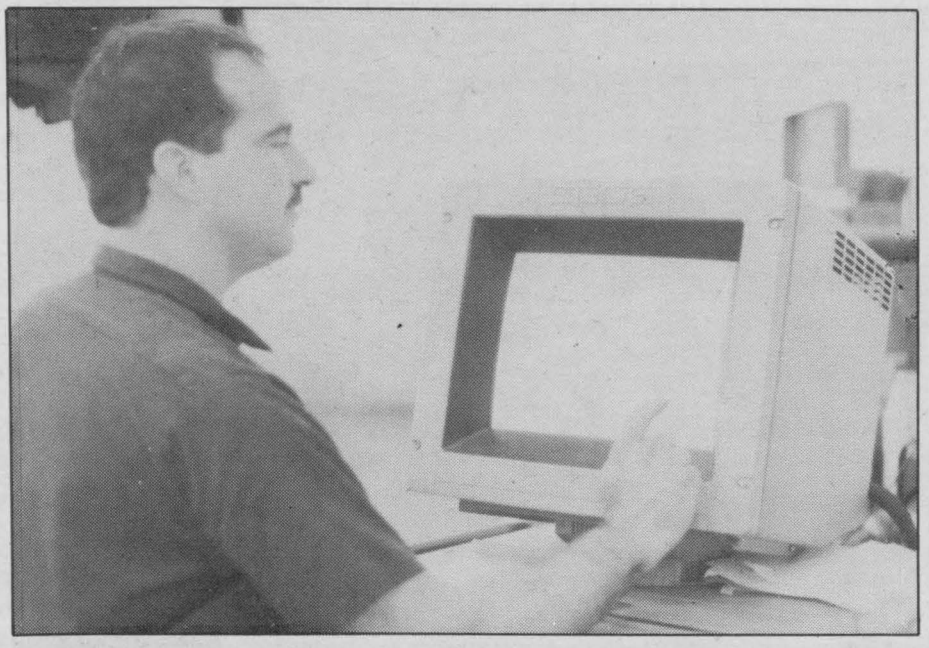
Proof is in the testing

Even on a blustery winter morning with subzero wind chill, people need to take their children to school, go to work and run errands. While they can brace themselves against the frigid air, their vehicle can't. No matter how hard people try, on a morning like this, their car often won't start.

Freezing temperatures and winter weather are hard on almost everything, especially engines and drivetrains. Cold parts contract and tighten, oils and fluids thicken, seals stiffen — it's a time when metal works against metal while waiting even longer for full lubricant flow. This is when vehicles can use extra help.

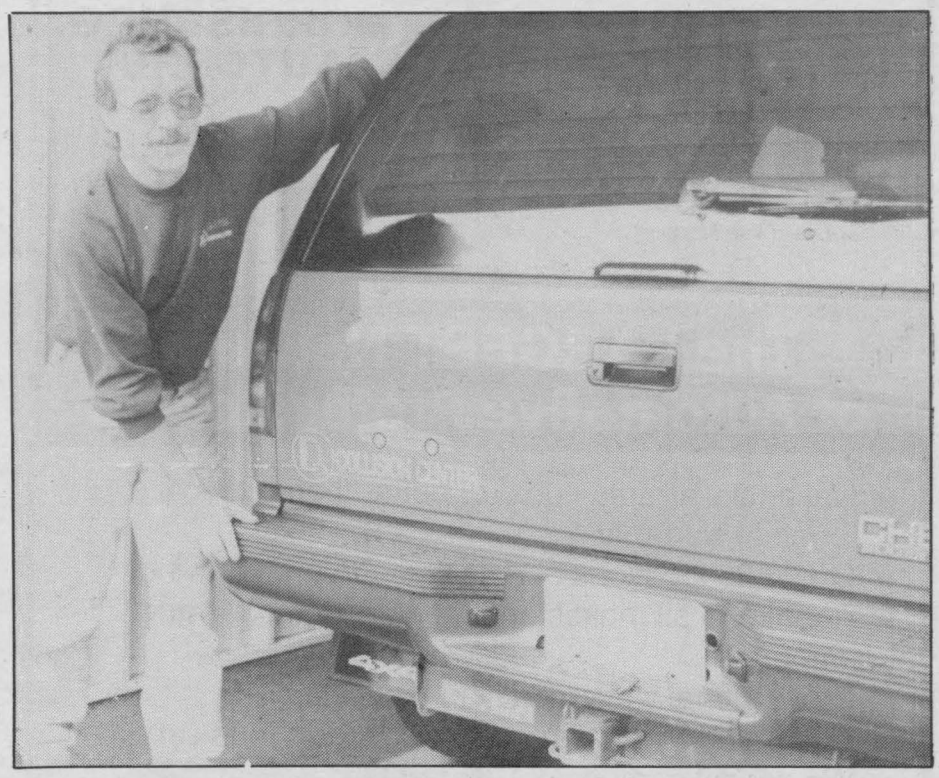
How can people be sure of what product to use? There are so many engine treatments and fuel additives on the market, and adding an untested chemical mixture to their car's motor oil can increase exhaust emissions or cause long-term engine damage. Because so many additive products claim to be safe in motor oil, consumers need to look for products that actually prove it. Look for a company that tests its products extensively under realistic conditions to ensure that they will enhance a vehicle's performance.

What does this mean to a vehicle? It means that a subzero engine treated with a suitable engine treatment is not only protected against the wear that comes with cold start-ups, but also can crank more easily when the key is turned to start it. Easier cold-weather cranking can mean a longer winter battery life. All of this means peace of mind to people as they go out to start the car on a cold winter morning.



Testing, testing

Pierre LeBlanc of Embrun Ford performs an Electronic Engine Control test on a vehicle.



Smooth finish

Dennis Carkner of D's Collision operates a complete collision service as well as a 24-hour towing service. Loaners and car rentals are also available. D's Collision is located in Wincrest Business Park on Dawley Drive in the west end of the village.



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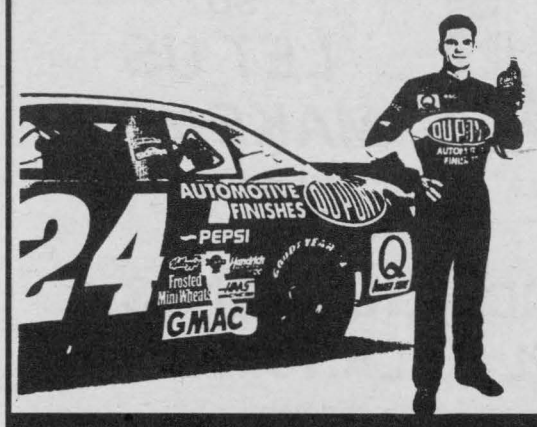
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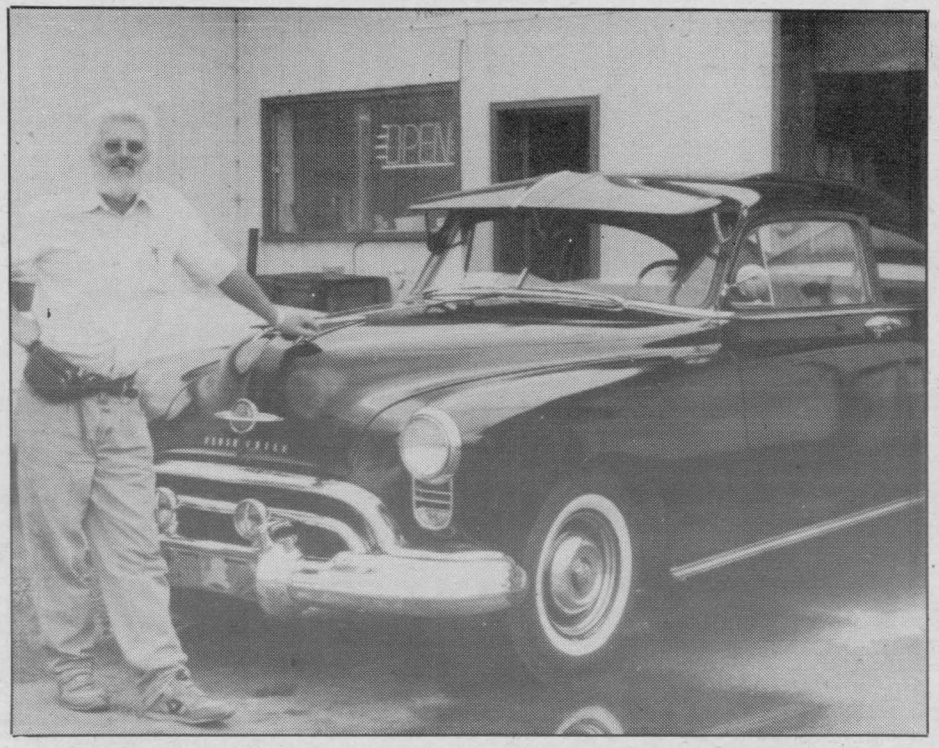
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Sleek lines

Wayne Morgan of C.W.M. Motor Sales is shown, with a 1950 Oldsmobile Futurmatic with 'torpedo b ack design'. The business was recently relocated to Hwy. 31 just south of Winchester where the new indoor showroom will house up to 40 classic cars.

Spring cleaning in the fall?

It's a rite of spring. All of winter's dust and grime are wiped away in an all-out cleaning frenzy. Other activities are either postponed or put on hold. This time-honored tradition applies to the home, garage and car.

However, the car bears the brunt of the most direct contact with winter's nasty elements. Usually a little more time and effort is required to remove the months of neglect, and sometimes even that isn't enough, because the wear and tear still shows. Can this job be made easier, and can winter's tarnish be diminished?

Most people associate a good car cleaning with a warm summer day; however, more and more car owners are realizing the benefits of sprucing up all year-round. Whether it's on an overcast October afternoon or a "warm" January day, frequent car cleaning can soften winter's damaging effects and lessen the spring workload.

KEEP THE "NEW LOOK"

Maintaining a car's "new car look" during the winter months can be a difficult, if seemingly impossible, task. Yet, with the proper precautions, a car's finish can be protected with periodic washing and waxing, even during the fall and winter.

Whenever possible, hose down the car first to remove all foreign materials like salt, mud and the like. Then, fill a bucket with water and add a small amount of a specially formulated car-washing product to a clean sponge. The car wash will thoroughly and gently clean the car's exterior, loosening dirt and other debris without dulling the paint or stripping the existing wax or finish.

The car should be washed from the top down. For best results, never wash more than a 3-square-foot area and make sure you rinse the sponge frequently to avoid scratching the finish with dirt or grit. After washing, rinse the car thoroughly and dry the finish with a chamois or terry-cloth towel.

Once the car has been washed and dried, a total car finish should be applied which shines a car like a polish, while covering the surface like a wax.

Simply apply the product according to the manufacturer's directions. It should not only provides a superior gloss, but also ensure extended water repellency, particularly important during the snowy winter season.

DEAL FOR THE WHEEL

Finally, since car wheels deal firsthand with road dirt, like mud, salt, ice and sand, their care is equally important. Automotive experts recommend thorough cleaning to safely and effectively clean harmful elements from a car's wheels and tires.

By preserving a showroom shine, you not only can prolong the appearance of the finish, but also help to maintain your car's resale value.

If you do keep to a regular regimen of sprucing up, your car not only will confront winter's harshest offerings bravely, but you will spare yourself a few extra hours of hard labor on that beautiful April afternoon.

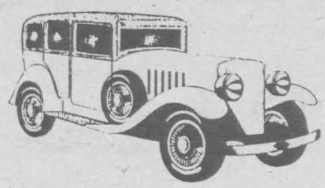
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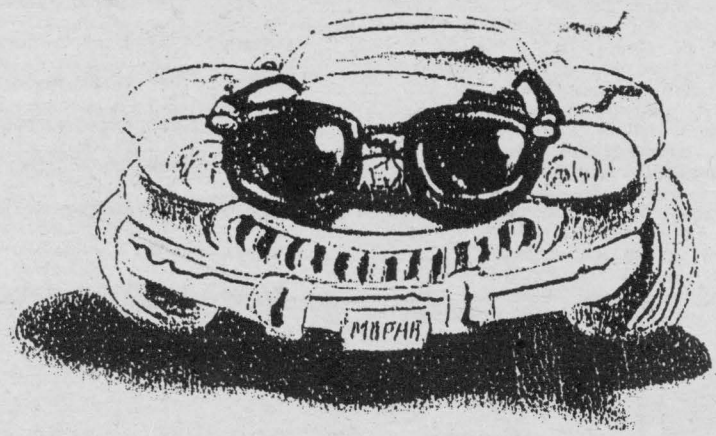
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