

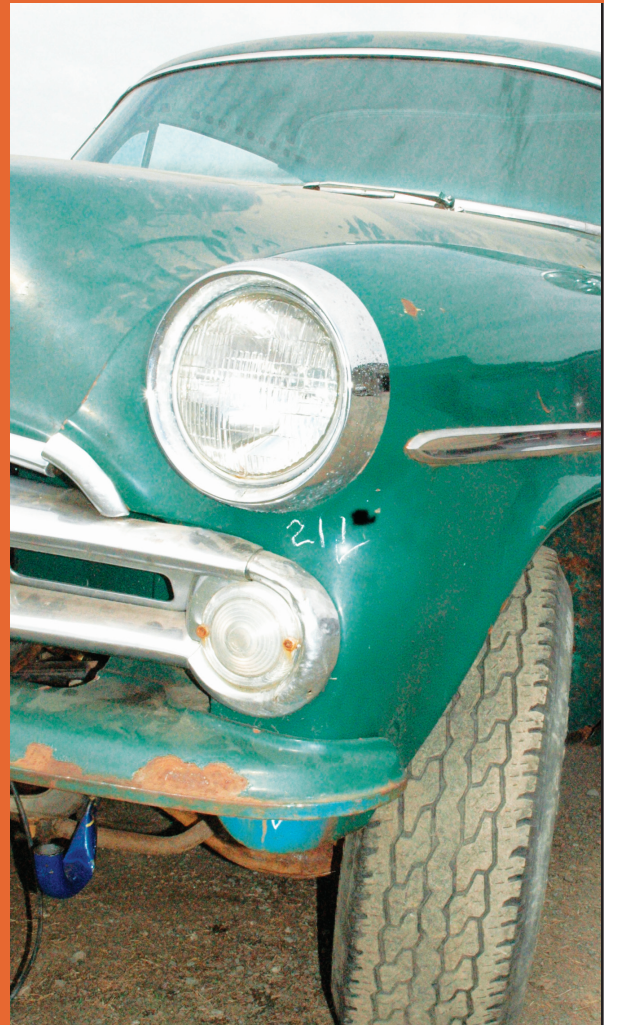
NDDHS
students
rebuild
1954
Dodge
Mayfair

Story on
page 19

May 27, 2009



Spring



car care

Special Section of the Winchester Press



The price of gas keeps on rising

If there is one thing that can get motorists hot under the collar more than aggressive or inconsiderate drivers, I am certain it is the price of gas.

The never-ending seesaw at the pumps is enough to turn one's hair grey from stress and anger.

From a driver's perspective, such inconsistency is weighing on the wallet. When gas prices reached as low as 70 cents per litre for the first time in years, I swear I heard cheers from across the province, but the prices have gone for a wild ride once again, stretching to over 85 cents per litre.

During the summer of 2008, we Canadians grew accustomed to a record price of \$1.40 a litre.

Not only that, it seems I live in a city of constant inconsistency when it comes to gas prices, never mind the hot air continually emanating as plumes of steam from Parliament Hill.

I am convinced that one could sit back and watch the price of gas change more than once throughout a day in Ottawa.

Recently, I have noticed a bigger dip into my wallet since I started reporting for the *Press*.

Nonetheless, from the first time I

travelled outside the exterior walls of the city, the one consistent thing I noticed was the convenient price of gasoline. At the time, it was ranging between 75 and 78 cents per litre. I felt like Jed Clampett, when he struck oil in *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

However, overnight it was all taken away.

The price of gas rose steadily throughout the night, sitting at an average price of 89.9 cents per litre across the city.

In my blissful ignorance, I felt as though this would not have any bearing on the price of gas in the rural area. Of course, I was wrong, and I had to come

down from my cloud.

Meanwhile, during my research for this column, I found that some of Ontario's most rural or northern regions are the hardest hit by the never-ending gas wars.

For example, on Wed., May 20, when gas prices climbed to 93.2 cents a litre in Winchester, it had skyrocketed to well over a dollar in the Thunder Bay District of Ontario.

They will continue to rise and fall, through holidays and the summer, we'll just have to buckle up and get used to it.



In Transit

by Matthew Uhrig

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NDDHS students rebuild 1954 Dodge Mayfair

Students attending Andrew Whitton's shop classes are learning a trade right in the classroom. Whitton, the transportation teacher at North Dundas District High School, comes up with the materials and project ideas and his students turn the wrenches.

Whitton and his students have put together some weird and wacky motorized combinations over the years, including a 1974 AMC Javelin AMX, customized dune buggies and lawnmowers — many of which have appeared in past issues of the *Press*. One project currently on the back-burner in the crew's shop is the attempt at converting a 30-year-old Bolens snowblower into a motorized school desk.

This year, the Maple Ridge fabrication crew's main focus is on a chop-cut-rebuild project involving a 1954 Dodge Mayfair, two-door hard top, and parts from a Dodge Ram, Dodge Dakota and a 1996 Chrysler LHS into what Whitton says will become a dependable, drive-anywhere hot rod.

Whitton acquired the '54 Mayfair last summer in Long Sault for \$200. It was sold to



settle the estate of the previous owner. The vehicle's body was located in a field without any axles, powertrain, or steering column just to name a few key

components. An Alberta safety sticker on the windshield indicated it was last driven in 1969.

After the all-steel body and

The pit crew

The North Dundas District High School student team, under the supervision of teacher Andrew Whitton, which has squeezed parts from three different Dodge vehicles into a 1954 Dodge Mayfair body are: (from left to right) - Robbie Haner, Michael Strong, Christopher Robertson, Trevor Havekes, Dawson Gilchrist, Brian Gobey (under car), Christopher Pyper, Greg Morris, Coady Findlay, Jesse Boone, Ryan Vandentillaart and Jeff Horler. Missing: Michael Blais, Jason Found, Brandon Oosterhof, Richard Bols, Curtis Vandemheen, Jimmy Jones and Nolan Lachapelle. Left: The leather interior comes from a 1996 Chrysler LHS.

Press Photos — Van Bridger

frame was relocated to the NDDHS shop, the students cut out the front frame and welded in a Dodge Dakota frame, which gave the Mayfair rack and pinion

steering, coil spring suspension and disc brakes.

A second donor vehicle was a 1996 Dodge Ram and it provided a 5.2L, multi-port, fuel-injected V8 and an overdrive transmission — which replaced an original I-6 (cylinder) engine and three-on-the-tree standard transmission. A 1996 Chrysler LHS supplied the leather interior and back seat. Whitton said the interior components fit like they were made for the two-door hard top.

Hands-on experience

"Students have learned how to fabricate almost everything that has had to be transplanted into the Mayfair including engine mounts, shifter linkage, fuel system (electric pump), lots of electrical, fabricate a drive shaft, install new brakes from the master cylinder to the brake lines, cooling system mods, and converting a six volt electrical system to 12 volt," explained the teacher.

"The car began to roll on its wheels just before the Christmas break and is very close to being driven and will hopefully be on the road this summer," he added. "The body work may be done at a later date."

Whitton pointed out that the total cost for the project should come in under \$2,000, including the price of the '54 and three donor vehicles — all of which came out of his own pocket and not the school's budget.



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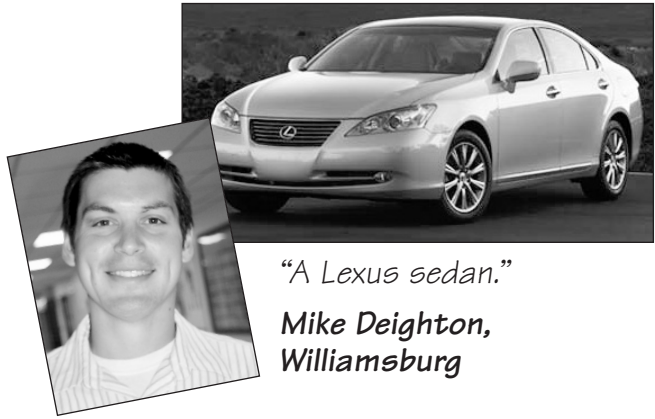
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"A Lexus sedan."

Mike Deighton,
Williamsburg



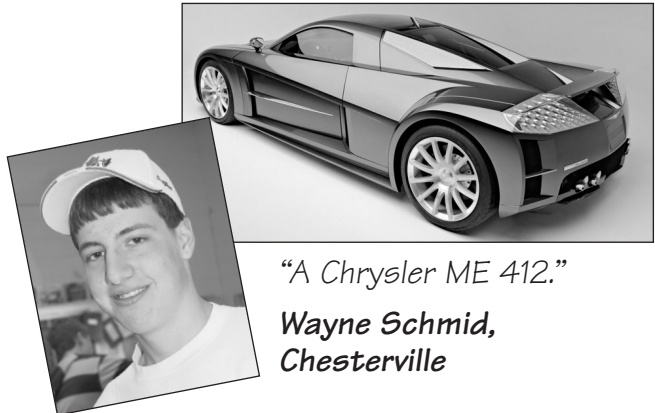
"A 1968 Chevrolet Camaro."

Brandon Heuff,
Morewood



"A Ford Mustang convertible."

Stacey Williams,
Chesterville



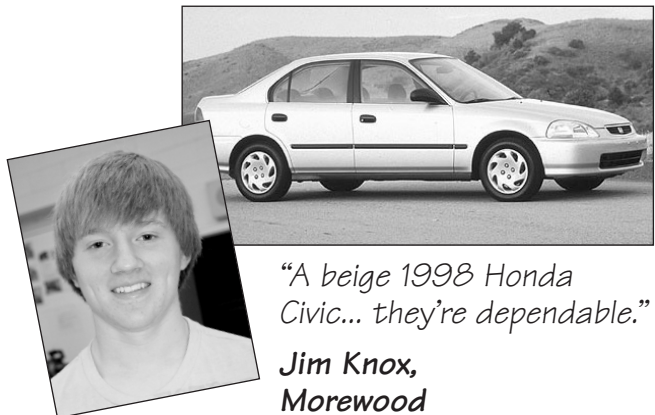
"A Chrysler ME 412."

Wayne Schmid,
Chesterville



"A Porsche."

Chelsea Thoms,
Chesterville



"A beige 1998 Honda Civic... they're dependable."

Jim Knox,
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"A Dodge Charger, because they're pretty lookin'."

Jessica Sell,
South Mountain



"A 1972 Chevrolet Chevelle."

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RV repair service available at BGM Autobody

Many people know where to take their vehicles when they need repair, or who to call when work around the home is needed. But what about your home away from home?

Enter Brian Maloney and his staff at BGM Autobody RV Repair and Paint Services, located along County Road 31 in Spring Hill, just north of Vernon. "Trailer repairs are becoming big business for us," said Maloney.

For the past eight years, BGM has been offering service work for all models of cars and trucks, and since late 2005 its trained specialists have become water leak and recreation vehicle (RV) repair specialists.

"Word has been getting out," said Maloney. "We find that we're getting RV repair business without asking."

What's interesting about BGM is that specialists do complete repair and paint work inside and outside of RVs.

Early water leak detection in RVs is also very important. In the past, RV dealers have had to completely soak an RV exterior with water and then search the interior for moisture.

However, as Maloney pointed out, the system had serious



shortcomings.

"Incoming rainwater often requires time to cause visible moisture inside the RV," said Maloney. "It's rarely adjacent to the exterior fault that allowed its entrance."

Because of this, BGM has

invested in new technology that makes it easier to determine where water is coming into the RV.

A machine that makes use of air pressure to slightly pressurize the RV's cabin area helps BGM to perform a thorough inspection

for all water leaks.

Once the air pressure test has been completed, BGM goes through the RV looking for any discoloration or wrinkles in the wallpaper and feels for any soft spots on the ceiling, around roof vents, air conditioners,

television antennas, and plumbing vents.

They will also check the exterior, roof and body seams, all openings, tail lights, marker lights, as well as window and door openings.

Because of these services being offered, RV owners have found a place to go when things go wrong.

"About 80 per cent of our business comes by referral from RV dealers," said Maloney. "They simply don't have the tools or manpower to offer this type of service."

BGM also offers a pick up and delivery service.

"Some of the RVs we do work on stay at campgrounds year-round, and they aren't easily transportable. We will perform certain repairs and water leak detection at the campgrounds," said Maloney.

When feasible, BGM will go to pick up an RV and bring it back to their shop for some of the more extensive repairs.

For now, Maloney and his staff are keeping their focus on this new service and are even considering an expansion in order to better serve RV owners.

"One day, we'll grow this site even bigger," said Maloney.

RV experts

BGM Autobody RV Repair and Paint Services employee Bruce Brown worked to repair the front end of a fifth-wheel trailer that was brought in for service.

Press Photo — Uhrig

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Are today's empires tomorrow's ashes?

The rise and fall of the auto industry

by Matthew Uhrig
Press staff

As a child growing up, many often dream of the day when they can get behind the wheel of an automobile for the first time.

Unfortunately, with today's withering auto industry, the concern has shifted more toward survival rather than customer appeal.

Working within a system with a broken business strategy must be tough.

From the media to construction, all industries are struggling to stay above the raging economic waters, but no industry is struggling more than the automotive industry.

With the big three — General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford — looking for assistance from the American government, and its Canadian subsidiaries asking for the same, it's easy for the public to see how very deep the problems run.

An American government bailout was projected to go as high as \$14 billion, while a bailout from the Canadian federal government and Ontario government, which was to go through in December 2008 providing the American government could agree with its own auto industry, was \$3.3 billion.

"What we're signalling here is that we want to be part of the solution," said federal industry minister Tony Clement during a press conference in December.

To date, the governments on both side of the border are still planning the exact amounts of bailout funding. The Canadian and American governments would like to know, in advance, what the auto corporations are going to do with the money.

In a recent article written for *Rolling Stone* magazine, journalist Mark Binelli wrote about his experience attending the 2009 North American International Auto Show, held annually during the month of January in Detroit, Michigan.

"Detroit — until the fifties — was America's fourth-largest city, a capitalist dream town of great innovation, and greater rewards," wrote Binelli. "However, it now remains as our country's [America's] most epic urban failure."

Since the 1980s, the state of Michigan has struggled to keep GM and Ford in its cities.

In 1989 GM shut down plants in Flint, Michigan in favour of outsourcing jobs to Mexico where the workers could be paid lower wages.

The plant closures were alarming, because at the time GM was experiencing record profits.

In today's struggling economy, it appears that customers simply aren't buying like they used to.

Locally, GM told Upper Canada Motor Sales in Morrisburg, that their franchise agreement wouldn't be renewed after October 2010. (However, Upper Canada Motor Sales plans to fight and stay open.)

On Thurs., May 14, the GM truck plant in Oshawa shuttered for good, leaving some 3,000 people without jobs, as the company decided it could survive with assembly lines in Mexico and other American states.

At its peak, the plant hit an annual output rate of 323,034 trucks a year on three shifts, but sales and assembly slowed down in recent years due to soaring gas prices.

"Why is this happening when we can build the best trucks in the world?" asked Pat Creighton, a GM retiree, in an interview with the *Toronto Sun*.

Former Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) union president Buzz Hargrove said "the fact that GM is continuing to make trucks elsewhere is an insult — especially when they agreed to keep it open," as he spoke of the Oshawa plant closure.

Hargrove laments that the issue surrounding Canadian GM plants is foreign imports, meaning more vehicles are coming into the country from American or Mexican assembly lines, rather than from right here at home.

"Right now in Canada, we import 28 per cent from foreign countries, while most of these countries we import from don't buy anything from us," said Hargrove. "It doesn't make any sense to me."

Some European countries have their import level set at 12 per cent, while others stay low at 5 per cent, Hargrove added.

"If Canada set its level at 17 per cent, North American vehicles could better compete," he said.

GM plans to continue to operate a parts plant in St. Catharines and a plant in Windsor, which builds transmissions; however, the Windsor plant is set to close its doors in 2010.

With these closures and government bailouts, it's clear that a change is needed in order for these major companies to rebound and begin to thrive once more.

If nothing good can come from this current rough patch, these giant companies may fall hard, and the biggest tend to fall hardest.

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During economic hardship, more drivers opt to keep their cars on the road

According to Phil Van Noppen of Winchester Autopro, there are two types of motorists: maintenance drivers and break-down drivers. The maintenance drivers keep track of their vehicle's recommended maintenance schedule. They not only change their oil faithfully, but also act when it's time to replace brakes, change the timing belt, or flush the automatic transmission fluid. Break-down drivers, said Van Noppen, wait until the car has serious problems before they bring it to the shop (or, in the worst-case scenario, have a tow truck haul it to Winchester Autopro from the side of the road). Van Noppen said the break-down and maintenance drivers each take a different approach to repairs. He's seen both types of motorists drop by his shop, located west of Winchester on County Road 43. As a technician, Van Noppen believes that maintenance-oriented vehicle owners will be able to keep their cars running longer in tough economic times and even avoid some expensive repairs. This is especially important in today's bleak financial climate, where some people tend to keep their vehicles running for longer before going out and buying a new car. Others may opt to buy a used, instead of a new car, which also needs to be inspected and cared for. "As today's economy changes, we believe it has never been more important to keep your vehicle running well, and longer," said Van Noppen. "It has been our experience that a vehicle that has regular



Be prepared
Winchester Autopro owner Phil Van Noppen (right) is a strong advocate of following a vehicle manufacturer's maintenance schedule. Many drivers don't plan for expected wear and tear and sometimes find themselves stuck at the side of the road, facing a nasty bill. At left is automotive technician Paul Kozmin. Press Photo — Smith-Millar

maintenance and inspection lasts longer and allows you to plan future repairs, rather than have to spend money on your unexpectedly broken-down vehicle." Van Noppen said drivers should read their car manual's maintenance plan. (If they can't find it, said Van Noppen, he also has an electronic maintenance list on file at Winchester Autopro detailing expected repairs for just about every car on the road right now.) The schedule lists all the items that are expected to wear down during the normal lifespan of the car. For example, 2003 Toyota Corolla owner should expect a lot of parts to be either inspected or replaced at 193,000 kilometres. According to Toyota, the owner should have a technician check out ball joints and boots, brakes, drive shaft

boots, and exhaust pipes and mountings, just to name a few items. At 193,000 kilometres, the Corolla's A/C cabin air filter, air cleaner filter or element, and automatic transmission fluid need to be replaced or serviced. Van Noppen said that while most people know they should change their oil every 5,000 kilometres, they often aren't aware that these other items need to get checked out, until it's too late. He added that when dollars get tight, people should do their best to avoid expensive, unexpected breakdowns that can be financially crippling for some people. Worse, unprepared drivers might see a potentially moderate bill skyrocket if an unexpected breakdown causes additional

damage. The classic example is the timing belt. These belts should be replaced before they snap, because in some vehicles, a broken timing belt can damage your engine. At that point, some owners with older cars may have to replace the engine or even buy a new vehicle. Van Noppen said following the maintenance schedule is easy, and drivers can avoid unplanned costs — not to mention the inconvenience of being unexpectedly deprived of one's vehicle while it's in the shop. "The concept is, you're expecting these items," explained Van Noppen. "What I like to do is help you plan your repairs. Let's do all we can do to avoid the breakdown."

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D's Collision/Fix Auto Winchester is taking steps to become as environmentally friendly as possible.

The Winchester business has not only taken steps to use a paint system that decreases volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions, but also to improve recycling and cut down on regular office waste.

Last year, D's worked to find an alternative to regular solvent-based paint used for repairs. Dennis and Phil Carkner hunted around for a while before settling on the BASF Glasurit 90 Line waterborne basecoat. Since the paint is water-based compared to the traditional solvent-based systems, it reduces the collision repair centre's VOC emissions by about 90 per cent.

The provincial government will force collision repair centres to improve their VOC emissions in coming years, but D's is ahead of the game.

"The transition was very smooth," Carkner said.

The business has also introduced a program that allows D's to re-use car bumpers. If D's can't fix a damaged bumper on the spot, it's sent off to Keystone Canada, which mends tough-to-save bumpers before returning them to collision repair centres like D's.

Carkner added that the office has also switched to a paperless system. "Instead of writing estimates on



A green fix

Phil Carkner of D's Collision/Fix Auto Winchester said his shop has taken steps to become more environmentally friendly. They're using different paint, less paper, and are involved in a reusable bumper program.

Press Photo — Smith-Millar

paper, we [record] them on a computer program," said Carkner, explaining that they also cut down on faxes. "We're trying to do scanning of invoices, so that eliminates some paper there as well."

Work orders, he said, are smaller and also use less paper.

"Our management system allows

us... to not print as much paper," said Carkner.

All these small "green" changes can add up to make a big difference, said Carkner.

"We're trying to take responsibility for what we do to the environment," said Carkner. "I think everybody's trying to go that way as much as possible."

Young drivers save money with a good driving record

If you are under 25 years of age and want the lowest auto insurance rates, start by building a good driving record, free of at-fault accidents and driving convictions. This includes having good driving habits and obeying the rules of the road, such as wearing a seat belt and not using a cell phone or handheld device while driving. Insurance companies also favour the completion of a recognized driver training course and the experience acquired by being an occasional driver on the policy of a parent or guardian.

You can also save money by following these tips from the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO), the regulator of the auto insurance industry in Ontario:

- Ask about student discounts.
- Compare rates, either online or by making phone calls and getting recommendations. The rate you pay could vary significantly from company to company.
- Don't pay for coverage you don't need. For example, if your vehicle is worth less than \$1,000, collision coverage may not be cost effective if your deductible is \$1,000 or higher.
- Consider a higher deductible. This means you'll contribute more towards the loss if you have an auto accident, but it will give you a lower rate.
- Make payments on time. If you're late, the consequences can include the cancellation of your policy, which can impact your ability to get insurance in the future.
- Make a wise choice on the vehicle you drive. For example, if you buy a vehicle with a high theft rate, your insurance rates will be higher. Consider choosing a vehicle with good security features.

More information on auto insurance is available online at www.fSCO.gov.on.ca where you can download the brochure *Understanding Automobile Insurance*.

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Cruisin' County Road 43

by Matthew Uhrig
Press staff

The Food Basics parking lot in Kemptville takes on a life of its own on Friday evenings from May 8 to Sept. 25 when the Highway 43 Car Club gathers for its weekly cruise nights.



Goodwill Campbell, of Kemptville, rode into town in his 1931 Ford Model A Coupe.

"I didn't start this club for Kemptville," said Highway 43 Car Club president and organizer Rod Rafter. "I started this to celebrate Highway 43." From Chesterville to Smiths Falls, members travel from far and wide to attend the cruise nights and meet up with other enthusiasts.

The mix of vehicle owners who comprise the group attending the cruise nights is large. From vehicles built in the early 1930s to more recent makes and models, there is something for all car lovers at the cruise nights. "They didn't put much into them back then," said Goodwill Campbell, who owns a 1931 Ford Model A Coupe. "But, they built them to last." Campbell finished with a chuckle, "they didn't have air conditioning back then, but there it is," he said, pointing to a latch in the corner of the windshield that tilts it back to allow air flow. Aside from focusing entirely on cars and their owners, Rafter, and all those who attend each Friday evening, take donations and host a 50-50 draw with all proceeds going toward the Children's Wish Foundation and other local charities. "We're also taking part in Dairyfest this August," said Rafter. For more information on the Highway 43 Car Club and its cruise nights, visit www.hwy43carclub.com or call Rafter at 613-258-7567.



Rob Ladouceur, of Winchester, gave his 1987 Buick Regal a good polish to get that new car shine.



Paul Stewart, of Chesterville, drove to the first Friday evening of the Highway 43 Car Club on May 15 in his 1970 Chevrolet Custom 10 Deluxe truck.



Keith Urquhart (left) of North Gower and Dalton Begin of Kemptville discussed cars in front of Urquhart's 1952 Chevrolet Styleline Special.

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