

Half Way Motors

Richard (Dick) Burrowes' slogan was, "They're cheaper in the country."

The area east of Bayside and south of White's Road isn't considered the country now, but it was in the 1940s when Burrowes opened his Half Way Motors car dealership there.

Burrowes bought the land and building that had been Riley's Dance Pavilion and opened a Jaguar, Rolls Royce, Woolsley and Riley dealership. The former hardwood floor that patrons' shoes once glided across became his showroom floor.

Kingston resident Burrowes got into the car business in 1941, working for Ralph Clapp. But he soon went on his own and after a few years in Toronto, returned to Belleville. Burrowes recalls parking two used cars on the street near Angus Duffy's service station on the corner of Front and Bridge Streets and putting for sale signs in them. Soon afterwards, he received permission to put them on Duffy's lot. He later moved to the former fire hall near the corner of Front and Dundas Streets and in 1946, he opened Half Way Motors, west of the city.

The luxury automobile dealer's timing was good. The last automobile to be produced for non-military use during the war came off the assembly line in 1942. Domestic production began again in 1946. Demand was high. Burrowes recalls a Jaguar XK120 convertible sold for about \$5,600. He sold one to Dr. George Faulkner. The manufacturer claimed the car

"Never has so much been done for so many for so little."

DICK BURROWES

CAR AND TRUCK BROKER

JIM ELLIOTT'S STATION

WEST MOIRA AND COLEMAN STS.

RES. PHONE 1234-R

BELLEVILLE, ONT.

Dick Burrowes' business card from the 1940s.

could reach speeds of 192 kmh (120 mph). Burrowes says he had the car going 168 kmh (105 mph) before he ran out of road. To get the XJ120, Burrowes had to buy several Woolsley's and Oxfords as a "package deal" because the Jaguars were in such demand.

Another customer bought a Jaguar Salon from Burrowes for about \$4,900. Burrowes says the car had doors that opened from the front to the back. They were called "suicide doors" because the wind could catch the doors and rip them off when the vehicle was in motion.

"It was a mistake. They only made it (that model) that one year."

Because his dealership was in the country, Burrowes would pick up prospective customers who had no transportation to his business. He remembers a farmer living east of the city who bought a car from him but couldn't drive. Burrowes took the car to the man's farm and found him

practising on his tractor. He gave the buyer a 15 minute lesson on shifting gears and handed over the keys.

"The last I saw him, he was making dust around the big pasture field," he says.

To bring customers to his business Burrowes often ran promotions. One time he offered a "barrel of gas" with each sale. The barrel was actually a 40-gallon metal drum but 'barrel' sounded better. However, the promotion lasted longer than Burrowes planned because he distributed his flyers through post offices as far north as Bancroft. Months later he still had people asking for barrels of gas.

In 1950 a fire destroyed Half Way Motors and Burrowes sold the lot. He opened the Shannonville Speedway racetrack and although he was still dealing with cars, "Honest Dick, the friend of the working man" as he once billed himself, was gone from the auto sales market.