

# Men scream politics on old seat

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Originally, Lucas bought 10 acres. However, he says, he sold some to Thurlow township — which Hillcrest used to be a part of — so the municipality would grant him his business license.

Lucas and Lloyst remember wondering when they would be ready to send a load of cars to a metal company.

"I thought we would never ever have enough cars to call the scrap in," Lloyst recalls. After seven years of business, Lucas had a yard full of junk cars ready to find new life.

"We had our own transport for years. We would load them on — not crushed — and take

them to the steel mill. (The scrap steel companies) have been coming to get them since 1960 or so," Lloyst says.

The next load of scrap drove out of Hillcrest four years later, and eventually the business sent a load every three years. Only the last three shipments have been sent every other year.

"I don't know what the City of Belleville would have done without this place. It would have been an awful mess," Lucas says.

Lucas — who has seven sons and four daughters — could always count on his family to help him out.

"One son, Leonard, drove

the tow truck for 42 years. Butch runs the place...Larry's been here about 15 years. Eric was here about 12 years, all told," Lloyst says.

The family atmosphere is easily noticed. A bench out of an old school bus leans across shelves of parts across from the counter.

Lloyst remembers Jack McMurter, an employee, used to nap on the bench every day.

"By (1:10 p.m.) he was sound asleep with Mr. Lucas' youngest son Todd asleep in his lap...He would work all morning, go for his lunch and within 10 minutes he'd be asleep. And then he'd be fine for the rest of the day," she smiles.

That bench was used for more than just napping.

Lloyst says the wreckers' yard has always been like an old barbershop.

"There's a seat out there where they sit and argue politics and talk about the railroad — they all worked there at one time...They scream politics, they get really mad," Lloyst recalls, amusement in her voice.

Since he started, Lucas has enjoyed selling car parts. But, over the years, one event in particular made the business difficult.

"It's been an awful change over the years, a terrible change over the years in automobiles and automobile parts. We went into this metric — that was the biggest change we ever had. Tires, bolts, nuts, everything is metric now...We came from one generation into this generation of metric and



Bud Lucas and friend Blake Keller sit on a 1932 or '33 Ford. The young girl is not identified.

it's damn hard to cope with," Lucas says.

A minor problem Lucas has to deal with is curious kids. Glimpses of rows of crushed cars peak curiosity and on occasion, Lucas tries to warn kids of the dangers of poking through the lot. But, he says with frustration, instead of listening, the kids always run away.

After 45 years in the wrecking business, Lucas still keeps

an eye on the front counter, ready to help a customer out. He takes a daily walk through his colorful field of metallic memories and, with awe, he wonders about the millions of dollars that were spent on the cars in the first place.

Perhaps he feels a sense of peace knowing the scrap will one day live again as part of a new car.

"This business has been very good to me," he says.

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