

Milton Means Business

Couple retiring after 40 years in car business



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Well-known Milton car dealership owners Norm and Donna Coulter are retiring after 40 years in business.

By **RICHARD VIVIAN**
The Champion

After 40 years of evolving Northend Nissan into the business it is today, Norm and Donna Coulter have decided it's time to retire.

"With age, it's always in the back of your mind that you'd like to retire. But do you start when you're 63 or wait until you're 73 years old?" Mr. Coulter chuckled. "It's nice to retire when you're in good health too."

The Coulters started their business as City Service Oil Company Ltd. on Baseline Road. Eleven years later, they left the service station turned sales lot for the dealership seen today on Martin Street.

"There have been a lot of good times over the years," said Mr. Coulter. "We made a lot of friends here. Some of the customers we've had for 40 years now."

Ownership of the dealership was officially handed over to the 401-Dixie Auto Group October 1, but the Coulters can still be found toiling away at the office.

While delegated to a basement office, the couple has been working to guide the transition in ownership and pack away all the trinkets they've collected over the years.

"You should see the number of totes we've already taken home," said Ms Coulter. "Just imagine what you can collect being in the same building for 30 years."

Making the ownership transition as smooth as possible has been an important

step in moving on with their lives, said Mr. Coulter.

"You want to make sure everything's going to fly," he said. "We've made sure all the employees have been retained and make sure they (new owners) still have a presence in the community. We wanted to make sure everything was kept going as it has."

While Mr. Coulter intends to continue spending time at the business he built — two or three days a week, he said — his wife is looking forward to devoting more time to her hobbies.

Those hobbies include providing shutter-bug services at numerous community events, volunteering time for various causes, and being deeply involved with the Milton Chamber of Commerce — who recently presented the couple with an honorary lifetime membership.

"When I look down the road, I don't think I'm going to stop," said Ms Coulter. "I'm maybe not going to be here (at the car dealership), but I'm going to be out with my camera in my bag or in my hand."

Keeping track of all his wife's activities, Mr. Coulter explained, is like "trying to contain the wind."

There may also be some travel in the future for this duo. No plans have been made yet, but having a little spare time should allow them to relax, said Mr. Coulter.

"Now when we travel, we don't have to worry about coming back and catching up on what we haven't gotten done or putting out the fires that started when we were away."

Professionals called on to help new businesses

Halton Region is seeking lawyers, accountants and marketing professionals to take part in the 2002 'Access to Professionals' program.

The program is designed to connect start-up entrepreneurs with professionals who can aid in developing their business.

"It's a great program for people starting a small business," said Tanya Leedale of O'Connor Macleod, a legal firm in Oakville. "I donated time to participate in

the Access to Professionals program. The program offers a good way to break the ice between an entrepreneur and a professional."

The program runs on the second Tuesday of each month, and volunteers are asked to donate time for one four-hour session.

For more information on the program or to volunteer, contact the Halton Region Business Development Centre at (905) 825-6300 or 1-866-442-5866.

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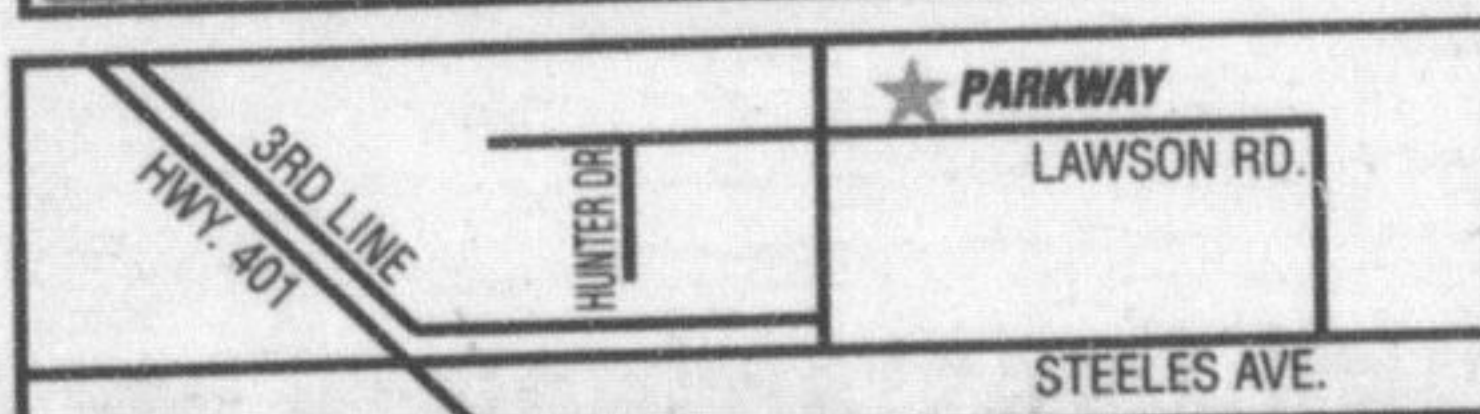


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