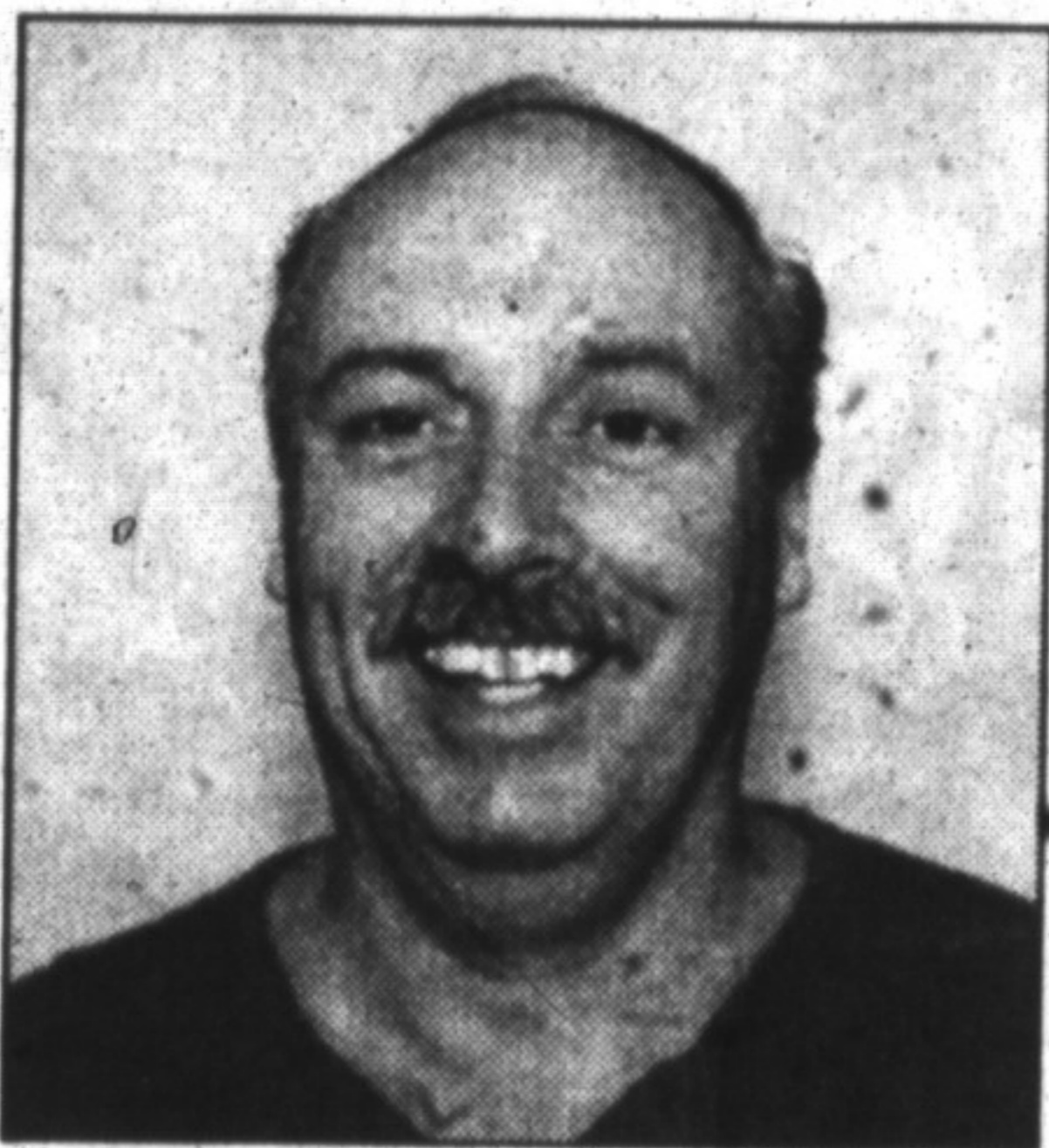


# AT YOUR SERVICE

## Introducing JOHN ANTHONY



JOHN ANTHONY

*The staff of Gallinger Motors would like you to meet their service manager, John Anthony.*

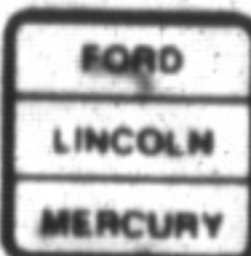
*John has been a valued employee at Gallinger Motors for nine years. He brings the best of his knowledge and professionalism to assist you with your automotive needs, and looks forward to seeing you as a valued customer.*

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# Dodge Dakota lookin like a Ram

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH - It's quiet on top of the world. At twelve thousand feet up, the only sounds were the chirp of crickets and the distant rumble of dark, heavy clouds rubbing against the face of the Wasatch Mountains. And the quickened beat of my heart as I huffed and puffed through the oxygen-thin air.

Fortunately, once I'd finished taking my photos, the only other climbing I had to do in those rarefied heights was to get back in the cab of my 4X4 ride up, a brand spankin' new '97 Dodge Dakota.

We were in Utah testing Chrysler's newest revised product in the compact pickup truck line.

Wait a minute, you might say. Compact? Are you sure that isn't a full-size Dodge Ram? That Big Rig-style nose? That macho 18-wheeler image?

Well, think of the Dakota as a three-quarter scale version of its bigger brother and you won't be that far off. Or as one western onlooker called out, "Looks lak ah Ram got shrunk in the warsh."

The resemblance isn't all that surprising, given the fact that the Dakota team is the same group of engineers that moved on from the revolutionary Ram redesign effort. By carrying forward the styling, strengths and lessons learned from that earlier project, they were able to capitalize on the Ram's popularity and economize

not just on Dakota's revision but also on its construction by building the compact truck on the same Michigan assembly line as its bigger brother.

And though it's smaller than the full-size Ram, the practically mid-size Dakota is the largest truck in the compact segment, bigger than the competitive products that Chrysler engineers somewhat derisively refer to as "toy trucks."

But even while recognizing that most compact trucks are bought strictly for personal use, "the key to the Dakota is that it's a REAL truck," according to Bernard Robertson, VP of Jeep/truck operations.

Dakotas come in a wide selection of models with regular extended cab, 4X2 or 4X4 with 6.5-foot or 8-foot cargo boxes and power translation via five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmissions. The three trim levels — Base, Sport and the upscale SLT version can be augmented with a variety of options. The Dodge lineup also includes the widest range of powerplants in its class. The Magnum engines, carried over from last year's Dakotas, start with the entry level 2.5-litre four-cylinder for basic econo-commuting moving up to the gutsier 3.9-litre V6. At the top end of the power scale, the optional big 5.2-litre V8 has been tweaked this year to a lofty

230 hp and 300 ft.lbs. of torque grunt, enough to haul up to 6800 lbs. of trailer weight.

Being a confessed power freak, I gotta admit I spent as much time as I could in the V8 version. When we finished hauling test trailers, that power turned into wheel-spinning speed on an improvised parking lot autocross where the Dakota proved it could handle pylons as well as pile-ons. Vehicle stability has improved with a two inch increase in track width. The truck also carries a bigger footprint this year with larger wheel and tire sizes.

Whether we were winding through Utah canyons, dashing pedal-to-the-metal across highway straights or dragging dust clouds down the dirt roads of Wyoming's big-sky cattle country, the Dakotas proved to be able and spirited performers on any kind of surface. A final off-road excursion in the 4X4 model rounded off the Dakota's impressive abilities, where an approximate twenty-percent power loss due to altitude did not prevent us from clawing our way up to the summit of a boulder-strewn mountainside.

The long day of testing was eased by a spacious and comfortable interior with standard dual airbags and all controls logically placed and accessible.

Any negatives? Well, an

• continued on page 7

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