

Nuts-and-bolts of car repair is a snap

By BRUCE STAPLEY
He's got a big warm smile, a heavy accent that accentuates his Estonian upbringing, and a sense of contentment that comes from working at the same job for 27 years.

And at 61, Keino Reman thinks he's still got a few good work years ahead of him. The father of four works in the service department at Giles Chev-Olds, Main Street West, Stouffville. And he's been there since the car dealership's founder, Ross Giles, rescued him from his long drive to work at a Toronto garage in 1961.

But he could have just as easily been a farmer.

"When I came to Canada in 1951, it was under the condition that I work as a farmer," he recalls. "I was a farmer's son in Estonia, and I had worked on my father's farm until I left home at 16."

After working several years on a farm on the Sixth Conc. just north of Stouffville Road, Keino moved to Toronto and served as an auto mechanic's apprenticeship at a garage at York and Adelaide Streets.

New job

He moved back to Stouffville in 1958, but continued to make the long drive to work in the city. He was delighted when the elder Giles approached him.

"I was fed up with driving back and forth from Stouffville to Toronto," Keino says.

And while there have been changes during his 27 years at Giles, his first service manager, Jim Brown, is still on the job.

But the cars Keino works on have changed drastically, he says.

"The electrical end of today's cars is much more difficult than it once was. Now with these transmissions and electrical ignitions, you have to have your books with you when you repair them."

He believes mechanics are given neither the financial reward, nor the overall respect they deserve.

"It's a tough profession," he says. "You have to go back for retraining at least twice a year. Plumbers, electricians, carpenters, even bus drivers make more than a mechanic."

Keino says the profession is only for those who are really interested and dedicated.

Making progress

"And it's probably best to learn one manufacturer's make of car only. The days of a mechanic being able to work on all makes are gone."

He says it can be hard enough learning about just one make of car.

"All the cars have different specs. I don't think even Superman could fix all makes," he noted.

Keino claims he enjoys his work, and the people with whom he comes in contact.

"I try to explain to the customers what I've done," he says. "Most are understanding, and appreciate what you've done for them."

He says today's customer is basically the same as the customer of yesteryear. But he says customers could understand their cars better when the designs were simpler.

"Back then, you could do a basic re-air with binder twine. But today, cars are just too complicated."

Better cars

He's a firm believer in progress, however, as it has applied to the automobile.

"Today's car goes much longer between servicing," he explains. "In the old days, a tire would last 20,000 miles, tops. Today, you can get up to 60,000 miles out of a tire."

And Keino acknowledges that today's driver will rack up 40,000 or 50,000 miles in a year.

He feels that preventive maintenance is still the most important part of car care, as in the past.

Keino's work these days is restricted mostly to 'light' work such as tires, lube and oil changes, electrical wiring and light bulbs.

And the arduous drive to work is a thing of the past. Ever since 1967, he has lived in the apartment above the dealership.

Keino has two sons who work in the Stouffville area. Mike works



Twenty-seven years later, Keino Reman is still calling when he served as an auto mechanic's apprentice in Toronto as a young man. Retirement, he says, isn't in the foreseeable future.

for Ted's Towing in Ballantrae and Randy is manager of McKerlie Millen in Stouffville.

When he's not working on cars, you're likely to find him with his

family, or camping on Canal Lake on the Trent System. He claims retirement is something he'll think about "someday."

"I guess it will depend upon

what management thinks," he grins.

And if he had to do it all over again?

"That's a good question," he says, breaking into a huge grin. "If I had stayed on as a farmer, at least I would have been able to breathe fresh air every day. But the hours were pretty long on the farm."

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Shoppers Drug Mart regrets any inconvenience this may have caused our customers.

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