

Chevy dealership family 'has gas in its veins'

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The Giles Chevrolet dealership has been a mainstay in the community since Mr. Giles' father opened its doors on the corner of Main Street and Ninth Line Dec. 4, 1959.

The family business is also known for supporting local events and sports teams and for that, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce named Mr. Giles and his wife Lynda its 2011 lifetime achievement award winners last week.

"It's a total shock," Mr. Giles said.

"It's an honour. It certainly is an honour," added Mrs. Giles. "Lifetime is frightening. It makes you realize how long you actually have been in business in this community. ... I really believe that when much is given to you from the community, much is expected back. We are there for our community."

The Giles and General Motors' working relationship began in 1902 when Mr. Giles' grandfather opened W.S. Giles Motors in Toronto.

"We don't have blood, we have gas in our veins," Mr. Giles quipped. He started selling cars when he was 15 and has worked in every department of a dealership.

When the couple married 42 years ago, Mr. Giles told his wife-

to-be, she was getting into two marriages — the car business and them, "in that order".

"And that has been true," Mrs. Giles said.

In 1968, Mr. Giles got tired of hearing the paging system blast out "service department, line 1."

"So I started calling it Mr. Goodwrench," he said.

Today, Mr. Goodwrench is the name of GM-franchised service departments across Canada.

Mr. Giles' innovative contributions to the company didn't stop there. In the late 1970s, he taught himself computer programming after reading three chapters of an IBM manual, then throwing it away because he said it confused him.

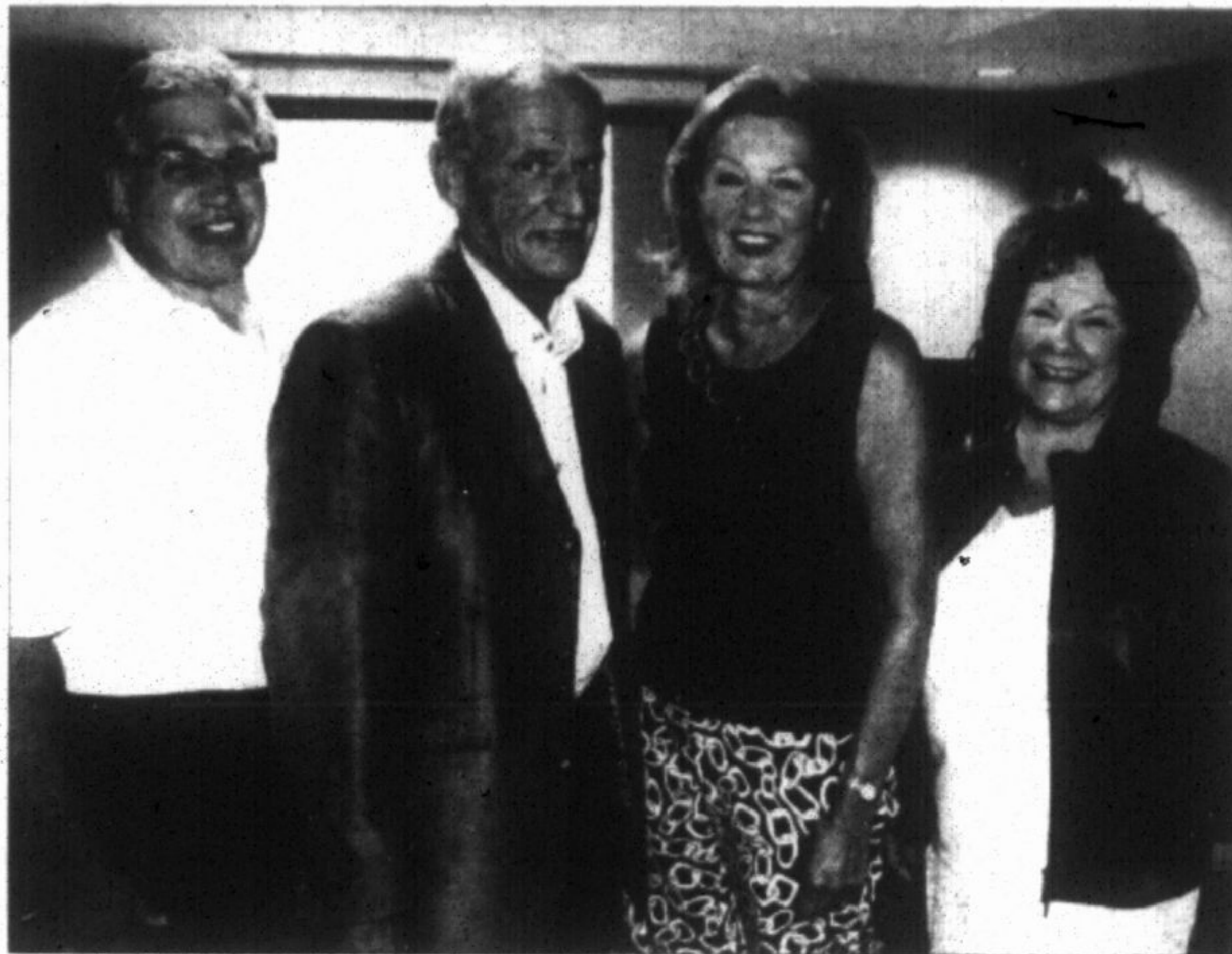
The program took the GM vehicle price books and put them onto a mainframe and eventually a PC. He sold the program to about 250 dealers across Canada, he said. The program has since been tendered out to a third-party.

Over the years, the Giles family has endured a lot of changes within the auto industry, as well as within Stouffville.

"We've seen a lot of dealers come and go," Mrs. Giles said.

Although an auto mall opened on Hwy. 48 just north of Stouffville Road last year, you won't ever find Giles Chevrolet there.

"Wrong location," Mr. Giles said.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Duncan and Lynda Giles of Giles Chevrolet Ltd. are the recipients of the 2011 Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award. They are pictured with the chamber business recognition awards committee members John Paulino (left) and Karen Cashin (right) at the announcement at the Stouffville Creek Retirement Residence.

"We love our corner," Mrs. Giles added. "It is part of the core community. I think the core community of Stouffville is still the downtown."

Does Mr. Giles have any desire to slow down or retire and pass the family business down to his children?

"I'm sticking around until I'm 150 just to piss them off," he said.

The chamber awards will be presented Oct. 3 at Sleepy Hollow Golf and Country Club. For tickets, call 905 642-4227 or e-mail at mardit@whitchurchstouffville.ca

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