

# Autoworks

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cars.” Dickson said prices for collectible cars held up well in the “recession, or whatever it was we went through.” He thinks collectors saw cars as a tangible asset in an uncertain market, and they’re fun, too.

When finished, the facility will offer more than just expensive cars. Monk said they intend to host events for car clubs and civic organizations, and Boback envisions a “hang-out” in the basement, with big-screen televisions and activities to keep children busy while mom and dad check out the inventory, which is anticipated to be 40-50 cars with a collective value of up to \$2 million. Auto-themed apparel, accessories

*“The market is strong. ‘If you’re not quick (to buy), you lose the cars.’”*

**Buz Boback**  
Harveys Lake

and gifts will also be available. The cars will come from a variety of sources. “We all have relationships with dealers,” Boback said, and each has bought and sold exotic personal vehicles over the years. Dickson, in fact, has 20 cars of his own, including a Porsche GT and a Ferrari 360 Spyder, his favorites.

The internet will also be a source of both buyers and sellers. “The last cars I bought were off the internet,” Dickson

said, and he anticipates that half of Autoworks’ business will be generated there. The dealership will also buy cars at auctions and from local dealers and individuals, and will accept cars for sale on a consignment basis.

American cars from the “muscle car” era of the 1950s to the 1970s will be a good portion of the inventory. Those are the cars of the partners’ youth, and still hold their interest. “You hear that engine turn on,

and you get turned on,” Boback said. “Those were the fun old days,” of hanging out at Stop ‘n’ Go in Wilkes-Barre and other hotspots for car-crazy teenagers.

The men each have successful backgrounds in business. Dickson owns KMS Precision Sheet Metal in Luzerne; Monk’s family has owned Monk Heating and Air Conditioning since his grandfather, Earl, started the business in 1915.

Boback is winding down a 27-year career in radio and television advertising that began when a Trucksville collectible car dealership operated by Tiny Gould closed, leaving him out of a job. He will be the on-site manager of Autoworks.

# New dealership will create a ‘car strip’

Just up the highway from the future Autoworks International are two dealers that have found formulas for success in the crowded late-model used car market.

Dreier Auto Sales is operated by Jeff and Diane Dreier of Dallas. Started 27 years ago selling used Volvos and servicing that make, their dealership has expanded into sales of several European imports and service on “pretty much any import,” Diane says.

Last year, the Dreiers constructed a new garage on the Shavertown lot they had owned for 15 years, and consolidated their business there. Like their dealership, “the business is always changing,” Dreier said, and mostly for the better.

A little further up and across Route 309, Hillside Auto Sales has also been upgrading its facilities. Owner Bill Corgan feels the appearance of a dealership has a direct influence on its success.

“Beautification is the number one factor,” he contends, because it focuses the attention of people who are his best potential customers, the ones who drive by every day.

Corgan has been in the business for 36 years, and has operated the Shavertown lot since 1989. He and his wife, Debbie, are the primary operators, which Bill Corgan says is another key to success.

“The way to do it is to have a nice, hands-on operation,” stay in control and manage costs, he says.

Diane Dreier also cited the growth in quality, both of vehicles and personnel, in the strength of used-car dealerships.

“I see more professionalism and more of an orientation toward service,” she said, offering as evidence the annual week-long meeting of a national used car dealers association that is focused on training and education.

The marketplace has changed dramatically, and now there are more good cars to choose from, and more sophisticated customers. “The 1980s were a sellers’ market,” Dreier said. “Now it’s much more of a buyers’ market.”

The popularity of leasing has created a pool of late model, one-owner, relatively low mileage cars, Dreier said, so much so that most cars now

*“The 1980s were a sellers’ market. Now it’s much more of a buyers’ market.”*

**Diane Dreier**  
Dreier Auto Sales

come from auctions rather than trade-ins at new car dealerships.

Jeff Dreier goes to the auction two or three times a week, and with his long experience as a mechanic picks out what he thinks are the best buys among the Saabs, Audis, BMWs and Volvos that make up the bulk of the inventory. But he’s not always successful, even at the Manheim Auto Auction, where 10,000 cars can go over the block in a single day. “There are times he comes back with nothing,” Diane said.

Hillside Motors has become something of a Jeep specialist in recent years, and gets most of its cars off-lease from Chrysler Financial Services. Debbie Corgan says they tried selling other SUVs, but found people wanted Jeeps. And it has paid off. “The SUV market is very strong,” she said. “We were just responding to the market.”

Another big factor affecting dealers is the internet. The ease and speed of using eBay or Auto Trader.com has expanded their market to the entire nation. Recently, a man flew in from Denver to pick up an unusual model of Audi at Dreier, and drove it back.

“A lot of them are willing to buy them sight unseen,” Diane Dreier said. The dealership has sold cars to customers as far away as California this way. Auctions are turning to online sales as well, with some batches of cars only available on the internet.

Hillside has had similar experiences, and Debbie Corgan says the people who come from far away to look at cars often discover an area they knew little about, but are impressed with when they see it. They sold a Chrysler van to a couple from New York City who then bought a home at Harveys Lake where they plan to retire.

“It (internet listing) brings a lot of people here,” she said.

# New car dealers once thrived here

age of about 175 new cars and 200 used each year.

“It’s enough to keep us busy,” he said. Richardson’s employs 12 people in the sales, service and parts departments.

Memorial Highway (Route 415) didn’t exist when Richardson’s was established and Lake Street was the main route to Harveys Lake. When the new road was built, it went through Louis Richardson’s property, and the dealership had frontage on what is now a busy highway.

About 1980, Richardson’s took over the vacant Himmler Theater next to the dealership, and it has been used for storage ever since.

## The Dallas Borough Municipal Building was once Jim Oliver’s Hudson dealership

Before the building on Lake Street was Richardson’s, there was James Besecker Ford.

Bob Besecker, whose real estate office is at the corner of Main Street and Memorial Highway, a short walk from the dealership, said his father opened a Ford dealership in 1923. “He built Richardson’s garage,” Besecker said.

James Besecker and his wife lived across Lake Street from the garage until 1936, when it was closed in the depths of the Great Depression.

The Beseckers moved to Kingston, but came back to Dallas in 1940, and James Besecker eventually took a job at Jim Oliver’s Hudson showroom, which occupied the building that is now the Dallas Borough municipal offices.

“They had a showroom where the police station is now,” Bob Besecker said. He remembers visiting his father there, and seeing the now-extinct nameplate.

“They were a little different car — like an inverted bathtub. I remember when you got into it, you actually stepped down.”

The years of World War II were tough on the auto business, as production lines were dedicated to tanks and other military vehicles. But as soon as the war was over, there was a ready market for the new models.

“My dad bought one of the first new cars after they started making them again; a 1946 Dodge,” Besecker recalled.

Howard “Duke” Isaacs was another dealer who got his start in the years leading up to the war. His son, George, said Howard Isaacs was one of the youngest dealers ever when he began at age 21. Before that, “my father was delivering a milk route in the summer and selling pots and pans door to door,” George Isaacs said.

In 1936, Bill Woolbert suggested that Howard Isaacs approach the Kirby family in Wilkes-Barre, who held the Chrysler distributorship for this region, about opening a place in Trucksville.



James Besecker established a Ford dealership on Lake Street in Dallas Borough in 1923. He built what is now L.L. Richardson’s garage before going out of business during the Great Depression.

“When he started out, he could only afford to buy one car at a time,” and couldn’t buy another until that was sold. Then things got worse when the war broke out, and there was nothing to sell.

“When the war came, it was difficult,” George Isaacs said. Not only was new car production halted, parts and tires were rationed.

George Isaacs said, like other dealers, his father had to rely on repairs to keep the doors open, and to support one or two employees. He also snagged a small government contract to manufacture parts, using the repair equipment.

Many years later, George Isaacs recalled a couple who came from miles away to buy a new car from his dealership, which by then was selling hundreds on new cars a year. He was curious as to why they had bypassed so many other dealers to come to Trucksville.

“Your father was the only one who didn’t gouge us,” after the war, they said. While the government put price controls into place to prevent the practice many dealers demanded \$300 to \$500 under the table from buyers. But “Duke” Isaacs sold cars as they came available, in the same sequence in which they were ordered. And there

was no additional charge.

In 1994, George Isaacs formed a joint venture with Ron Ertley, who had a large Cadillac and Oldsmobile dealership. Isaacs sold Chrysler, Plymouth and GMC trucks. His average of 600 new car sales bolstered the Motorworld superstore, raising its offerings to 13 new car lines.

Isaacs stayed in the business for six years, and moved into real estate development, building Pendragon Plaza at the intersection of Route 309 and Pioneer Avenue. The property now includes Grange National Bank, Verizon, Sheetz and other businesses.

# Spend Saturdays “At Home” In The TIMES LEADER

**Autumn prime tree time**

**PICK OF THE WEEK**  
If you're not a vegetable expert, you might be surprised by the popularity and rising "in" status of the white carrot. It's a crisp, juicy, slightly sweet root vegetable with an earthy, nutty flavor. It's perfect for soups, stews, and roasted. Try it in our recipe for White Carrot Soup.

**SWEET AND GOODY PARSNIPS**  
Parsnips are the most common vegetable on American plates, but maybe that's because you haven't yet tried to make them. They're a root vegetable with a sweet, nutty flavor. Try them in our recipe for Parsnip Soup.

**FLORY OF THE WEEK: GOLDEN ASTER**  
This is a hardy perennial that blooms in late summer and early fall. It has bright yellow flowers and is a great addition to any garden. Try it in our recipe for Golden Aster.

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