



Prince Albert, Saskatchewan



A MODEL OF EFFICIENCY This progressive operation

Back in the early 1980s, Doug Brown faced the most difficult decision of his life. Should he stay in the insurance business where he had a secure position, or give it all up and buy into the collision repair business? He took the plunge, and twenty years later his shop, P.A. Auto Body, is the leading shop in the region.

The shop is situated on the major east-west thoroughfare in Prince Albert, a bustling community of 40,000 plus on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River and the gateway to northern Saskatchewan's wealth of lakes, forests and minerals. The 8,000 square foot facility has a total of 12 employees who put 100 to 150 cars through the shop each month.

Production staff have the choice of working on flat rate or hourly, whatever they are most comfortable with. "They're our biggest asset," says Doug Brown. "Most have been with us a long time, and they're all highly skilled. We do everything we can to accommodate them – in turn they take full responsibility and accountability in turning out work that meets the highest quality standards."



Shop owner Doug Brown (right) and office manager Luella Armstrong greet a new customer. Customer satisfaction is the number one focus of every employee at P.A. Auto Body.

The business places a high value on safety, cleanliness and the environment, and is kept spotless. Never reluctant to innovate and invest in the business, Doug points to an impressive list of "firsts" for northern Saskatchewan, including installation of the first downdraft spray booth, the first dustless sanding system, the first fully explosion-proof mixing room, the first Mitchell UltraMate estimating system and the first DuPont ChromaVision computerized colour matching tool. Even in the tidy storage area they do things a bit differently, choosing to label parts by customer name rather than work order number. As Doug puts it, "It may not be the recommended practice, but for us it's fast and it works."

Word-of-mouth advertising and a highly visible location help to keep the shop busy year-round. As a con-

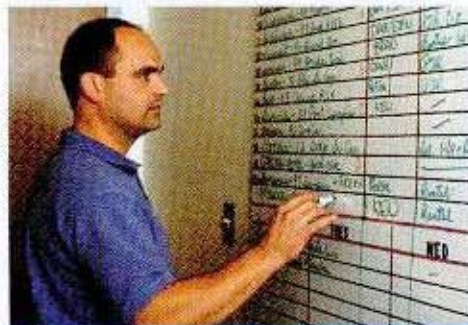
sequence, they have chosen to spend their 'advertising' budget in support of the city's junior hockey team and other local functions and events. For customer feedback, they rely on their own system of random customer survey letters. Says Doug, "We don't get many negative responses, but those we do are immediately reviewed with all our employees."

Shop manager Shane Goller has been in the body shop business for a total of 12 years, 8 years refinishing and 4 years in management. Shane participated in DuPont's SMART Cycle Time seminar in April, and found it very helpful. He has put into practice many of the ideas and management techniques covered in the seminar. Shane has also completed several ICAR & DuPont courses to improve his skills in the bodyshop business.

Management of the business is largely computerized, so paper is kept to a minimum. Using the Mitchell system linked with DuPont's ColorNet system, Shane and office manager Luella Armstrong maintain a

close watch on the numbers. The most visible shop management tool is the production board, which lists key information and tracks the status of every job in the shop. Each employee is personally responsible for keeping the board up to date at all times. Upon completion of the repair, each car is detailed inside and out and checked against a comprehensive pre-delivery checklist. Shane then does a thorough inspection of the vehicle against the original work order to ensure that the customer will be satisfied.

Shop manager Shane Goller updates the shop's production board, a key tool in tracking the status of every job. Each employee is responsible to keep the board current.

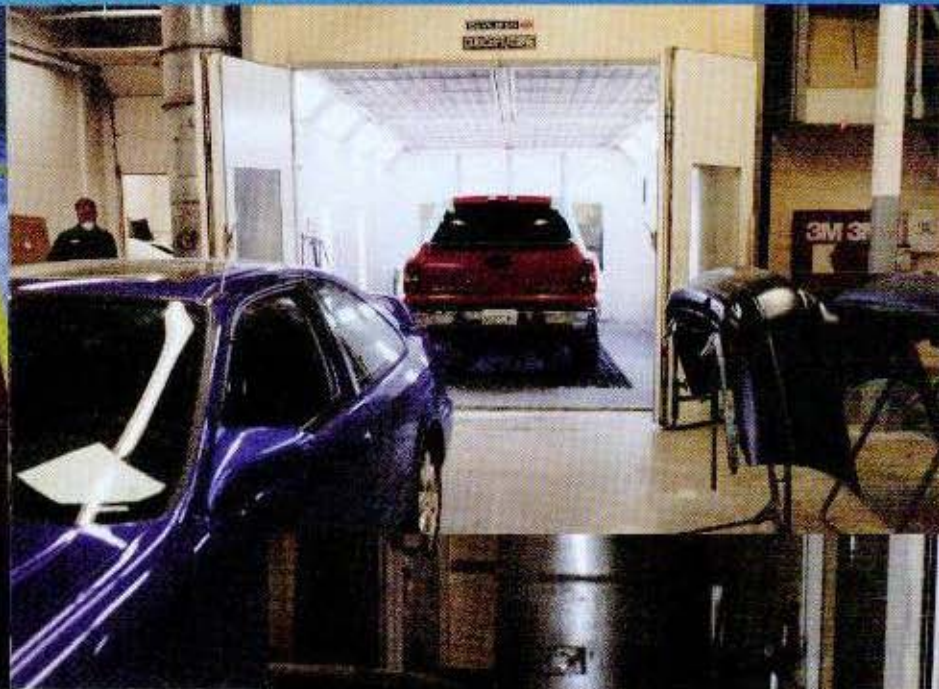


"I can't say enough about Larry, Don and Gerry – they really know their stuff and they take a sincere interest in our business."

Randy Fraser, a 30-year veteran of the shop, has high praise for the productivity gains he's been able to achieve with DuPont's 1140 series high solids ValueShade primers, ChromaPremier basecoats and the new 72500S ChromaPremier Premium Appearance Clear with its easy handling, flow and outstanding appearance. Randy depends on ChromaVision

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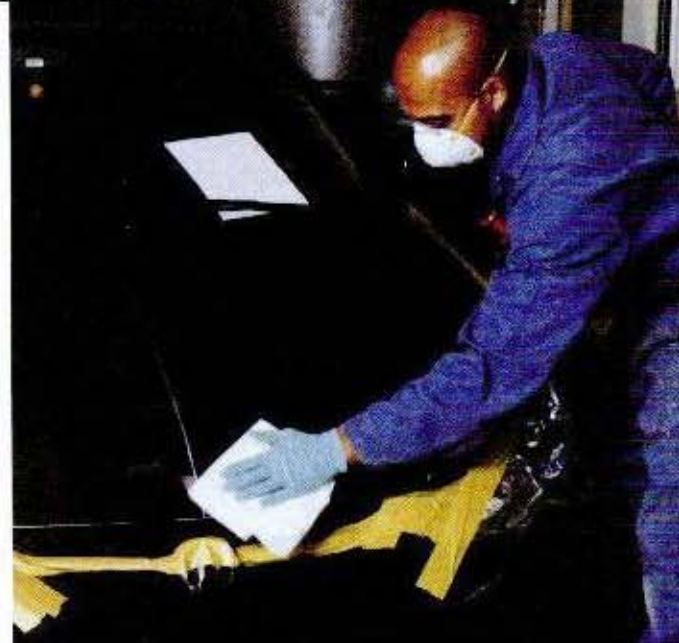
sets the pace in northern Saskatchewan



The paint area features two spray booths - a downdraft booth for all colour and clear application, and a crossdraft booth for priming and parts. Painters Randy Fraser and Graham Chetty have both taken a number of DuPont and ICAR courses to improve their skills. DuPont representative Larry Laventure along with Don Sthamann and Gerry Silbernagel of Acklands Grainger, their jobber, have provided a high level of paint support. "It is important to have knowledgeable suppliers working with us," says Doug Brown.

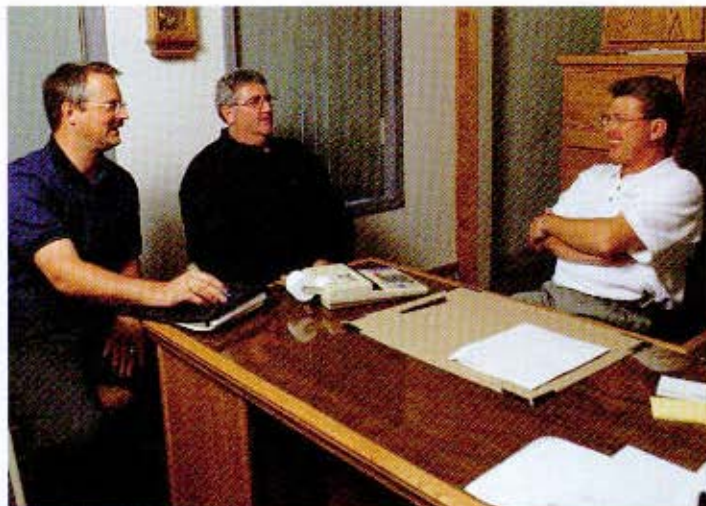
Painter Randy Fraser (left, above) is impressed with the productivity gains he's been able to achieve using the ChromaPremier system and DuPont's new 72500S Premium Appearance Clear.

According to painter Graham Chetty (right), the Sontara surface preparation system consistently produces cleaner jobs and actually saves money on cloths.



to provide a fast and accurate colour formula. "It's the best thing that I've ever seen for colour matching," he says. "It's really good on at least 95 per cent of the jobs, especially new work. There's no more guessing, so it saves time and grief. We don't have much need for colour chips any more."

Graham Chetty has been an employee at P.A. for nine years, three of those as a painter. He gives 'two thumbs up' to the new 72500S Clear. "The flow and levelling is awesome, with a real deep gloss," he states.



Owner Doug Brown (right), depends on the high level of support and expertise provided by suppliers like DuPont representative Larry Laventure (centre) and Don Sthamann of Acklands Grainger, their jobber.

"This really is a great business..."

"We get a perfect job every time, and it's in and out of the booth in under an hour." Graham uses DuPont's Sontara Surface Preparation system on every job. "Using Sontara, we know that we're going to get a cleaner job, and at the same time actually save money on cloths," he says. "The First Tack cloth is very effective – there's no stickiness, and it leaves no strings behind. One cloth will do 2 or 3 cars, where I was using 2 of the old tack rags on each car. It's the same thing with the Final Tack cloth – I can do a lot of cars with a single cloth."

While Doug Brown has become a successful entrepreneur with interests in unrelated businesses across the west, this well-run collision repair operation has built a large following. Everyone at P.A. Auto Body enjoys working there – they're all team players working together with customer satisfaction their number one focus. Looking back as they celebrate their 20th anniversary, Doug comments "This really is a great business. If I had it all to do over again, I wouldn't change a thing."

