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Oldest used car dealer in valley keeps customers riding in style

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Kern Valley Sun



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Isabella Motors employees pictured from left to right Paul Cromwell, Wendy Snodgrass, Mike Liske and Ed Snodgrass pose in front of the business located 6907 Wofford Heights Boulevard in Wofford Heights.

It's not often that you can simply walk into a business and immediately become aware of the camaraderie that the staff shares with one another. However, this is certainly the case with the close knit group of individuals working at Isabella Motors in Wofford Heights.

Owners, Ed and Wendy Snodgrass, along with salesmen Paul Cromwell and Mike Liske make up the friendly and personable team that run the oldest used car sales operation in the valley. The business, which not surprisingly first opened in Lake Isabella in 1991, made the move to Wofford Heights a year later when a more ideal location became available. Snodgrass recalled, "People followed us over and the business got even better."

Each member of the Isabella Motor's team brings their own unique personality and skill set to the business; as a result complement each other in a way that comes from years of working closely together.

Snodgrass offers customers a lifetime of auto sales experience and fondly states, "It's in my blood." That statement isn't far from the truth. Raised as a farm boy in Indiana, he went on to open a car lot at the tender young age of 20. He obviously had the knack because two short years later, he had another one to his name and he's never looked back since.

After deciding to make his way to California like so many other mid-westerners, Snodgrass found himself in the unlikely setting of Barstow. He jokingly added, "I ran out of gas and just stayed." He continued for some years to work in auto sales but eventually changed hats and gave real estate a whirl. It paid off in more ways than one. He greatly expanded his expertise in sales, but more importantly, at least to the romantics amongst us, he met the true love of his life, Wendy. She was in the escrow field at the time and found herself working alongside Snodgrass. As they say, "The rest is history." Thirty one years later, the couple still enjoys working side-by-side, traveling whenever they get the chance and playing a few rounds of golf together.

Another activity that the couple thoroughly enjoys is making frequent trips to the huge auto auctions down south. They generally head down there several times a month and each trip entails leaving home by 4:30 a.m. to arrive at the huge lots in time to survey the thousands of cars prior to the auction. Going by the twinkle in his eye and his infectious enthusiasm, it's obvious that Snodgrass still experiences a definite adrenaline rush from not only finding the "perfect" automobile but also from successfully outbidding his worthy opponents. "By going down there, we are able to find the prettiest, nicest and cleanest cars out there." If people want something specific, Snodgrass stated confidently, "With 3000 to 4000 cars on the lot to choose from every week, we can usually find a customer what they are looking for."

The couple generally split up at that point with one of them driving back the "choice" find. Wendy usually takes advantage of the trip home to swing by Barstow to have lunch with her mother who still resides there.

With Wendy taking care of much of the paperwork that is involved in running the business, it frees the three men to do what they do best, sell automobiles. And they sell a lot of them, about 150 a year to be exact.

Cromwell is also a transplant to the valley, though for him he came from the south as opposed to the east. Like so many of us, he had a vacation property in the valley and when an opportunity came along to move up full time, he jumped at it in a hurry.

He spent numerous years working at Archie's Hardware in Kernville. It was there that he came to know so many valley residents. The positive relationships he fostered with his customers so many years ago continues to serve him well even today, almost 15 years later. Commenting on what he can do for the average buyer, Cromwell stated, "The truth is we can sell the same car that you'll find in Bakersfield for less money. Our overheads are lower by far and our reputation is as good as it gets."

Cromwell and the Snodgrass's share a unique bond that is characterized not only by a deep level of trust and respect, but also by the humorous ongoing banter that comes from a genuine fondness for each other.

Liske is a long time valley resident who is the newest kid on the block, have worked at Isabella Motors for two and half years. Though he has worked in the field off and on throughout his life, he is quick to clarify, "The solid reputation of Isabella Motors makes it a lot easier for me to do my job." Liske went on to add, "I've seen and heard a lot in this field. I wanted to see how it was done at an honest dealer. This is a wonderful place to work."

On the topic of integrity, Snodgrass takes it very seriously. "We have been in business since 1991 and have done so well because we take our customer service so seriously. It's what we do best. People know first hand that we will go above and beyond to make it a good experience." It's not surprising that so much of their business is from repeat customers. When asked if they could furnish some customer names to get a quote for the article, Cromwell went through his comprehensive database. As he and Snodgrass kept offering name after name it became quickly apparent, they've made a lot of people very happy over the years.

Most of the cars the men sell are in excellent shape and still under warranty. On the rare occasion that something might be off with the car's performance after it is sold, one of the Lake Isabella Motors' team will themselves drive the car down to a dealership in Bakersfield for service. Another unwritten policy is that they try to avoid inconveniencing the customer at all costs. It is obviously greatly appreciated if their loyal customer base is any indication.

So next time you're in the market for a used auto, why not drop by and meet the Isabella Motors "family." While you're at it, take a peek at their "Wall of Fame" featuring photos of their hundreds of satisfied customers. Rest assured, they'll treat you right and do their best to bring you and your "dream car" together for your very own happy ever after. You'll find Isabella Motors at 6907 Wofford Heights Boulevard in Wofford Heights or give them a call at (760) 376-4117.