

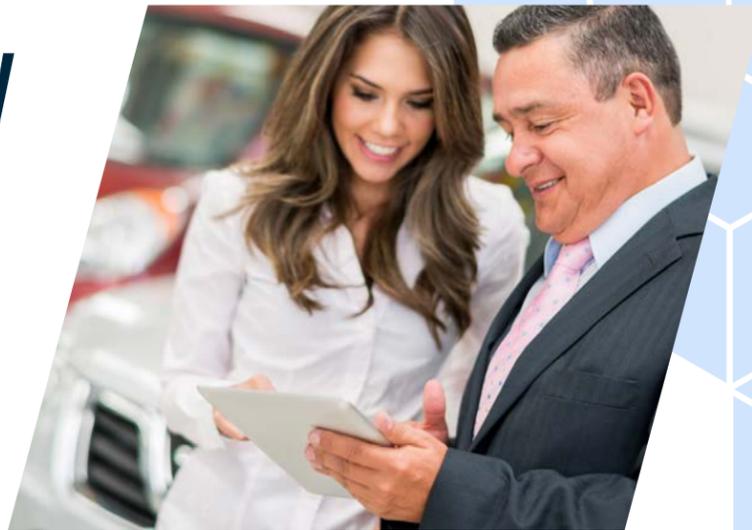
# DEALER POINT

Official Publication of the Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association | 1928-2024 | Volume 70 | Winter 2024



**INSIDE:**  
**John Klein, Clintonville**  
**2024 WATDA Chairman**

# When your technology just works



## How connected solutions make selling and buying a car a whole lot easier

It's the goal for any dealership solution you invest in: the realization that everything is working exactly the way it should.

It triggers a positive emotional reaction that grows as the benefits of a new tool, technology, or process compound. What if everything you did could be handled with that kind of quiet confidence and assurance?

It can when you ditch manual processes and broken workflows that frustrate employees and customers and put in place connected technologies that help create a seamless selling and buying journey. Make this change and discover what it's like when you realize selling or buying a car doesn't have to be a hassle.

How do you come to the realization that your job is easier? Here are a few ways:

### Your efficiency shows up on the financial statement

When it comes down to it, running a thriving dealership demands that all systems work in sync. Connected technology streamlines workflows and reduces friction points from disparate systems so you can make more deals in less time. Systems in sync also create a faster, easier buying journey for today's customers who increasingly won't stand for spending hours in the store.

Fortunately, connecting your sales and back-office technology with the DMS helps maximize efficiency and revenue. The Dealertrack DMS is rated the #1 easiest-to-use<sup>1</sup>, so your team can reach full productivity fast and take advantage of its powerful capabilities. From deal start to completion, you can be so efficient that profitability is a given.

### You can give customers your undivided attention

When you must manually enter data into multiple systems during the sales process, it not only slows down your staff and increases the odds of data errors, but it takes away from the time spent developing a rapport with the car buyer. It's frustrating for customers to be asked for the same information over and over again by a sales rep who isn't even making eye contact because they're looking at a screen. How many more deals could your dealership close if your team spent less time typing and more time transacting?

A truly versatile DMS should empower and improve the way your dealership performs by connecting your technology. Flexible integration with your sales, F&I, and electronic registration and titling solutions ensures data flows seamlessly to break down the silos that create cumbersome workflows. When your team has data right at their fingertips, everyone wins.

### The customers notice the difference

Consumers believe certain stereotypes about the car buying process that persist over time despite recent advancements. Many car buyers approach their purchase expecting it to be a hassle, so when your solutions leave them pleasantly surprised, your dealership can gain their loyalty and appreciation.

A fast, easy, and fluid process from start to finish is what will floor your customers - especially when it comes to deal completion. After all, this last step in the process is what will be top-of-mind when they drive off your lot. Connected technology, including electronic reg and title processes, will get customers out the door faster and leave a great last impression that's sure to boost CSI scores and prompt them to return for service and future vehicle purchases.

### The Dealertrack difference

Backed by the power of Cox Automotive, Dealertrack's advanced DMS, F&I platform, and complete set of registration and titling solutions connect seamlessly across departments to make selling and buying vehicles a whole lot easier. From knowing the retail automotive industry and its challenges inside and out to proactive system support, we have your back so you can focus on what matters most: your customers.

**Click here or call 262-239-9078 to schedule a no-obligation demo with Jerrod Wertz, regional sales manager for Wisconsin, to discuss how Dealertrack solutions and support can help you confidently complete deals and provide better customer service.**

A publication of the Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association focusing on the human side of the membership and trade.

#### Our Mission:

The Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association, an organization of licensed dealers of new and used motor vehicles, is dedicated to advancing the common good of its members, consumers and their communities by promoting professionalism and prosperity through education, advocacy, information and service.

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LaVonne & John Klein

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Barb, Charles, John, & LaVonne Klein

# JOHN KLEIN

## KLEIN AUTOMOTIVE, WATDA 2024 BOARD CHAIRMAN

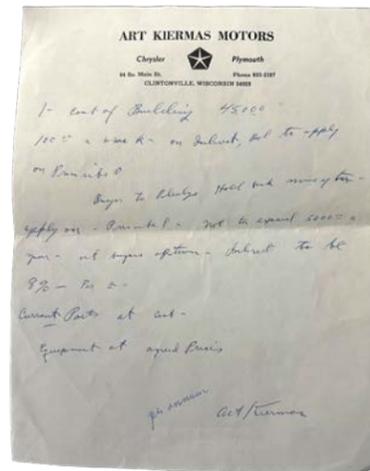
BY JULIE FARMER

John Klein is following his father's footsteps serving as WATDA Chairman; Charles served as Board Chairman in 1993. He also served as the Wisconsin NADA Director from 1998–2003. Let's look at his family dealership beginnings.

Klein Chrysler Plymouth was founded in April 1974 by John's father, Charles Klein. He purchased Kiermas Chrysler Plymouth in Clintonville from Art Kiermas, who had placed a classified ad in the *Milwaukee Journal* that read "Dealership for sale OWNER WILL FINANCE." The original purchase agreement was handwritten on a piece of dealership stationary paper with \$10 down payment.

Charles wore many hats back in '74—salesperson, service writer, and parts manager and even janitor. The only others on staff were a parts person, one technician, a detailer, and an office person. John's mother Barb helped in the office as well and eventually became the office manager/controller. "One of her main duties was to check under Dad's desk blotter to get cash down payments that he forgot to create a receipt for."

In the early 80's Charles gave up the Chrysler and Plymouth franchises and purchased the Chevrolet Olds dealership in Clintonville. As the years went by, he purchased the local Buick Pontiac dealership and moved it into the Chevrolet Olds store. He also purchased a local Dodge dealership, and a local Chrysler Jeep dealership and combined and relocated them to Clintonville.



Front Row L-R: Kennedy (Beyersdorf) Klein, "Jack" Klein, Sam Nelson, Emily (Klein) Nelson  
 Second Row: Elizabeth (Klein) O'Connor, Ella O'Connor, LaVonne Klein  
 Back Row: Rory O'Connor, Joe O'Connor, Ben Klein, Bridger Klein, Dayna (Seymour) Klein, John Klein  
 Missing: Foster Klein, born Nov '23 and Reagan O'Connor, born Jan '24

John started sweeping floors and washing cars on weekends and after school from middle school years on. In high school he filled-in part time as a service writer and parts counter person at the Chev Olds store.

After high school, John was accepted by the US Coast Guard Academy and shipped off to Connecticut for 'Swab Summer' and football camp. "After sailing the Coast Guard cutter Eagle, playing in a few football games, and beginning school, my girlfriend (now my wife, LaVonne) came to visit for parents' weekend and I got homesick and resigned my commission."

Next stop was the University of Minnesota to study Aerospace Engineering. That lasted two years and he began to express interest in coming back to the family business. He transferred to the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and graduated in 1989 with a degree in Business Administration. While attending college, John worked as a detailer for a year at Mueller Chrysler Plymouth Lincoln Mercury in Oshkosh, and then talked owner Norm Mueller into letting him sell cars part time while finishing college.

John returned to work at the family Chev Olds Buick Pontiac store in 1989 as a salesperson after graduating from UW Oshkosh. John attended the NADA Dealer Academy, graduating in 1991.

The Klein's are also great supporters of NADA. "We have greatly benefited from our involvement in an NADA 20 Group. We have also built lifetime relationships with great dealers from across the country through our 20 Group."

In 2014, John and his brother Jason became the Dealer Principals at the Chevrolet Buick and CDJR stores following Charles' retirement.

In 2018, Klein's purchased Wentzel Ford in Winneconne from Barry Wentzel. Will O'Kane, who runs Klein Ford, is a partner at that store.

John met his wife LaVonne when he was in eighth grade, LaVonne a freshman. They dated for many years having lots of long-distance phone bills. They have been together ever since; married in 1988. They have four children, Elizabeth, Benjamin, Emily, and John (Jack). All are married, and John and LaVonne are blessed with five grandchildren. Their daughter Emily (Klein) Nelson has been handling duties as Delivery Coordinator as well as working in marketing and social media. In February she began selling vehicles as well.

Parents Charles and Barb split their time between Clintonville and Brooksville, FL and are great at lending expertise and advice for the dealerships whenever asked. Brother Jason is a partner in the dealerships and Matt is the Director of Logistics and Team Travel for the Green Bay Packers. The Klein guys have an annual Father's Day golfing trip to South Dakota.



Father's Day golf in South Dakota.

L-R: John, Charlie, Matt, and Jason Klein

Hunting, fishing, golf, and hiking are John's ideas of relaxing. There is also an annual trip to South Dakota pheasant hunting. His latest hobby is woodworking in a shop built in 2019 just before Covid; he spent a lot of time there early in the pandemic. He has built many pieces of furniture for their home as well as building some cool dining tables for some friends. He's made pieces as small and simple cutting boards all the way up to elaborate epoxy river tables.



**I asked John to share his goals for 2024:**

"As far as goals and focus for the board in 2024, I think that our most pressing issues are to join forces with NADA in getting the FTC CARS rule stopped in its tracks, as well as to remain ever vigilant in defending the franchise system against direct manufacturer sales."

"I feel very strongly that we, as dealers, should be willing to give our time for causes that are important to all of us as a group," said Klein. "We have one of the strongest state associations in the country and without dealer involvement and passion, we cannot perpetuate that strength. Seeing how WATDA fought against the manufacturers, especially GM, with respect to warranty reimbursement and illegal surcharges galvanized me into getting more involved with WATDA."

"Finally, as it relates to our family business, one of the keys to our success is to always respect the struggles of what we did to get where we are. I stress the history of our dealership and the story of my father so that everyone appreciates the way that we look at the business, shared John. "Sometimes it is easy to look around and think that everything we do is just automatic and forget the sacrifices that were made to get us to where we are. My father started with absolutely nothing and created tremendous opportunities for our family and our employees. We need to never forget that."

2024 will be a great year for WATDA with John at the helm.

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The road to success is smoother when you've traveled it before. For over 50 years, we have worked side by side with Wisconsin dealerships to navigate their legal landscape. We understand the issues dealerships face and are equipped to handle them with a skilled team and decades of experience. Together, we can chart the best path forward.

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- Buy/Sell Agreements
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- Consumer Disputes
- Employment Issues
- Real Estate
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# Legislative Commentary

BY CHRIS SNYDER

## The More Things Change, The More We Realize It's Not Always for the Better

In an attempt to keep our members as up to date as possible, WATDA has sent out more emails to members than we have in the past. Unfortunately, we have encountered an uptick to recipients unsubscribing to our emails. That's unfortunate. We understand that you are probably receiving an inordinate number of emails daily, but please keep in mind that we try to limit the number of emails we send out and reserve email sends to vital and timely topics.

By the time this publication of Dealer Point reaches you, the Wisconsin state legislature may very well be adjourned for the 2023-24 session, and we will be in full election mode. But as of today, bills are jamming up in an attempt to get them to the floor for a vote before the session ends. Here are some of the bills that WATDA is monitoring.

*[AB means Assembly Bill and SB means Senate Bill. In many cases the legislature will introduce and work on separate but identical bills simultaneously, that way both chambers (assembly and senate) can hold hearings and move the bills through their respective processes in a more efficient manner.]*

### SB 60 / AB 66 Title Transfer Exemptions (WATDA Supported)

Under Wisconsin law, when someone transfers ownership in a motor vehicle there is a title transfer fee of \$157 and a supplemental title fee of \$7.50 for a total of \$164.50. Previously, when a vehicle owner died the title transfer fees were waived when the vehicle ownership was transferred to that person's spouse or domestic partner. This bill expands the exemption to immediate family members of the decedent. "Immediate family member" is defined under the bill as "a spouse, grandparent, parent, sibling, child, stepchild, stepparent, or grandchild, or the spouse of a grandparent, parent, sibling, child, stepchild, stepparent, or grandchild."

This bill was signed into law by the governor on December 6, 2023.

### SB 89 Sales Tax Revenues from Motor Vehicle Sales and Service to be Deposited into the Transportation Fund (WATDA Opposed)

This bill would have required that a specific percentage of sales

tax revenues generated from motor vehicle sales and service activities to be deposited into the Transportation fund. It would begin with earmarking 10% of all sales tax revenue from motor vehicle sales and service and ramp up the percentage every 2 years through 2037-38 where it would amount to 50%. WATDA has traditionally opposed this idea. Sales tax revenues from motor vehicle sales and service make up a large percentage of the overall sales tax revenues for the state. Part of the legislature's duties are to establish a bi-annual budget and WATDA believes that they should have revenues from all sources at their disposal to do that. We feel that it would be bad policy to restrict a large percentage of sales tax revenues for a specific agency when that money may be better spent in other areas that the legislature sees fit.

This bill did not get any traction and did not have a hearing.

### SB 124 / AB122 Motor Vehicle Temporary Tags (WATDA Supported)

This bill codified the existing temporary tag (vehicle registration display) process. In the past, DOT issued cardboard temporary registration license plates. This bill merely allows the department to devise a different method of temporary registration display, the bar code print-off that is affixed to the rear window.

This bill was signed into law by the governor on December 6, 2023.

### SB 212 / AB 142 Prohibition on Government Restricting Motor Vehicle Sales Based on Power Source (WATDA Supported)

Under this bill, no state agency or local governmental unit may restrict the use or sale of motor vehicles based on the energy source used to power the motor vehicle, including use for propulsion or use for powering other functions of the motor vehicle. The main purpose of this bill was to prevent certain local governmental units from establishing policies that would restrict the sale of internal combustion engines.

This bill was vetoed by the governor because he believes that local governments should be able to place restrictions on the marketplace if they want to.

### SB 213 / AB 141 Prohibition on Government Restricting the Sale of a Device Based on Energy Source (WATDA Supported)

Under this bill, no state agency and no local governmental unit may restrict the use or sale of a device based on the energy source that is used to power the device or that is consumed by the device.

This bill was vetoed by the governor for the same reasons as above.

### SB 588 / AB625 Wholesaler Licensing (WATDA Supported)

This bill provides that a motor vehicle wholesaler may not engage in business in this state unless he or she maintains a permanent business location, with indoor office space, in this state. The bill provides that a business location does not meet this requirement if more than one licensed wholesale dealer is located under the same roof or if the office space 1) is common space or shared with other tenants; 2) is rented by the hour or day; 3) contains cubicles; or 4) is temporary, virtual, or rotating.

Since 2019 the number of wholesalers licensed in Wisconsin has jumped from around 200 to over 1,700. According to DMV records over 1,450 of the 1,7000 wholesalers are located at one of three locations in the state (Arlington, Elkhorn or Beaver Dam), and of those individuals over 1,300 live outside of the state of Wisconsin. Over that same timeframe DMV has identified that 1) more than 155 million miles were rolled back on vehicles licensed by Wisconsin wholesalers, 2) the number of consumer complaints resulting from tolling and parking violations regarding vehicles that they no longer own have dramatically increased, and 3) incidents of title jumping and complaints from out-of-state consumers have spiked.

The modifications to the wholesale licensing requirements in this bill are such that they will not eliminate the license, but they mimic what was done in Alabama that resulted in droves of wholesalers leaving for other states.

This bill has passed the assembly and hopefully will get to the senate floor for a vote before the end of the session.

### SB 791 / AB 846 Allowing Private Owners of Electric Vehicle Charging Units to Recoup Their Energy Expenses (WATDA Supported)

This bill has been a work in progress for over 3 years. There are a lot of players involved and the legislature has done a great job at trying to address the various affected parties' issues. For dealers it's simple, you will be allowed to recoup your energy cost to operate the charger. If you do charge customers for use, you will have to collect the 3 cents per kilowatt hour of electricity sold. Below are the details for everyone.

This bill exempts from regulation as a public utility a person who supplies electricity through an electric vehicle charging station to electric vehicles if all the electricity supplied is provided by the person's electric utility or retail electric cooperative. Under current law, a person who directly or indirectly provides electricity to the public is regulated as a public utility by the Public Service Commission.

The bill also prohibits a local governmental unit that does not operate an electric utility from owning, operating, managing, or leasing an electric vehicle charging station at which Level 1 or Level 2 chargers are available to the public, unless all Level 1 or Level 2 charges are available for public use free of any charge. However, the bill also allows a local governmental unit to own, operate, manage, or lease an electric vehicle charging station containing a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 charger if the charger is not available to the public and is used solely to charge vehicles owned or leased by the local governmental unit.

A local governmental unit may also authorize another person to own and operate an electric vehicle charging station available to the public on its property. Under the bill, a municipal electric utility may own and operate an electric vehicle charging station that is available to the public and may charge a fee for its use if no tax revenue subsidizes the charging station and if no revenue generated by the charging station is transferred to the general fund of the municipality that owns the municipal electric utility.

Also, under the bill, a state agency is prohibited from owning, operating, managing, or leasing an electric vehicle charging station containing a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 charger unless the charger is not available to the public and is used solely to charge vehicles owned or leased by a state agency.

The bill also imposes an excise tax on electric vehicle charging. The tax is imposed at a rate of 3 cents per kilowatt-hour on the electricity delivered or placed, for compensation, by an electric vehicle charging station into the battery or other energy storage device of an electric vehicle. The tax does not apply to electricity delivered or placed for no charge or by an electric vehicle charging station located at a residence. Under the bill, a "residence" is a place where a person resides permanently or temporarily, except for a hotel. Any person who, for compensation, delivers or places electricity from an electric vehicle charging station, other than an electric vehicle charging station located at a residence, owned, operated, managed, or leased by the person into the battery or other energy storage device of an electric vehicle must obtain a permit from the Department of Revenue. DOR enforces and collects the tax and must deposit all the revenue that it collects from the tax into the transportation fund. The bill also exempts the sale of electricity delivered or placed by an electric vehicle charging station into the battery or other energy storage device of an electric vehicle from the sales and use tax.

Dealers seem to be firing squad targets for federal regulators lately. The FTC and EPA want to tell people what vehicles they can buy and how dealers must sell those vehicles.

### Wisconsin Political Maps

As a result of last year's supreme court election, Wisconsin's state legislative district maps are going to be redrawn (there is also a petition to redraw the congressional maps). The court allowed the issue to bypass typical judicial procedures (Circuit Court, Court of Appeals, Supreme Court) because in their perspective, forcing the issue to be litigated would simply take too long and they had apparently already made the decision that the maps needed to be redrawn. It appears that the court's goal is to satisfy the petitioner's request to have new maps drawn by March 15, so they can be implemented in the upcoming 2024 elections.

The court hired a pair of redistricting experts to evaluate six different proposed maps. They almost immediately discredited two of the options provided by parties supported by republicans and are considering maps provided by Governor Evers, democratic lawmakers, professors from UW-Milwaukee and by the party that filed the lawsuit.

After assessing the situation and weighing possible outcomes, the legislature passed the state district maps drawn by Governor Evers. Earlier in the session they had passed maps that were very close to those drawn by the governor (one district was slightly modified) just to have them vetoed by the governor, stating that the only maps he would sign are his exact proposed maps. So, the legislature passed his maps. Despite objections from democratic legislators, Governor Evers signed the bill formalizing the legislative maps he devised. Under the new maps there will be 29 incumbent republicans in 15 legislative districts that will be forced to run against incumbents from their own party and 4 democrats in 2 districts.

### EV Tax Credits

2024 started with an onslaught of activity regarding the federal EV tax credits, from 2023 reporting requirements to registering dealerships on the IRS portal to complete the time of sale registrations and reimbursements. There have been numerous amendments to the portal, process and filing deadlines.

Here is what we know for sure: 1) Dealers need to register with the IRS to process EV tax credit information (<https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/register-your-dealership-to-enable-credits-for-clean-vehicle-buyers>) for filing 2023 sales reports and registering 2024 transactions that qualify for the EV tax credit. You need to be registered with the IRS regardless of whether you are seeking to apply the credit toward the transaction as a rebate or if the customer will claim their credit on their 2024 income tax filing. 2) Do not deliver or apply the tax credit toward the transaction (as a rebate) until you have confirmation that you have successfully completed the "time

of sale registration." Dealers who do so run the risk of not being able to process the tax credit within the 72-hour window and therefore may lose the right to be reimbursed for the credit applied. 3) The tax credits applied at the time of sale should be treated and taxed like a rebate.

### FTC Delays Effective Date of Vehicle Shopping Rule

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has issued its Combating Auto Retail Scams (CARS - Rule), more appropriately labeled as the Vehicle Shopping Rule (VSR). The FTC has been slow walking this Rule since opening comment period in June 2023. The FTC set an effective date of July 30, 2024, for compliance. To that end, NADA has held webinars to help dealers get up to speed. However, almost immediately after issuing the Rule, NADA and the Texas Automobile Dealers Association (TADA) filed a lawsuit resulting in the FTC suspending the Rule indefinitely.

*The FTC announced on January 18, that they have issued an Order postponing the July 30, 2024, effective date of the Vehicle Shopping Rule pending judicial review of the petition.*

As a result of the FTC's action, NADA released the following statement by its President and CEO Mike Stanton: "We are pleased that the FTC has determined that 'it is in the interests of justice to stay the effective date of the rule to allow for judicial review.' We continue to believe the rule is unnecessary, redundant, confusing, and will needlessly lengthen the car sales process for consumers. The FTC failed to demonstrate the need for the rule and has not tested the effectiveness of its mandates with consumers. NADA will continue to advocate in the courts and in Congress to keep this ill-conceived rule from taking effect."

The postponement of the implementation date does not mean the Rule is dead but it does buy opponents of the Rule time to convince law makers and the court that the proposed Rule is redundant, unfair and unnecessary.

NADA has begun a two-pronged attack to stop the implementation of the Rule. In addition to the judicial filing (in the Fifth Circuit Court - TX), NADA is pursuing support for federal legislation to prevent the implementation and enforcement of the rule, including not only a provision in a House appropriations bill that would deny funding for enforcing the rule but also the "FTC REDO Act" (S.3014), which requires the FTC to follow basic regulatory safeguards should the agency choose to redo the rule.

While these are promising events, dealers should be aware that anything can happen. Any legislation that passes would have to be signed by the president (who would probably veto it) and lately issues brought before the courts are a crap shoot. Therefore, dealers should continue to educate themselves on the proposed changes that may be coming down the road.

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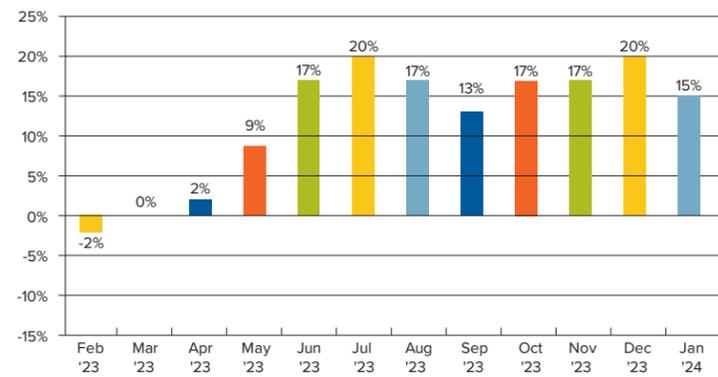
**Proceeds help at-risk youth**



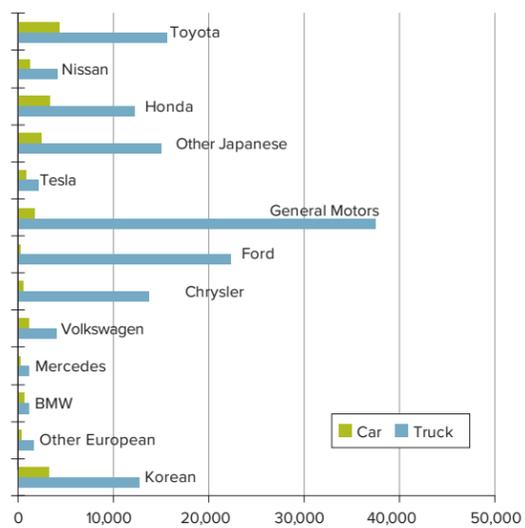
## Wisconsin New Vehicle Trends: January 2024

	Previous Two Months			Year to Date			Year to Date Market Share		
	12/22 to 1/23	12/23 to 1/24	% change	'23 YTD	'24 YTD	% change	'23 YTD	'24 YTD	change
Industry Total	28,500	32,727	14.8%	14,212	15,761	10.9%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Car	3,726	3,785	1.6%	1,874	1,836	-2.0%	13.2%	11.6%	-1.6%
Truck	24,774	28,942	16.8%	12,338	13,925	12.9%	86.8%	88.4%	1.6%
Japanese	9,244	11,785	27.5%	4,568	5,675	24.2%	32.1%	35.9%	3.8%
Toyota	3,023	4,067	34.5%	1,455	1,942	33.5%	10.2%	12.3%	2.1%
Honda	2,508	3,252	29.7%	1,310	1,514	15.6%	9.2%	9.6%	0.4%
Nissan	946	1,037	9.6%	465	525	12.9%	3.3%	3.3%	0.0%
Other	2,767	3,429	23.9%	1,338	1,694	26.6%	9.4%	10.7%	1.3%
Domestic	14,630	15,917	8.8%	7,320	7,712	5.4%	51.5%	49.0%	-2.5%
General Motors	7,288	7,758	6.4%	3,583	3,810	6.3%	25.2%	24.2%	-1.0%
Ford	4,158	4,694	12.9%	2,065	2,198	6.4%	14.5%	13.9%	-0.6%
Chrysler	2,707	2,894	6.9%	1,429	1,402	-1.9%	10.1%	8.9%	-1.2%
Tesla	432	512	18.5%	213	277	30.0%	1.5%	1.8%	0.3%
Other	45	59	31.1%	30	25	-16.7%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
European	1,860	2,172	16.8%	976	1,029	5.4%	6.9%	6.4%	-0.5%
Volkswagen	797	1,077	35.1%	391	510	30.4%	2.8%	3.2%	0.4%
BMW	398	433	8.8%	215	176	-18.1%	1.5%	1.1%	-0.4%
Mercedes	267	258	-3.4%	145	132	-9.0%	1.0%	0.8%	-0.2%
Alfa Romeo	5	8	60.0%	2	4	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	393	396	0.8%	223	207	-7.2%	1.6%	1.3%	-0.3%
Korean	2,766	2,853	3.1%	1,348	1,345	-0.2%	9.5%	8.5%	-1.0%
Other	2,766	2,853	3.1%	1,348	1,345	-0.2%	9.5%	8.5%	-1.0%

**3 Month % Change – and view annual trend.**  
Compares most recent 90 days vs. same 90-day period from last year.



**YTD Registrations by Vehicle Type.**



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January Trend Report from Scott Quimby

## NADA Chairman's Priorities and Initiatives for Wisconsin Automobile Dealers



### Executive Summary

Following the NADA Show, Gary Gilchrist, the 2024 National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Chairman, outlined his priorities and initiatives in a message to automobile dealers nationwide, emphasizing the industry's collective strength and challenges. With extensive experience and

insights gained during his tenure as the NADA vice chairman in 2023, the chairman is set to address national and state-level issues, enhancing the resilience and effectiveness of the franchise system amid evolving automotive retail landscapes.

### Key Priorities for 2024

Gary's leadership agenda centers on the following strategic priorities:

- Strengthening the Franchise System:** Collaborating closely with NADA professional staff, dealers, and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to safeguard and bolster the dealership franchise system against emerging challenges.
- Enhancing Dealer Engagement:** Encouraging more active involvement and engagement among dealers to foster a more cohesive and united front in addressing industry issues.
- Improving NADA and ATAE Collaboration:** Deepening the partnership between NADA and Automotive Trade Association Executives (ATAE) to fortify the industry's advocacy and support structures.
- Defending Against Regulatory Overreach:** Vigorously defending the auto retail sector from potential regulatory excesses that could undermine operational viability and market competitiveness.

### Challenges and Actions

Gary highlighted the multifaceted challenges confronting the auto retail industry, from regulatory pressures to technological shifts. Notably, he pointed to the forthcoming electric vehicle

(EV) mandates from the Biden administration and the problematic Vehicle Shopping Rule proposed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

- EV Mandates:** With EV inventory rising and consumer acceptance lagging regulatory ambitions, NADA is committed to advocating for realistic standards and promoting alternative emission-reducing technologies like hybrids and hydrogen.
- FTC's Vehicle Shopping Rule:** Simply put, the rule will complicate and increase the cost of car buying. NADA has taken extensive legal steps to challenge the rule and is exploring legislative avenues to prevent its implementation.

### Call to Action for Dealers

The chairman urged dealers to remain proactive, informed, and engaged with NADA and ATAE representatives. By working collectively, we can overcome the industry's current and upcoming challenges.

### Conclusion

As the 2024 NADA Chairman, Gary Gilchrist's vision for the future is built on collaboration, advocacy, and resilience. Facing regulatory challenges head-on and fostering a strong, united front among dealers and industry partners, Gary's leadership is poised to navigate the complexities of the automotive market, ensuring a robust and dynamic future for the franchise system.

As part of this national effort, I encourage all Wisconsin automobile dealers to align with NADA's priorities, stay abreast of developments, and actively contribute to the industry's collective success in the face of these unprecedented challenges.



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# HEAVY DUTY TRUCK DEALER SPOTLIGHT

BY JILL SUKOW, DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP

## BILL REILLEY, JR.

LAKESIDE INTERNATIONAL TRUCKS

ATD TRUCK DEALER OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALIST



### How did you get into the truck dealer industry?

My exposure to commercial trucks and the transportation industry began when I was 18 years old. In 1984, after 22 years with the manufacturer, then known as International Harvester, my father marked a pivotal point in his career by acquiring an

International dealership in Milwaukee. From that first point of exposure forward, International trucks and the world of transportation have been embedded in my life.

During my college years, I supported my father in the dealership, embracing a multitude of roles that started humbly with building maintenance/janitorial duties and detailing used trucks, further advancing through positions in shipping/receiving and parts delivery. As time progressed, I began expanding my exposure within the dealership operations, interfacing with customers as a parts counter sales representative, outside parts sales representative and creating and executing marketing strategies aimed at increasing parts and service sales. These roles helped develop my knowledge of the business and industry from the ground up. They also helped shape my appreciation for the value of each position within the dealership and how each comes together to ultimately serve the customer.

My father continued to expand his business with Lakeside International Trucks. As he built the business and established a market presence, in 1994, the opportunity arose for him to acquire an underperforming market in southern Wisconsin. It

was at this time my father recruited me to join his business, taking the lead role in starting Lakeside's second location in Racine.

### How have you risen in the industry and your company to reach where you are today?

After graduating college, I started my professional career with the manufacturer, Navistar International, with a management training program and then assigned as a dealer development manager covering Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa, and later the Chicago market.

Our Racine market acquisition was a ground-up effort as there was no dealership facility, employees, or a customer base from which to build. Taking charge of the role, I assembled a lean, yet effective team. We implemented a strategic plan that culminated in the creation of a dealership. This location, continuing today as a successful cornerstone of Lakeside International Trucks, stands as a testament to our collective efforts, marking not only the success of this business, but also serving as just the initial chapter in my journey in a leadership role.

After establishing the business in Racine, I assumed additional responsibilities as the overall needs of Lakeside International Trucks evolved. I functioned as a versatile "journeyman manager," seamlessly adapting to various roles and addressing emerging business needs as they unfolded. As we advanced in our acquisitions, I took on leadership roles across diverse facets of the business, serving as the used truck manager, parts manager and general manager for recently acquired underperforming International dealerships in West Bend and Random Lake. Later, I became general manager of the largest dealership in the largest market in the state in Milwaukee.

In 1996 my father took the formal initiative to approach Navistar, seeking approval to designate me as his successor. The request was granted, paving the way for the formulation of a comprehensive and strategic long-term succession plan. In 2010, I assumed the role of president, and during that pivotal year, our company experienced additional growth acquiring the Madison market — the second largest market in the state — and establishing our first out-of-state dealership in Rockford, IL.

Beginning in 1996, in alignment with the company's succession strategy, I increasingly acquired an equity position in the business through a blend of corporate and personal achievements. This strategic journey culminated in 2021, as I purchased the remaining equity interest in Lakeside from my father, assuming full ownership of the enterprise and assuming the roles of chairman, CEO, and president.

### What do you like most about being a truck dealer?

One of the motivating and most appealing aspects of our business is that it is constantly changing. If you ever think you have everything "figured out," you quickly realize you don't, as the world of medium- and heavy-duty truck dealers is always changing.

The three most recent years have been, and the next three years are sure to continue to be among the most dynamic in recent history — navigating through the post-COVID environment, including supply chain challenges, manufacturer allocation, the emerging world of electric and alternative fuel vehicles, declining used truck values, the impact of CARB and EPA regulations, challenging labor pool and staffing shortages, interest rates, understanding AI and how it can impact our business, just to cite a few.

It can be exciting, at times stressful, and often exceptionally rewarding to work through the process of identifying challenges and opportunities, setting strategic direction, building, and implementing plans ultimately focused on improving our business. Candidly, it's not for everyone, but the life of a truck dealer is dynamic and full of constant challenges which makes every day interesting and exciting.

### Describe your leadership style. How do you pilot your business?

I find the ever-evolving nature of our industry to be one of the most compelling aspects of being a truck dealer. In this dynamic world of medium- and heavy-duty trucks, change is constant. No matter how adept you may become, there's always more to learn.

This environment may at times seem discouraging, but I thrive on these challenges. It's a blend of excitement, occasional stress, and immense satisfaction in tackling these dynamics. Identifying opportunities amidst challenges, setting strategic courses, and executing plans that enhance our business. This

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is what drives me. The challenge and energy of a truck dealer's life keeps each day interesting and invigorating.

My approach to "piloting" our business is rooted in structured discipline, refined over the years. We establish a comprehensive financial business plan constructed "bottom-up," by individual departments and locations. Once approved, these plans cascade down to personalized goal setting throughout the organization. Everyone understands our company's objectives, their role within it and how their contributions shape our success. We constantly revisit our progress, identifying hurdles and adjusting courses regularly, at minimum monthly. In this, my role is to guide this process, ensuring we have the right people in the right roles and equipped with the necessary resources.

My active engagement with employees, customers, and vendors is fundamental. To illustrate, in 2023, I engaged directly with over 60% of our truck customers, fostering relationships and collaborating with our sales team in the field. I firmly believe in leading by example and understand the pivotal role a strong market and employee presence plays in our success.

#### Why do you believe you were nominated for the ATD Truck Dealer of the Year Award?

I attribute the nomination for the ATD Truck Dealer of the Year Award to our persistent commitment to excellence across various dimensions of performance. Our financial performance stands out notably within our industry, consistently surpassing benchmarks and achieving positive results compared to our peers.

Lakeside's distinction in representing the International brand, reflected in our recognition by Navistar as one of their perennial, top-performing dealers in North America in terms of customer service, market share, and commitment to ongoing investment and growth, acknowledges our credibility and commitment to continual growth and investment in serving our customers.

Beyond business metrics, I also believe people in the industry and our local communities recognize and acknowledge Lakeside's focus on being leaders and active participants to help improve the world we operate in. We're very involved in our local communities, dedicating our time and talents and financial resources to local charities. Me, along with several key staff members, are continually involved in the industry, serving on many of our manufacturer's advisory boards, committees, pilot dealer programs, along with broader industry-related engagement at the state, local and even national level including examples such as trade associations, technical schools and elected representative engagements.

Equally significant is our dedication to fostering a positive work environment, as evidenced by our high staff retention rates and best-in-class scores in employee satisfaction surveys. We prioritize engagement and empowerment within our team,

reflecting a culture that values and supports its members.

Our reputation as an organization built on integrity resonates strongly with our employees, customers, and partners. Integrity isn't just a value we promote but a principle woven into the fabric of our operations, guiding our actions and interactions consistently.

The combination of our financial performance, brand recognition, commitment to our team and community, and our unwavering integrity collectively positioned Lakeside for consideration for this prestigious recognition.

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## Be Part of our Summer Virtual Auto Show!

We are planning a virtual car show for the summer 2024 issue of Dealer Point! Please submit a photo of your vehicle along with a paragraph giving us some of the finer details of your pride and joy. We welcome classic cars, trucks, tractors, and special unique vehicles, even toys—show us what you've got so we can create an interesting show for our readers. Submit electronic pictures (300 dpi is the preferred resolution) to [mmarkanich@watda.org](mailto:mmarkanich@watda.org).



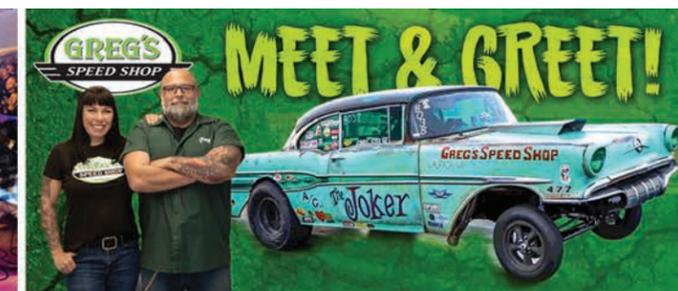
Dave and Julie Farmer's 1966 Ford Country Sedan. Her name is "Betty White."



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# CenterStage

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## ► Dahl Automotive Sells Electric SUV to Raise Funds for Chariots4Hope

Dahl Automotive has always been a gracious community partner supporting many non-profits throughout the 7-Rivers Region. This time, however, they got creative to raise funds by capitalizing on the hype of direct-to-consumer Electric Vehicle sales. Dahl Auto purchased a Rivian R1S electric SUV as a case study to fully understand the complete purchase process provided by the online startup. Executives at Dahl Auto documented the reservation process, communication during production, the vehicle delivery and final document signing to receive a glimpse into the tech-forward online vehicle purchase experience.

Dahl then presented the findings to the entire sales team in a group-wide gathering. "Throughout this entire process," explains Tyler Dahl, Vice President of Strategy, "we were able to connect new ways of retailing vehicles to how we currently do business. The most significant learning lesson for us is that we can simplify the purchase process for our customers while maintaining a personal and local relationship that the online retailers simply cannot match. Using our own technology, we can provide a very similar purchase experience to the online retailers from a 100% online purchase process to home delivery. We just get the benefit of establishing a deeper relationship with the customer because we can provide local service and a level of trust that they can hold us accountable to."

At the conclusion of the case study, Dahl placed the Rivian up for auction online and was able to raise \$10,000 over the original purchase price that was donated to the local non-profit chapter of Chariots4Hope. Chariots4Hope is a faith-based, non-profit organization that supports low-income families and individuals to maintain self-sufficiency through reliable transportation and RIDE programs. "Since inception, Dahl Auto and their incredible team members have been big supporters of C4H here in Wisconsin and we were thrilled to learn about this very innovative idea to raise local funds through this project," states Nyhus Shaffer, Executive Director of Wisconsin C4H. "Without partners like Dahl that lend their automotive expertise by donating funds and resources to restoring vehicles to uplift those most deserving of a second chance, our community would not be the vibrant and supportive place it is today."



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# From Around the State

Please send your news From Around the State to [mmarkanich@watda.org](mailto:mmarkanich@watda.org)

## ONE Automotive Group Acquires Eau Claire Automotive Group

ONE Automotive Group, serving Eau Claire and the Chippewa Valley, has acquired another longtime local auto group. The acquisition of Eau Claire Automotive Group was finalized in December.

"I'm thrilled about this development and what it will mean for the auto buyers of the Chippewa Valley," said Mike Keil, Eau Claire Auto's veteran owner. "It's been great to watch the growth that's coming to ONE – and Eau Claire's brands are going to fuel that in a big way."

In addition to a foursome of domestic brands – Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, and Ram – the acquisition will include a Nissan dealership as well as ABRA Auto Body Eau Claire (Altoona). The Eau Claire Auto brands will complement ONE's existing offerings, which include Audi, Honda, Hyundai, Mazda, and Volkswagen, as well as Vance Collision Center in Eau Claire.

Keil was pleased to sell to ONE, a well-regarded and fellow locally owned organization. "You often hear about giant chains snatching up little dealerships," he said, "but what's happened here in Eau Claire is just the opposite."

Bill Bertrand, ONE Automotive's President and Owner, agrees. "We both believe in staying local, employing local, and most of all doing right by the customer," he said. "The existing great relationship between the two groups means this acquisition will happen with minimal disruption to our personnel."

After 38 years in the auto business in Eau Claire, including the past 12 years as owner, Keil expressed gratitude to his many customers and friends over the years. "It's certainly bittersweet," Keil said. "It's been an honor to work so long in such a great community. But I'll be watching from afar with pride, and I know our group is in great hands with ONE Auto."

## Dahl Automotive Acquires four dealerships from Kocourek Automotive

"We are excited to welcome over one hundred new team members to the Dahl Automotive family. The Kocourek organization is known for its operational excellence, team engagement and community impact. We are honored to have the opportunity to acquire these four stores in two great markets," comments Andrew Dahl, President of Dahl Automotive.

Selling these stores allows the Kocourek organization to further invest in the Wausau market for years to come", states Keith Kocourek, President of Kocourek Automotive. Kocourek Automotive will continue to operate their dealerships in Wausau, which are not included in the transaction.

The acquisitions include two Honda dealerships and two CDJR dealerships. The new dealership names are Dahl Honda Stevens Point, Dahl Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram Stevens Point, Dahl Honda Rhinelander, and Dahl Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram Rhinelander.

With the acquisitions, Dahl Automotive group grows to 10 dealerships in total in MN and WI, representing 13 brands and employing 525 team members.

"Rhinelander and Stevens Point fit our strategic plan of growing in small to mid-size markets where we can have a positive impact through our business on our team, guests, and community. Our strong OEM relationships are the cornerstone to our success, and we are excited to expand our partnership with Honda and welcome back Chrysler Dodge Jeep and RAM," commented Andrew.

## Morrie's Acquires Chilson Motors

Morrie's Auto Group has acquired three Chippewa Valley car dealerships with its purchase of Chilson Motors. Chilson Motors — which includes Chilson Eau Claire Subaru, Chilson Chippewa Falls CDJR and Chilson Cadott CDJR — was owned by the Chilson family, which has been part of the auto dealership industry for 65 years. "We truly want to thank everyone for all their support. We feel honored and privileged to be a part of this community," the Chilson family said in the release. "Without our employees, this would not have been possible. We have an amazing team of dedicated professionals that truly care for our clients."

"These businesses share many of the same core values as Morrie's, including serving their communities with heart, humility and integrity," Lance Iserman, CEO of Morrie's Auto Group, said. Morrie's now owns 29 dealerships across Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, representing 21 brands.

## Russ Darrow West Bend Relocation

Russ Darrow Group recently announced that Russ Darrow CDJR of West Bend is relocating in the city, and its new location is holding a grand opening in February. The dealership will

include: a showroom designed to highlight the latest models and allow customers to explore and test drive vehicles; expanded service center that can handle a higher volume of vehicles; a customer lounge that includes complimentary Wi-Fi, refreshments and kids' play area; enhanced parts department; and a finance center to help customers with financing, and lease options.

## Don Johnson Auto Group adds Hayward CDJR

Hayward Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram has been a key player in the automotive sales and service sector of Sawyer County. The transition comes as current owners Dan and Julie Dunn shift their focus to cater to the area's outdoor recreation needs at Adventure RV and Powersports of Hayward.

Don Johnson Motors has locations in Rice Lake, Hayward, Cumberland, and Ladysmith, representing franchises including Chevrolet, GMC, Ford, Chrysler, Dodge, Fiat, Jeep, RAM, and RAM commercial vehicles. Josh Johnson, CEO of Don Johnson Auto Group, said, "With the addition of Hayward CDJR, we're not just joining forces; we're expanding our family, which values each guest and every team member. The Hayward Chrysler team's commitment to quality and guest satisfaction perfectly complements our ethos at Don Johnson Motors."

## Holiday Automotive Breaks Ground on New Facility

Holiday Automotive is expanding their campus to include a dedicated vehicle reconditioning center on a 5-acre parcel for the 18,000 sq ft facility Holiday's Reconditioning Tech Center. The new building will house a team of twenty technicians, a parts department, and reconditioning support staff readying pre-owned vehicles for sale at all four Holiday showrooms across the company campus.

Willie Beyer, VP of fixed operations stated, "this new facility will not only allow us to prepare our used vehicles more efficiently for sale, but it will expand our service capacity for our guests. Michael Shannon, Jr, Holiday's President added, "this new facility will help us to accommodate our guests' repair and maintenance needs, while streamlining the used vehicle reconditioning process. This expansion will support continued growth in both sales and service." The project has an estimated completion timeframe of late Summer 2024.

## Algoma Motors Shifts Gears

Algoma Motors is no longer a GMC franchise affiliate but will continue as a used vehicle dealership. The GMC franchise has been shifted to Patriot Motors in Sturgeon Bay. The decision to transfer the GMC franchise came about because Buick intended to go all-electric in January 2023. "In this Midwest, northeastern Wisconsin atmosphere — if you want to call it that — people are a little reluctant to buy electric cars," said Principal Dealer Jim Rabas. "It appeared that the timing was right to do that," he added. This isn't Algoma Motors' first big change. When the company first opened in 1937, they offered Hudson, Terraplane, and Nash vehicles, later adding Pontiac in 1938 and Buick in 1985. In 2010, General Motors discontinued the Pontiac line, thus removing it from their dealership. Algoma Motors will continue to service all makes and models. Rabas is even offering to coach those who need warranty work on their used vehicles, since Algoma Motors can no longer do so under GMC. Despite the changes, Rabas has no plans of closing the business and looks forward to the evolution of the dealership.



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## The Emil Ewald Legacy Lives On

The Emil A. Ewald name is synonymous with work ethic, passion, and giving back in Wisconsin. He was an entrepreneurial auto dealer that served our country in World War II, and vigorously supported the causes he believed in. Emil was a visionary and leader. Part of this leadership is shown by his longstanding commitment to the WATDA Foundation. Emil was one of the Foundation's charter members, served on the Board of Directors, and was Chairman of the Board.

Through Emil's philanthropic spirit he formed the Emil Ewald Family Foundation. Through the family foundation he was able to support causes he was passionate about. His giving to the Foundation started in its infancy and he never stopped. To further demonstrate Emil's unyielding commitment to giving to the WATDA Foundation—he made one final generous donation to the organization he loved.

Champions like Emil are few and far between. From the very beginning, he was a Champion for the WATDA Foundation and its mission of supporting young people pursuing transportation careers. The entire WATDA family and network are forever grateful for Emil's impact.



Tom Ewald presenting a \$25,000 check from the Emil Ewald Revocable Trust.

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# Tribute

## James (Jim) Charles Carter



James Charles Carter was an American football player who played only for the Green Bay Packers from 1970 to 1978.

Carter, born on October 18, 1948, died in his home November 23 at 75. The news of Jim's death came 45 years after he retired from an NFL career of eight seasons. Yet, even after

all these years, his proficient defensive skills remain the talk of the franchise. The former NFL player, now retired, is survived by his wife, Victoria. No information about his children or other family members is available.

A third-round pick of the 1970 NFL draft, Carter's potential didn't take him long to progress. After his rookie season, he replaced legendary linebacker Ray Nitschke in 1971 as the starter. It did come up with both bright & dark sides; while players and coaches respected his progression, fans would "boo" him as he replaced the fan favorite Nitschke.



He became the second member of the 1972 Packers team to die in 2023; earlier in March 2023, running back John Brockington died at 74.

In 1978, then-30-year-old Carter retired from the NFL playing career as a Packers player, completing eight seasons. After leaving his football career, the 1973 Pro Bowl honoree dipped his toes in a business venture which bloomed with success.

As reported, the University of Minnesota alum bought a struggling Ford dealership in Eau Claire following his retirement. By February of 1980, his dealership as "Jim Carter Ford" began to collect profits. Carter spread his business to other automotive dealerships around Wisconsin: Bob Johnson Chevrolet-Mazda, Car City Honda, Borum-Dyer Volkswagen-Audi, and Ken Loesch Cadillac-Pontiac-Oldsmobile.

Even more, he was honored as the Wisconsin Dealer of the Year in 1988.

After operating the dealership for more than 25 years, he sold all his business holdings to his longtime manager Keith Kocourek in 2005.

Throughout his business career, the late St. Paul, Minnesota native actively participated in community work.

Some of the honorable positions held by Jim were as president of the Greater Eau Claire Area Chamber (in 1990) and as

board of directors of the Wisconsin Auto and Truck Dealers Association and Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.

## James A. Cooper

James "Jim" Arthur Cooper, a lifelong resident of Stevens Point passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his family, on January 10, at the age of 78.

Jim was born November 29, 1945, in Stevens Point; son of the late Roman and Mary Ann (Glodowski) Cooper. He went through the Stevens Point Catholic school system, where he excelled in his studies, graduating in 1964 from Pacelli High School.

Jim attended Regis College in Denver, CO, where he studied accounting. He was elected Class President and graduated Summa Cum Laude in 1968. While at Regis, Jim met his college sweetheart, Karen Hack, who was attending a nearby college, Loretto Heights. The two were married on July 13, 1968, in Karen's hometown, Chicago, IL. Jim was called up to serve in the Army Reserves and, from 1968 until 1974, Jim was ready to be called to active duty if necessary. After basic training, he and Karen returned to Stevens Point, where Jim began working at Cooper Motors; a family-owned business, founded by his grandfather. Jim worked alongside his father, Roman Cooper, and proudly took over the business in 1969. He was a trusted and well-respected businessman, and successfully ran the business until his retirement in 2008.

Jim was an active member of the community, serving on numerous Boards of Directors, including Catholic Diocesan Board & Finance Committee, Anchor Bank, and Wisconsin Auto & Truck Dealers. In 1990, Jim and Karen were invited to join the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

In December of 2016, Jim suffered a severe stroke. Due to the amazing care and unconditional love from Karen, as well as the loyalty and support he received from his family and dear friends, he was able to maintain a good quality of life.

Jim is survived by his wife of 55 years, Karen; his daughter, Elizabeth Cooper of San Francisco, CA; his son, David (Kaaryn) Cooper, and their children, Isla and Wyatt, of Prior Lake, MN; his daughter, Jennifer (Matt) Packard, and their children, Charlie, Madeline, and Owen, of Hingham, MA; and his daughter, Annie Cooper (Nick Hourigan) and their children, Olive and Nora Hourigan, of London, England. He is also survived by his younger brother, Michael; and his sister-in-law, Nancy Cooper.

## John H. Hackman



John H. Hackman Jr., age 69, passed away on the evening of December 7, after a short, courageous battle against cancer. He was surrounded by his loving and devoted wife Laura, his daughters, and family.

Born August 5, 1954 in Marshfield the first child to John "Jack" and Joanne (Wirtz)

Hackman. John received his education at St. John's Elementary and Columbus high school graduating in 1972. He went to work for a local grocer until 1976 when he began his career at Wisco Cooperative. His dedication and service at Wisco included two decades as President, until his retirement in 2020.

John wed Laura (Moran) in 1996. Their love for each other kept the days full of adventure and happiness. Whether fishing, pontooning, or traveling, they enjoyed everything together. John's devotion to Laura was balanced by his love of his family along with the Green Bay Packers and Chicago Cubs. John was a natural born leader in his work, his family, and his many dedicated years coaching basketball. He led by example with a calm presence and endless loyalty and dedication to anything he committed to. John had a very strong faith and was an active member of St. Andrew's Parish acting as financial steward for multiple years.

John is survived by his wife Laura (Moran) Hackman, his mother, JoAnne Hackman, three daughters Patti (James) Bandow, Heather (Joe) Maass, Jodi (Aaron) Volkmar, and three stepsons Matt (Shannon) Schueller, Joe (Louise) Schueller and Jake (Katie) Schueller, and many grandchildren and great grandchildren. He is further survived by his siblings.

He is preceded in death by his father John "Jack" Hackman and his brother, Michael Hackman.

## Ronald Thorstad



Ron was born October 29, 1937, in Madison, the oldest of four children, to Clarence and Anita (Prinz) Thorstad. He graduated from West High School in 1955 and UW-Madison in 1959. He was married to Laureen Seefeldt in 1960 in Two Rivers.

In high school, Ron served two years in the Marine Corps Reserve as a tank driver. After graduating from the University, he accepted a Regular Army commission and completed Airborne and Ranger schooling. He was assigned to the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg NC for 18 months; then assigned to the Korean Military Advisory Group for 18 months as the infantry advisor to the Korean basic training camp.

He left the military in 1962 and entered the automobile business with his father. He sold cars for 3 years while founding Thorstad Leasing in 1963. He subsequently became President of Thorstad Chevrolet and Thorstad Leasing. He conducted seminars for two years on Body Shop operations at the NADA convention. In 1992 he was named TIME's Wisconsin Automotive Dealer of the Year.

Ron was very active in the community. He served as co-founder and president of Thursday's Child (a Wisconsin-based charity gifting to seriously ill children), co-founder and treasurer of Bethel Horizons, Council President of Bethel Lutheran Church, and President of Nakoma Golf Club.

Ron was a licensed pilot (120 hours), a lifetime member of American Mensa, and a mediocre but generally happy golfer with his friends. He enjoyed boating, camping, and skiing with his family, and talking with his grandchildren. He and Laureen traveled to Europe, Hawaii, and Nova Scotia, and enjoyed many winter months in Sanibel.

Ron was preceded in death by his father and mother, wife, Laureen; granddaughter Maggie, and sisters Diane Price and Dawneen Beedy. He is survived by his son James Thorstad (Barbara Horton) of North Reading, MA; daughter Jae Ellen Werndli (Todd) of Waunakee; son Thomas Thorstad of Madison; grandchildren Isabel and Julia Thorstad; Alex (Chaimaa) Mahmoud-Werndli; brother John (Debbi Kramer); nieces and nephews, and many good friends.

## Eight Reasons for WATDA Membership

### 1 Make Money

#### Warranty Reimbursement Laws

Wisconsin has the best warranty reimbursement laws in the country. In 2011 WATDA passed our state law that utilizes a specific reimbursement formula that will get a dealership as close to retail as possible, without fear of retaliation. In 2019 an enhancement was added with an anti-surcharge/anti-retaliation component. This added revenue in itself will pay for annual membership dues.

### 2 Reasonable Compensation

#### Wisconsin Service Fees

WATDA passed legislation that allows a reasonable service fee to be passed on to the purchasing customer. This fee is not capped as in many other states. The fee must be itemized and can be reviewed by DMV at any time. A non-capped fee is a luxury not found in most states. This generates revenue directly to the dealership.

### 3 Save Money

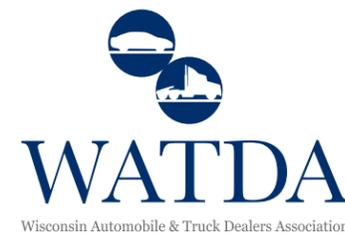
#### Legal Information

WATDA employs its own Legal Counsel. WATDA legal counsel has 25 years experience dealing with the Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Franchise law and other legal issues that dealers encounter. The information provided by our counsel is for members only and is a benefit of membership.

### 4 Home Advantage

#### Trade-in Credit

WATDA secured and protects the practice of providing consumers with a trade-in credit. This reduction in state tax makes purchasing from a Wisconsin dealership more appealing.



### 5 Preserve the System

#### District Sales Legislation

WATDA has mounted opposition to the direct sales assault for the last 7 years, covering the last 3+ legislative sessions. The WATDA board of directors raised \$100,000 in 2021 and 2022 to combat the direct sales initiatives. The plan is to defeat the issue in the 2023-2024 session allowing manufacturers ample time to load dealer lots with electric vehicles, making such legislation a moot point by 2025.

### 6 Provide Education

#### Training of Technicians

The Foundation of WATDA has provided 2,000 scholarships, \$5 million in tuition, and \$5 million in tools to technicians to work in Wisconsin dealerships.

### 7 Protection

#### Prevent Mistakes

WATDA provides training to prevent mistakes in the dealership. Training is provided in such areas as Sales & Service, Title & Registration, and Financing and Insurance. These up-to-date seminars are provided to members only to understand the complexity of Wisconsin laws.

### 8 Collective Voice

#### We Know Everyone

WATDA has member dealerships in every legislative district allowing dealerships the luxury of educating our legislators on issues important to our industry.

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## NEXT ISSUE: Who's New in Wisconsin? The changing member base of WATDA



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