

Future is bright in car business

Grassroot News, N.W. — What's good for the Big Three car companies is supposed to be good for the lot of us. The bail-out of one of these car companies in Jimmy's last term avoided the turmoil of mass unemployment and layoffs. According to Al McGilberry, a sales and leasing representative of Cadillac, Pontiac and GMC cars, the automobile industry is directly tied into the economy. "For some reason the Big Three took their time in producing the low-fuel consumption cars that the Japanese, French and German manufacturers excelled in. Because of the gas-saving situation people bought foreign cars and the big three had to go 360 degrees. Now we can compete with our across-the-sea competitor. What took so much time was the realization of the importance of saving money for gas."

For years the marketing campaigns geared the American consumer toward four-door gas hogs but as the price of gasoline moved over and above the \$1.40 mark the utility of a long car soon diminished. "Sometimes old habits are hard to break and just because they say they're managers they may not do the best for their company at that time. It will take millions of dollars to make that change-over, with the stockholders wanting more money. They didn't do it and now they're in a situation where the foreign market takes up to 40 per cent of the home market. The Big Three are playing catch-up and trying to bring the money back to America."

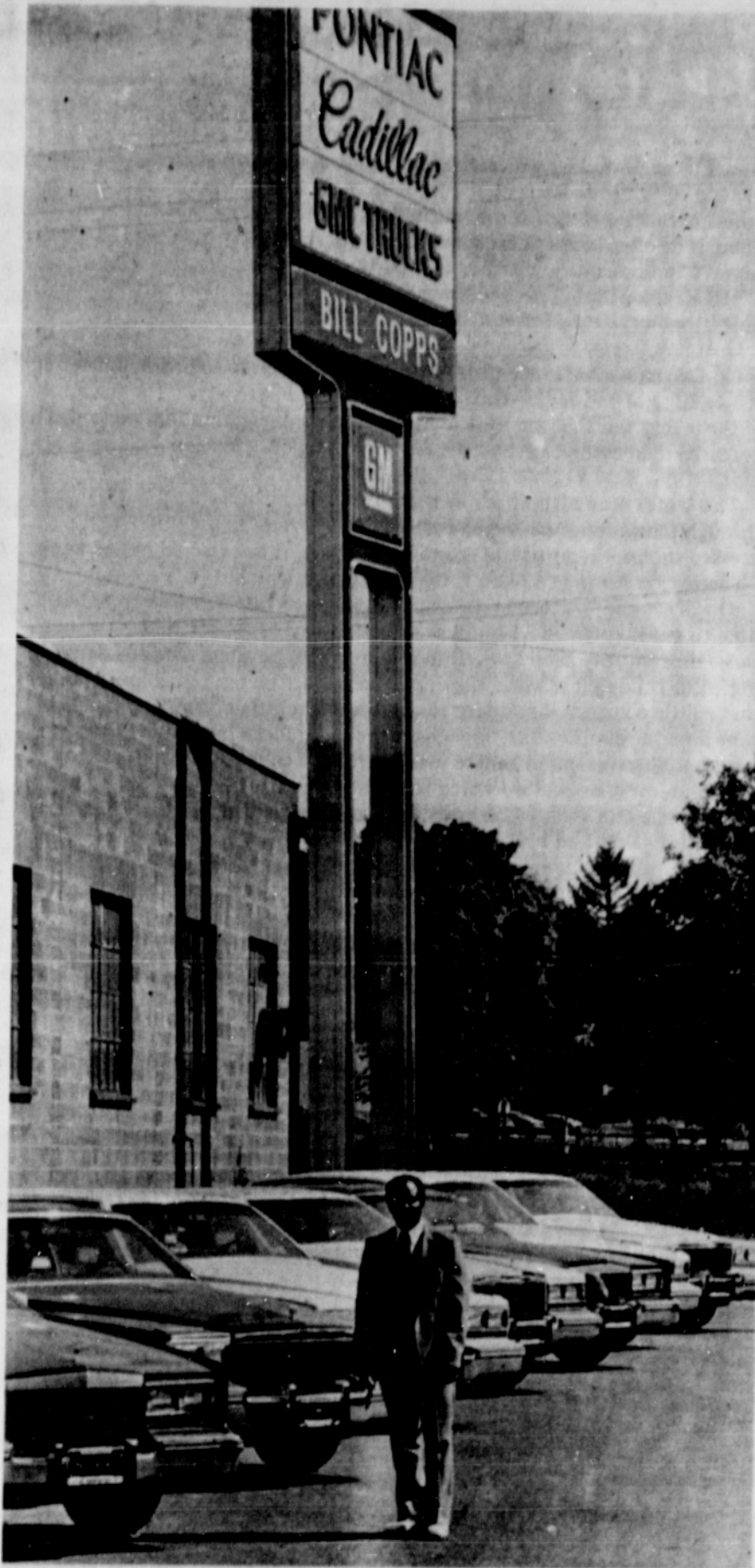
McGilberry started out as a teacher in New York and was introduced to car dealerships through a summer job. Nothing in this busi-

ness surprised him and he expected the Government to bail out one of the Big Three. "Industry and the Government are all tied in together. If it had been a small company they would have let them go bankrupt. But we are dealing with a national as well as an international market. There were too many people employed and too much money to let the company go down."

Among the other problems that the car business has to drive out of is one of high interest rates. "The Government continues to borrow money and the lenders are making it higher and costlier to get money. That is one reason that interest rates are as high as they are. When you and I are ready to buy an automobile we have to pay from 18 to 20 per cent interest. The interest rates may go down in the next couple of years but it will never go down to the 5 and 6 per cent we once knew."

McGilberry is one of the few Blacks in management in northwest car sales and has encountered racism in the mostly all-white industry. "I worked myself up from a car salesman to a general manager and gained a master's degree in business. When I came to Portland, Pontiac wanted to put me in a store in Portland. They called Mike Salta, who didn't want to hire a Black man as a salesman. They seem to find, many other businesses, that they didn't want Black in those jobs that are the economic crust of this country. The automobile business has yet to embrace Blacks in the management level."

And with this limit McGilberry has raced through and established himself qualified enough to assist others in making the second biggest purchase of their lifetime, a car.



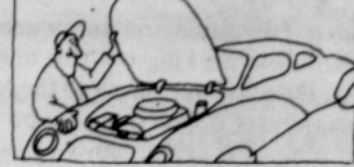
Al McGilberry poses with new line of cadillacs at Bill Copp's in Vancouver. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

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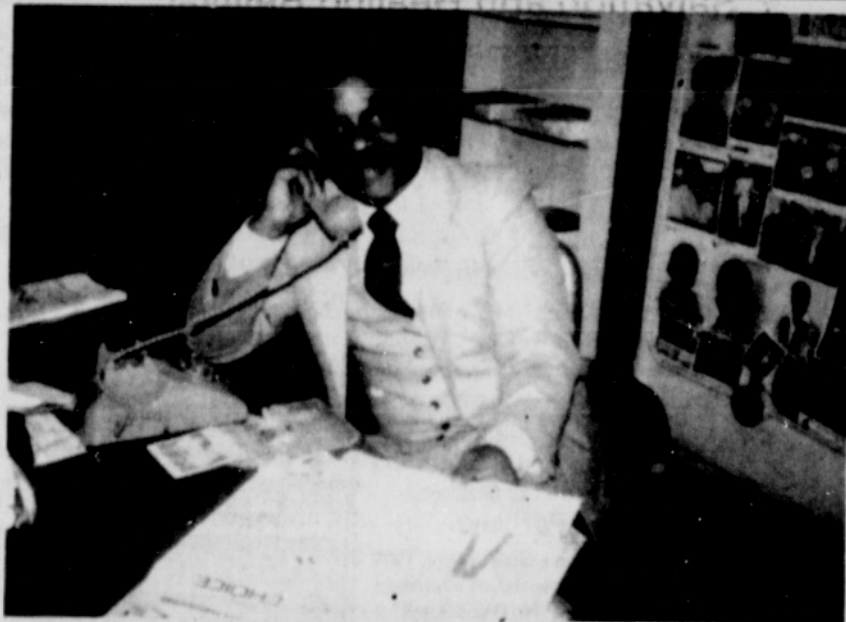
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