



Buying and Selling With Beecher

Part 1 in the "Beecher Auto Sales" series

by Mathilda Gregory, Editor-in-Chief

Claude Beecher has been selling used cars in Hardy Falls for as long as he can remember.

"I bought some of my brother's toy cars for a nickel apiece and then sold them to my friends marked up to a quarter a car when I was a kid," he told *The Hardy Falls Gazette* recently. "My first real car sale of the non-toy variety was to a buddy of mine when I was sixteen," he laughs. "Too bad the car I sold belonged to my parents at the time. They weren't too happy about it, but they went through with the sale. I'd gotten them an excellent price.

The love of buying and selling cars followed Beecher into adulthood, leading him to work for his uncle at Beecher Auto Sales, after high school, before finally taking over the business twenty years ago when he was in his mid-thirties. Another trait followed him as well—that of complaints about the vehicles sold.

"Yeah, I bought this toy racing car from Claude back when we were kids," said local businessman Al Roth, owner of Roth Furniture. "The wheels fell off the next day. Seems he'd stuck them on with chewing gum." Roth shrugs philosophically. "I tried to get my quarter back, and he laughed at me. We never hung out after that, but it doesn't seem like it was much of a loss.

Toy cars are one thing, but the issue becomes much more severe when we're talking about the real deal.

"I bought a used car from Claude a year ago," June Esperanza, a server at the Country Time told *The Hardy Falls Gazette*. "It's been a total lemon. Everything that could rot or fall off the thing has. Nothing seems to have been covered by the warranty, even though I bought an extended one. It didn't even cover the alternator when it crapped out." She sighs. "It's my own fault. I was just stupid. I guess I could try to sue him, but I really can't afford an attorney.

"All the problems June's had with her car have all been normal wear and tear," Claude Beecher said when *The Hardy Falls Gazette* asked him to comment on the issue. "Her warranty specifically states that it doesn't cover those kinds of repairs." And when asked about the alternator, he said, "Electrical systems are not covered under the warranties offered by Beecher Auto Sales.

If you've been living in Hardy Falls for any length of time, you've heard the complaints. One man, who asked to remain anonymous because, "I have to live in this town" recently told this reporter that "buying a car from Beecher was like marrying a sweet girl and waking up in the morning to find out she's a crackhead who's going to suck out all your money and your life.

That seems rather harsh. Aren't there any satisfied customers in the Beecher records? We found a few hanging around Wally Dunlop's garage—Richie Dunlop and his friend Bernie Housemann.

"Everybody complains about Claude, but I don't get it," said Richie, brother to Wally and operator of the Dunlop garage overnight towing service. "He's given me some great deals over the years. Sure, there have been problems now and then, but you have to expect that with a used car. With a new car too, come to that." Dunlop laughs. "If cars didn't have problems we'd be out of business.

"I never really had an issue," said Housemann. "I know what I'm looking for, and I'm smart about what I buy.

"I knew what I was looking for, too," said June Esperanza, when asked to comment on these opinions. "I did my research. Claude Beecher sold me a junker and refuses to do anything about it.

"Every business has dissatisfied customers," Beecher responded. "You have to look at what we've done for the community over the years and all of the people who depend on Beecher Auto Sales.

We've been looking for those people, Mr. Beecher, and we've found many more of the dissatisfied variety than those who believe Beecher Auto Sales service to be dependable. Could there be a valid reason?

We'll see.

Next — the surprising connections Beecher Auto Sales has forged over the years.