

## Montgomery's Body Shop (written by Helen Garrett)

“Paul Montgomery opened his body shop at his residence west of Kinmundy in March of 1960. When wrecks occurred at any time of the day or night (especially when the weather meant icy and snowy roads) Paul was called. Mr. Frank Garrett was his first customer. Hank Reed's Construction Company was his second one. Cars in those days were made of all steel and could be straightened; dents removed, filled in and painted in colors to exactly match the original color. The cars sold now are made so much lighter in weight even a small wreck can mean ordering a whole new fender, door or whatever the damaged area is.

Paul was well known for his meticulous work and kept busy all the time. Business at home meant seldom sitting down to a meal without the phone ringing—someone in a ditch—perhaps a phone call at midnight on a snowy night! His was truly no seven to five job, and Sundays were no exception. All the insurance claims meant waiting quite a while for payment. In between the car repair jobs, Paul kept busy painting refrigerators, steel doors, and kitchen cabinets. One time Paul was excused from grand jury duty, due to being the sole owner of his body shop and to keep money coming in! Paul mostly worked alone except 1 or 2 years when Bill Halterman helped him.

One reason Paul quit was the red tape involved. The EPA put restrictions on the paint used and ordered expensive additives. At first, the state of Illinois required no permit, but that changed. Paul's last permit expired in 1989. Also the prices of the paint and lacquer used in the repair doubled and tripled. Paint started out at 85 cents a pint, then to \$1.60 a pint! Now, Paul says the paint would be at least \$385 a gallon!

Many of us, who had teenage sons during Paul's years in business, were some of his best customers! Paul, “Bring your wrecker” was too often our request!”