# ALL OEM Information

with Tom McGee

*Tom McGee is National Account Manager for ALLDATA Collision. He has had a long career with I-CAR, including as President & CEO. Tom is an ASE certified Master Collision Repair/Refinish Technician. He has also run his own collision facility and been a career and technical school instructor. He can be reached at Tom.McGee@alldata.com. For other Tom McGee articles in Autobody News, go to: http://www.autobodynews.com/tom-mcgee/index.php*

## ‘Be Proud’ and Take Advantage of the Need for Repair Information

Recently I had the opportunity to give a presentation to a group of shop owners and managers. The presentation highlighted several areas of change in vehicle technology: advanced high-strength steels, laser welding, MIG brazing, hybrid disabling procedures, structural sectioning, and panel attachment methods, such as bonding and riveting. During the presentation, I spoke not only about the technology, but also how the technology was impacting the collision repair industry in areas such as: technician safety; required tools, equipment and materials; technician efficiency; estimate accuracy and other areas that affect the business.

Following the presentation I received several positive comments from those in attendance, but one stood out. A shop owner mentioned that he had been in the collision repair business for more than 40 years, and that following the presentation he felt like he didn’t know what he was doing. I have not stopped thinking about his comments since leaving the meeting that night.

In all my travels and meetings, I have never met a collision professional who woke up in the morning, went to the shop, and deliberately made an improper repair. This industry has some wonderful people who try their best to do what’s right both in the shop and in their community.

While that gentleman may have felt as if he didn’t know everything he needs to know, he should be proud of the fact that he is engaged in the collision industry. He took advantage of an opportunity to learn and stay aware of the changes that are going on at a rapid pace around him.

We all need to take advantage of every opportunity we can to learn from each other and share information that will help us write better estimates, perform better repairs, and successfully communicate with the vehicle owner. We all need an ongoing stream of information to keep up with the changes.

While the presentation focused on current changes in vehicle technology, I also began to think about the changes that this gentleman has seen over the last 40-plus years.

Forty years ago we had steel chrome bumpers. They evolved into plastic bumper covers with reinforcements. Now we have bumpers that incorporate back-up cameras, lasers or sonar for adaptive cruise control systems, and collision warning systems.

Electrical systems moved from generators to alternators. Six-volt systems became 12-volt systems. Manual windows and locks gave way to power windows and locks. And 40 years ago, who would have envisioned today’s hybrid systems.

Vehicle construction went from body-over-frame, to the unibody. And construction of the unibody itself has continued to evolve from mild steel to high-strength steels to today’s advanced high-strength steels (AHSS), laminated steels, aluminum, and other new materials.

A study by the American Iron and Steel Institute (www.steel.org) estimates that the use of advanced high-strength steels increased by more than 4% of the total vehicle body weight between 2007 to 2009, while the average vehicle weight decreased by 163 pounds. [See article on p. 2]

While we can discuss other advancements in vehicle technology: supplemental restraint systems, electronic monitoring systems, lighting systems and more, we know that we are in for more changes in the future. Even in the last couple of weeks, new federal roof standards were announced that will require vehicle manufacturers to significantly strengthen vehicle roof structures and improve rollover crash protection. The new National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) regulation doubles the requirement for light vehicles weighing up to 6,000 pounds and specifies that both driver and passenger sides of the roof must be capable of withstanding a force equal to three times the weight of the vehicle. The standard also mandates electronic stability control systems. The rule’s phased-in schedule begins in September 2012. All affected vehicles must be in compliance by the 2017 model year.

To the gentleman I spoke to at the meeting, all I can say is, “Be proud of yourself for being engaged in your industry, participating in your state association, and for recognizing the need to continue learning all you can about changes in vehicle technology and what is necessary to properly repair today’s collision-damaged vehicles. Your customers need your experience and your ongoing desire to obtain the latest repair information.”