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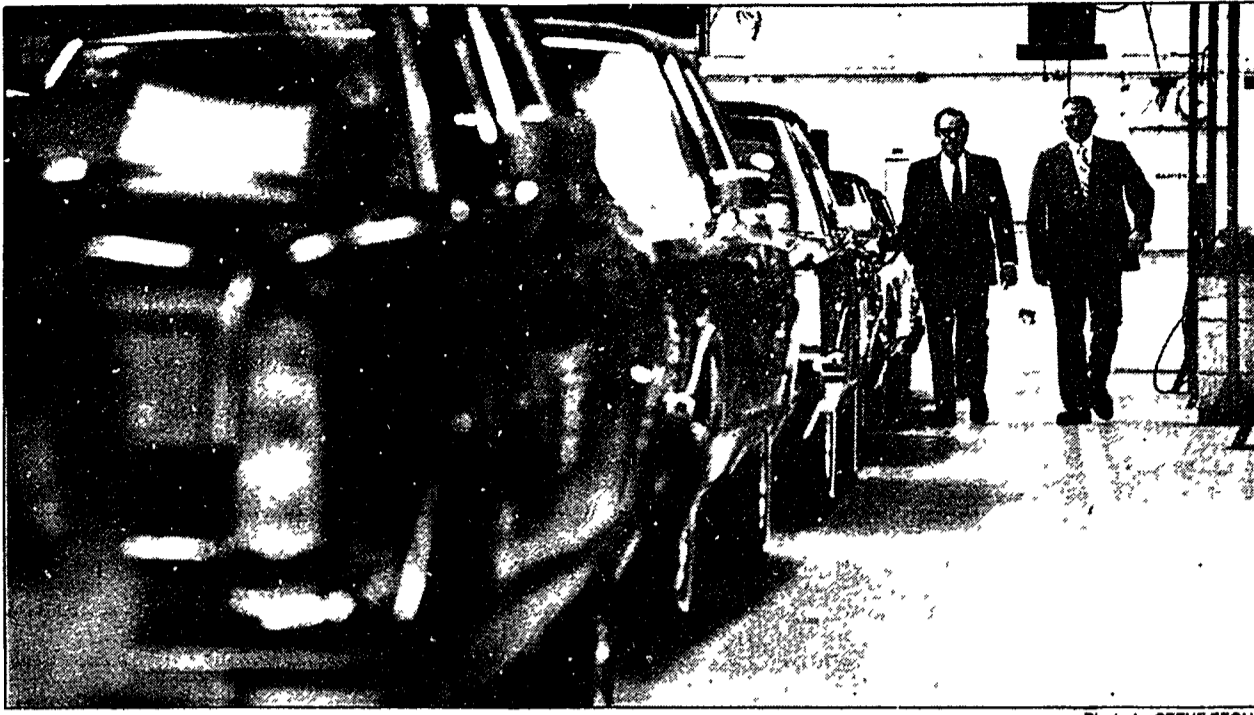


Photo by STEVE FECHT

Automobile Specialty Company production line will turn out 10,000 cars this year

Gilding the Lincolns

By LEANNE ROGERS

A dream car — long body, plush seats, a cloth half-roof and electronically-operated moonroof.

If you are driving a Ford Lincoln Continental or Mark VI, chances are those last two options were installed by the Automobile Specialty Company, located on Beck Road in Wixom.

The facility was opened in 1974, according to the company's president and general manager Karl Knoth. "We move about 10,000 cars through this facility in a year," he said. "We located in Wixom to be close to the Ford Assembly plant. We should be as close as possible to the company we are doing work for to save transportation costs."

Automobile Specialty is a division of ASC, Inc., which was formed in 1965 in California. The company expanded to Michigan in 1968 and has a number of facilities across the country.

"This is a multi-division company. We work in sunroofs, customizing and auto parts manufacturing," said Knoth, a Nor-

"We are looking at different products. We don't want to be considered (only) a luxury car business."

Karl Knoth
President, ASC

thville resident. "We were one of the first customizers in the country. We were certainly the first to bring electric sunroofs in this country."

Other divisions of the company build convertibles for General Motors, limousines for Chrysler and various roof treatments for cars.

In Wixom, the company works specializing Ford's line of large luxury cars. Carriage roofs, simulated convertible roofs and electronically operated moonroofs are the primary additions made to the cars.

The majority of the firm's business comes from orders through the Ford Assembly plant rather than direct orders from customers or dealers, said acting plant manager Don Teets.

The special order cars are sent to the Automobile Specialty plant and work can be completed within four to six hours of the vehicle reaching the production line, according to Knoth. There is not a long waiting period for the specialty work, he added, since the cars are returned to the factory within one week.

"We use a woven fiber on the roofs, not vinyl. It was originally used by Mercedes Benz and we brought it over," he said. "It's actually woven and treated to be water repellent."

A smoother, more sophisticated look is added to the car with the half-fiber or simulated convertible roofs, Teets said, but there is also a practical benefit.

The tops are manufactured at the factory including a heating process to remove wrinkles and stretch the covering.

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