

With More Cars Going Faster, Auto Body Man C. M. Graham Gets Busier

by Jean McDonald

The battle over which sex puts the most dents in the family car is as old as the Model-T that started it.

Auto body and paint shop owner C. M. Graham could shed a lot of light on the subject but he knows better.

"Do men or women dent more fenders?"

"Well, I'd hardly know how to answer that," he reflects. "I believe more wrecks have men at the wheel but there might be more men drivers. I wouldn't like to commit myself."

Quiet Charlie Graham was born in Tazewell county and came to Loudoun in 1904. His father bought the Mercer farm near Hamilton and Charlie farmed for eight years before seeking a more lucrative field.

He served as an apprentice in a shop in Baltimore for about a year and then returned to Purcellville and set up his own business. "There was a great need for auto body and paint work then," he explains. "Mine used to be the only shop in the county."

Obviously very interested in his work, Charlie also has plenty of outside interests. He loves doing over old furniture, but only for himself. The Graham home has some handsome chests of drawers, tables and other pieces that came into their beauty through his hard work. His only regret is that he doesn't have enough time to do them. Says wife Kathleen, "I'd hate to tell you when he does the refinishing, around 12 or one o'clock at night."

If Graham is an expert at building up he's also pretty good at tearing down, as sidewalk observers who watched the demolition of the old Hirst store building can testify. He describes his decision to handle this as "one of those spur of the moment jobs, I guess". The Grahams are building a new home on School street so the lumber will come in handy.

The interests of the Graham children, Bonnie and Charles Mac, haven't stuck to the automotive field. Charles Mac is a medical student at the Medical college of Richmond and Bonnie is a registered nurse now devoting her time to three small sons who have an inside track on their grandfather's after-work activities.

With more cars on the road and all of them going faster, Charlie Graham's business is constantly increasing. Also, he points out, as cars get fancier, work gets more complicated.

The fins and stream-lined features of the new models look like a dream to you but once you get a dent, both you and Charlie may wish you were back in the forties when fenders were fenders.