



LOCATOR

LEMS AUTO RECYCLERS

Late-Model Specialist

Service, Service, Service

It was over coffee one Sunday when Garrett Lems and Clarence Holwerda conceived a business. The year was 1947 and the brothers-in-law officially opened Lems and Holwerda, an automotive repair shop.

"You know how it happens," said Garrett's son Clyde Lems. "They bought a few vehicles, and had parts leftover and maybe a vehicle sitting there. People would ask, 'Could I buy this door?' It wasn't the intention when they started, but they opened a salvage yard."

In 1962, Holwerda left to pursue other opportunities and Garrett and wife Jeanette operated the business as Lems Auto Salvage. It became a true salvage facility with automotive repairs spun off to a separate entity in the early 1970s. That's about the time Clyde got involved.

Family Operated

"I was the first one," said Clyde as he referenced his brother Alan Lems and sister Audrey Plasier, both in the business now. "I had helped out in high school and liked it. I did a year and a half of college and thought I knew more than the professors. So I came back and worked the counter."

Today, Clyde is company president and oversees the operations of the business, which has been renamed Lems Auto Recyclers (LemsAuto.com) to reflect its environmental emphasis. Alan is vice president and handles sales; Audrey is secretary / treasurer and does the bookkeeping. But that's not the end of the family roster. Clyde's wife Carol Lems and daughter Stacey Lems work in administration. His sister-in-law Lynette Lems handles the web site and helps in administration. Nephew Dalton Lems and niece Sable Lems work there as well. Even Garrett, although retired now, reports in daily to handle past due accounts, chat with longtime customers and do odd jobs.

"It can be a challenge when you work with family," acknowledged

Clyde. "We always get along well. Do we have the same opinions? Absolutely not. But we take the time to talk them out and come to a consensus."

Lems Auto Recyclers takes great pride in its operation, which carries the full range of auto, two-ton, light-truck and RV parts. It has five delivery trucks that travel 150 miles and uses a multitude of shipping companies.

"Dalton constantly checks to see which one is best," said Clyde, "but we have four that stop here each day."

Customers First

Fifty-five percent of Lems Auto Recyclers' customers are wholesale and

be better. It's service, service, service. Price is almost secondary. We have customers who come in and say, 'Wow! It's 4:30 in the afternoon and you guys are still friendly?'"

Customers often remark about the clean environment. Lems Auto Recyclers has a nice display area and the meticulous family keeps the shop

FAST FACTS

Owners:

Clyde Lems, Alan Lems and Audrey Plasier

Location: Doon, Iowa

Years In Business: 62

URL: LemsAuto.com

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Lems Auto Recyclers, Doon, Iowa
By Felicia Lowenstein Niven

45 percent retail. Word-of-mouth is the primary advertising, although the company freely hands out items with the business name - from jackets, to t-shirts, to mugs. Sales representatives target customers within a 150-mile radius, spreading the message about Lems Auto Recyclers' products and exceptional customer service.

"Competition keeps you sharp," explained Clyde. "There is a lot of competition out there and we just have to

and facility organized. The business also offers discounts to military employees. It's another way of differentiating the business while giving back to the community.

In the industry, the Lems family is well known. Clyde is a past president of the Iowa Automotive Recyclers (IAR) and a former IAR Legislative Committee Chair. The staff attends industry conferences and exhibits at auto body associations. ❧