

State and Local

Car dealer takes B-CS by storm

Local merchant shows 'down-to-earth' qualities in work

By Shannon Boysen
Reporter

His office is formal, with a bronze and marble statue of Pegasus, and outstanding Young Texan Awards decorating the walls. The most obvious hint of the down-to-earth qualities of Fred Brown are the overuffed pillow replicas of a Mazda and a BMW on the couch.

Brown, 32, has lived in the Bryan-College Station area since November 1982 and seemingly has taken the area by storm.

He started a Mazda and BMW dealership that he's expanding to include Mercedes automobiles. He's also a College Station councilman and vice president of the Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce.

"I'd always had this pent-up desire to get involved in the community, only before I lived in College Station I was commuting and moving around too much," Brown says. "I plan to stay here for a while."

Brown graduated from Mineral Wells High School. While still in school, he worked part-time as a used car salesman, making about \$1,500 a month. That's when he decided to go into the car business.

After graduation, Garlyn Shelton asked Brown to be his partner in a dealership he was starting in Killeen, so Brown skipped college and went to work.

A dealer in Waco later asked Brown to come and manage his struggling Mazda/Subaru dealership. Within eight months, Brown had replaced all but two of the former employees and had the company back in the black, all while running his own dealership in Killeen.

Brown credits some success to the flowering import market in the '70s.

"The object is hitting the market at the right time," Brown says. "Back in the early '70s, imports were the market, and, once we had one dealership, it was easier to get more."

He says customer satisfaction is the key to good sales.

"My employees know the fastest way to an 'early retirement' is upsetting the customer," Brown says.

Brown and his wife, Jane, have been married for 12 years. He credits her with giving him the support he needed to get by.

"You have to be very understanding when you're married to someone in the car business," he says. "Especially like the time when I took on the Waco project. I originally helped them out as a favor so that when I came home at night, I was pretty frustrated. At times I even cried.

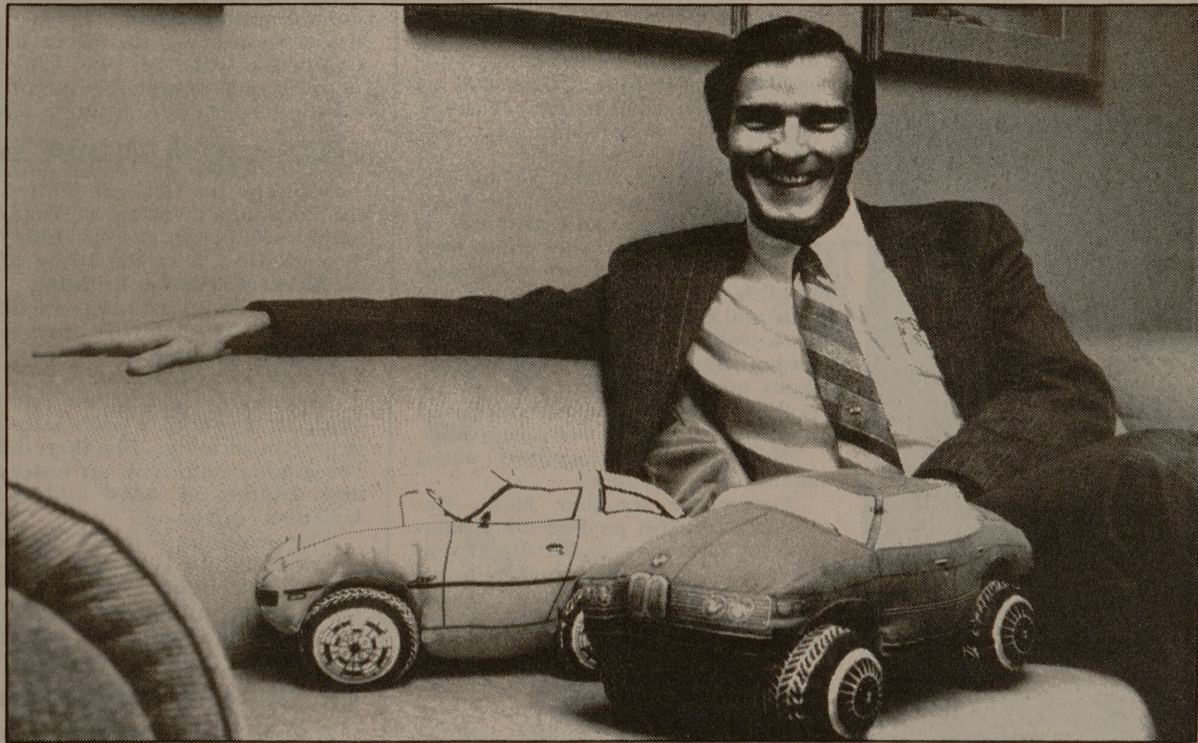


Photo by Tom Ownbey

Fred Brown shows off the stuffed cars — a Mazda and a BMW — that he keeps in his office.

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(But) Jane was right there beside me."

Beside the awards hang pictures of his wife and their two daughters, Hayley, 5, and Kelley, 8.

Brown says his is a private family. He says privacy is hard to maintain now that he's relatively well-known in the community, but that his family loves to get away and go camping.

"Fame is nice to a point," Brown says. "But the time with my two little girls is important. You can't turn that back. The people around town will always know you, but the relationship you have with your children when they are young is a basis for the rest of their lives and they're only young for a short while."

Brown has political aspirations. He says he wants to run for Congress someday.

"I got my feet wet in the city council and the more I get involved, the more I want," he says.

Brown was born in Germany and adopted by a U.S. Army captain and his wife when he was 3 years old. They brought him to the United States and when he was 6, he was naturalized as a U.S. citizen. Brown's adopted father, also Fred Brown, retired in Mineral Wells in 1961.

Brown says that because of his age, he occasionally has some identity problems. Although he is 32 years old, the neat, dark hair, tan skin and the gap in his front teeth give him a kind of boyish quality.

"People are always coming in and assuming that my dad owns the dealership and I only work here," Brown says. "Eventually, they end up asking for him, wanting to speak with the owner of the establishment. They are always quite surprised that I'm the Mr. Brown and so young. Actually though, my dad is Mr. Brown and I'm just Fred."

Correction

An article in Friday's *Battalion* incorrectly stated that the recount for the Precinct 4 Brazos County commissioner race would be conducted Saturday. However, the recount actually will be conducted this Saturday, Nov. 22. The *Battalion* regrets the error.

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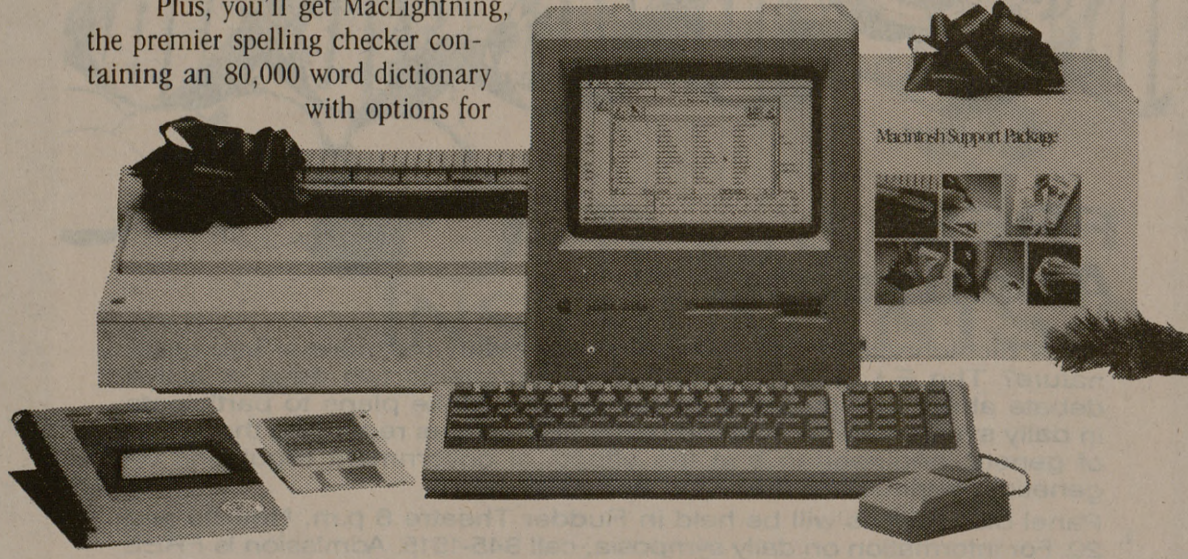
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