

Indo American News

READ US ONLINE at www.indoamerican-news.com | Published weekly from Houston, Texas, USA
7457 Harwin Dr, Suite 262, Houston, TX 77036 • PH: 713 789 6397 • Fax: 713 789 6399 • indoamericannews@yahoo.com

Follow Indo-American News



Sign Up! Become a fan !!

Circulation Verified by
CIRCULATION
VERIFICATION
COUNCIL



Galsons Auto Runs with Engineering Precision and Creativity

By JAWAHAR MALHOTRA

HOUSTON: There is an often used belief that out of all professions, engineers make the best transitions into other businesses. They are organized in their thoughts, can figure out abstract notions, are quick learners and are naturals in seeking out solutions. They just need an impetus to get started, but once they do, it's hard to slow them down.

That's exactly the crossroads that Harjit Galhotra found himself at eighteen years ago when he lost his job as a senior tool design engineer at Dresser Industries where he had worked for 13 years. "My CPA told me that the

major expansions, steadily building onto the mechanics shop, then adding a body shop in 2001, remodeling and adding to his office space and finally buying another ¾ acre lot to the back of his property. He attributes his success to having a good bank, Questar Bank on San Felipe, since bought up by Comerica Bank, that stood by his plans and lent him the money to grow his business.

But Galhotra's engineering acumen showed him the way to logically grow his business at key points over the years. Now, on nearly 3 acres, he has 25,000 sf of covered area that handles 13 mechanics bays and 15 body

Harjit Galhotra (front row, center) with his wife Seema and son Ravi and the staff who works at Galson's Auto and Body at its 18th Anniversary party last Friday, April 8

(Left) Galhotra, with his wife Seema in his remodeled office, is highly organized and recycles everything.

(Below right) Galhotra in the mechanics shop of his 25,000sf facility on 12900 Cypress North Houston Road
Photos: Jawahar Malhotra



zation and incorporating technology into his business. Apart from having the entire operation computerized with his own IT servers, Galhotra is able to monitor every angle with security cameras and through a centralized phone and intercom system that he can operate through a cordless phone he carries on his belt, like a captain of a ship.

When he first started the body shop in 2001, Galhotra shared an office with his son Ravi and later with an IT person. In 2000, Ravi graduated from the University of Houston with a degree in MIS, which allowed him to build better efficiencies into the business' data and inventory management systems. Soon after, he began working full-time at the business and is now the General Manager of the body shop.

Now, after the latest remodeling and expansion, the support staff of eight have their own offices, there are three copiers, a lounge for customers in both shops, a huge lot for storing car and Galhotra's office now resembles the one that he probably had as an engineer, complete with two computer screens. Ravi indulged his passion for cars by remodeling his office with a race track, along the ceiling, complete with miniature race cars and bushes.

The company's reputation has been built in the glowing testimonial cards that satisfied customers have sent in and are stacked in the lounge and displayed on the Galsons web site. Even the Better Business Bureau has taken noticed by giving him awards every year since 2005, including the



businesses with the best potentials were Mexican restaurants or a mechanics shop," he remembered with a smile as he sat in the shade of the tent on his lot where the 18th anniversary party was held. "I chose the mechanic shop since I was interested in cars and didn't want to work late hours!"

A product of the Mulana Azad college of Technology in Bhopal, India, Galhotra searched for three months for a business to buy, "but some wanted too much for run down equipment and some had bad reputations". So he took the plunge and bought a 2-acre lot on Cypress North Houston, got himself a tractor and cleared the shrubs and trees to put down a small building and 8 bays. Both his sons Ravi and Raja worked with him and his wife Seema left her job in the cosmetics department of Foley's to join him four years later in 1996.

Over the years, as the reputation of his business grew, Galhotra plowed back his profits into four

shop bays. Galsons Auto and Body Shop now has two frame machines, two paint booths, a Hunter Laser alignment machine and a recently bought laser measuring machine.

"It's a major advantage to have both mechanic and body shops in one location," explained Galhotra as he walked the shops and chatted with some of the nearly 20 mechanics who work there. "These guys are real artists in fixing car bodies, you can't even tell that any work has been done on them," he said as he pointed out some of the brand new cars that had been sent from dealerships for touch ups of minor dents and scratches.

The overwhelming impression that one gets is that the whole facility, even down to the final car wash and detailing is neat, clean and organized and that is in large part due to the two custodians who help keep things that way. Galhotra's engineering background makes him a stickler for organi-

Pinnacle Award in 2005 and 2007. This year, the BBB will honor the business again at its Gala on May 4 and the AAA, which has rated him since 1997, has given him a 97% evaluation score this year.

As busy as he has been with his expanding business, Galhotra is a devout Sikh who is deeply involved in the Gurdwara on Prairie Street and is a major force behind the building of the Sikh National Center off the Beltway across from the Sam Houston Race track. And he has turned to his faith to vent the creativity inherent in an engineer, to design stained glass lamps featuring the Sikh Khanda emblem into chandeliers and other compositions. He has produced the insignia in various materials – steel, foam board, wood and plastic – which he has donated to various Gurdwaras across the US, and even on a tie and shirts that he wears.

Galhotra's auto business consumes most of his days, as well as

for many of the employees, some who have been with him for 8 or 9 years. The sense of camaraderie and support between them is very evident in the business that has effectively a second home for them. With a little effort, Galhotra has brought in touches of his other passions.

He insists on being Green and recycling, not only for the business but personally too. "We recycle everything, don't use foam, paper plates or plastic cutlery," he said with pride. Behind his office, he has built an 8 by 10 foot aviary for canaries and a small waterfall. But he lights up when he steps into the red roses that he grows in a flower bed along the edge of the main road that curves before the new pylon that announces the company that he has built.

Galson's Auto and Body is located at 12900 Cypress North Houston Road, Cypress, TX 77429; 281-469-6432 or on the web at www.galsonauto.com