



*Sammy Ashendorf (president) and his father, Harry (founder), discuss a recent order.*

## **Northwestern Auto Supply — 42 years of parts and service**

**By Fred and Donna Winters**

From their unpretentious location on South Division in downtown Grand Rapids, Mich., Northwestern Auto Supply has spent over four decades building the inventory and experience that makes them qualified to serve old car collectors.

Founded in January 1947 by Harry Ashendorf, now semi-retired, the business is currently managed by his son, Sammy Ashendorf, president of the company, serves walk-in and mail order customers and oversees the rebuilding of a variety of essential parts for all makes, including carburetors, water pumps, starters, generators and fuel pumps. His highly experienced employees also manufacture engine components such as babbitt bearings, which are poured and machined on the premises.

The tenure of Northwestern staff involvement in the auto parts business is a major factor in their ability to knowledgeably supply parts and service to the antique car enthusiast. Harry has spent 56 years in the business, and Sammy, 30. Key employees include Russ Knol, senior shop foreman, with 31 years experience, Russ's son, Ken, with 30 years of rebuilding antique carburetors and other components to his credit, and Gene Isenga, head counterman, with 15 years in the business for a grand total of 152 years experience.

Sammy Ashendorf considers Northwestern a "pack rat" auto parts operation with the ability to fill unusual requests. This probably accounts for the high volume of mail order business the company enjoys. He offers a special mail order number and asks callers to be prepared with

sizes, part numbers, make, model, and any other relevant information that would help him locate a rare part and then to be patient.

Northwestern's inventory includes 15 percent new old stock, 80 percent new old replacement stock and five percent new replacement stock. Sammy points out that many of the suppliers of the new old replacement stock made the original parts for various auto companies.

Examples of Northwestern's ability to rebuild components, and of its commitment to civic duty are evident in the Lorraine and the DeVaux automobiles restored for the Grand Rapids Public Museum. Both makes were once manufactured in this city.

Serving auto hobbyists throughout the United States, Northwestern Auto Supply stands ready to rebuild or replace that troublesome part.



*Shown here is a portion of Northwestern's NORs babbitted connecting rods.*