

# Today's Auto Repair

with Chip Stewart

## - Searching for a Pro, Part 1 -

The search for a good automotive repair facility can be frustrating and especially so if you're new to the area. Although there's no guarantee that you'll be "tickled to death" by any product or service that you'll ever buy, when it comes to auto repair there are several things you can look for that will put the odds in your favor. This time I'm going to discuss technician certification and its benefit to the consumer.

The certification of mechanics has been around for many years but has come to public notice more of late, due to the complexity of today's automobiles. Without a doubt, the leader in the certification process is the National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence. Founded in 1972, their certification process is voluntary and not for profit. They've recently adopted a logo that is a picture of a blue gear with the initials "ASE" inside. In order to be certified by ASE, a technician must pass at least one of eight different tests. Those are: engine repair, engine performance, brakes, suspension and steering, heating and air conditioning, electrical /electronic systems, manual drive trains and axles, and automatic transmissions and transaxles. He or she must also have a minimum of two years of full time, hands on, supervised working experience. Some of the time may be waived if the technician has had specialized training or has completed a bona fide apprenticeship program. Does this mean that if you take your car to an ASE certified technician it will be repaired correctly? Maybe. Maybe not. Your chances are much better if the technician is certified for the type of repair you require. In other words, have your brakes repaired by a technician certified in brake repair rather than air conditioning and vice versa.

A technician that has been certified in all areas is considered a "master" technician. However, just like doctors, a technician will generally specialize in one particular area. Although he may be a good general mechanic, his expertise will shine in his chosen endeavor. Therefore, if you know the area in which your car needs attention, a specialist in that area will usually afford a higher level of satisfaction. Don't be afraid to ask for credentials. We worked hard for them and we're proud to show them off.

By the way, there are still a few excellent technicians around who have not yet had an opportunity to take the certification tests although they could probably pass them with ease. A good reputation with many recommendations should not be ignored. Ask around!

