



# Interview:

## Pat Finley Montgomery, Illinois

Pat Finley's 40 by 60 foot shop is located in Montgomery, IL, on the southern outskirts of Aurora. His one-man shop (his dad and son, Ryan, age 10, help with coat-out and such) serves the Aurora area, a town of about 80,000.

Most of his clients are small businesses — retail stores, contractors, service businesses and so on. He does plenty of truck lettering and pinstriping, too.

Pat calls himself "just a basic signpainter". If that is the case, then he turns out a

lot of basically excellent sign work.

**SC:** Let's start with a classic question. How old are you?

**Pat:** Oh . . . I'm going on 22! No, I'm 39 — just kidding.

**SC:** How did you wind up in the sign business?

**Pat:** Like a lot of people, I always enjoyed drawing and that sort of thing. In about 1958 or so I started pinstriping cars. Then everybody wanted names

on their cars. I knew I wasn't proficient enough at lettering, so I stopped in to see a local sign painter, the late Ernie Harding of Waterman, Illinois. He looked at my work and I started working for him.

Pinstriping was really popular during the fifties. I think it got a lot of us interested in the sign trade.

I did signwork while I was in the Army. I was in Vietnam and got extended 30 days because the



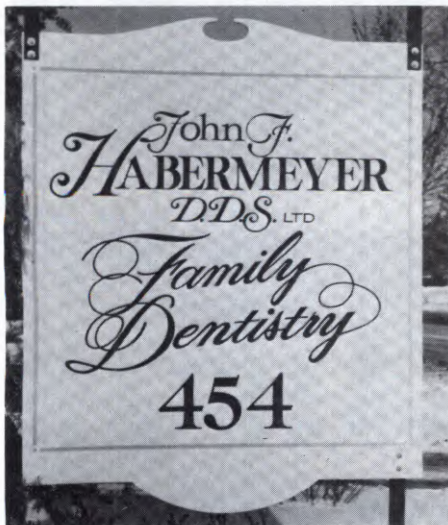
Black on white knockout



Blue-gray on silver



White and ivory copy, red outlines on black



Black lettering, gray border, white panel



Light blue on black



Blue and black convex, Auto Supply is white on orange panel.



Gold convex on red racecar

commanding officer saw my signs in the company area, and wanted me to repaint all the signs on the division base camp at Pleiku.

**SC:** You said the other day that you considered yourself “just a basic sign painter”. Your work really looks great.

**Pat:** I like to stay on the colors and letters, but I like to think of myself as somebody who is just trying harder.

I do the same as a lot of people — I keep my eyes open for things I like . . . Good design, letter styles, colors. You adapt them to your work with variations.

Panels were something I never really used a lot, although I find myself doing more of that lately. I like to use them on certain types of work.

I do use shades and outlines quite a bit. I also use convex lettering now and then. Some folks don’t use quite so much of this stuff as I do.

**SC:** The knockout work, the parking lot signs — everything has a nice, loose look.

**Pat:** I’m one of those guys who tries to get it in and get it out. You have to when you do all the layout and lettering. Some of my customers might tell you otherwise, but I sure try to get it done on time.

Sometimes it takes a couple or three weeks to get someone’s sign out, or I have to call and ask for an extra day when I have a truck in here. I don’t like that, but that’s just the way it is.

**SC:** Do you have any trouble getting the flexibility to do a good job from the client?

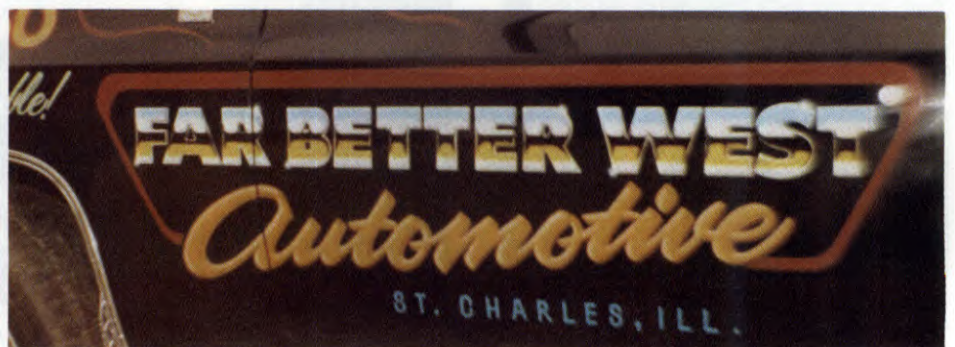
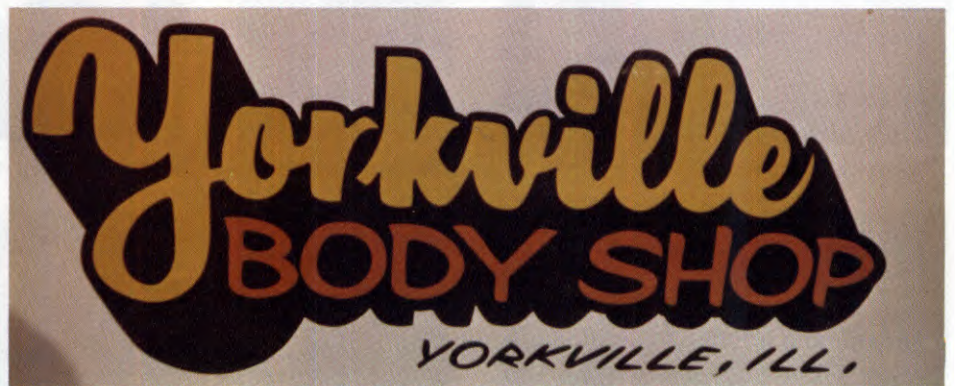
**Pat:** My customers aren’t really the type that come in and tell you exactly how it has to be. I usually get free rein. I’m not really wild about doing sketches, which is really to my disadvantage. I do a better job with a brush than with a sketch.

If I have to do one, I keep it as loose as possible. It’s easier for me when I have that flexibility when I do the actual sign. Oh I might use markers to add a little color on some, but not all.

**SC:** Being in the business for 15 years, what’s your biggest hassle?

**Pat:** Well, of course you have the routine little things, but they just go with the business. Signwork demands a lot of concentration, too. People may give you the old, “You’ve got it made — All you do is paint all day . . .” They ought to spend all afternoon lettering a menu board!

You really have to concentrate on your spacing, and think of that next letter at the same time. Then you step



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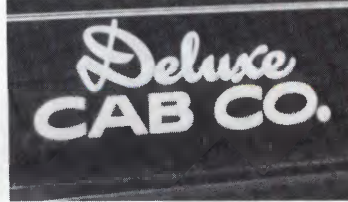
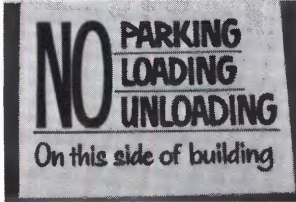




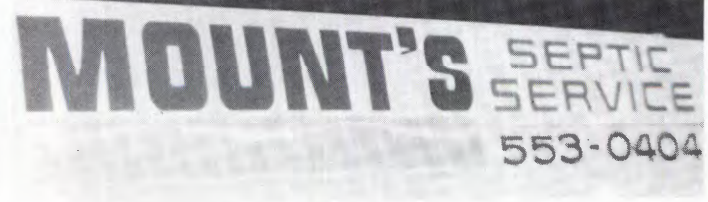
Red and maroon on white truck



Black lettering on yellow truck



Two routine knockout jobs



Dark, medium and light blue on white



Gold enamel, black outlines, orange, brown and black minor copy



White and light blue on dark blue truck

back and realize you left a C out right in the middle of a line! There's nothing worse. We all laugh about it, but it happens.

But to be honest with you, I think the biggest hassle is trying to stay on schedule and get the work out on time. It's hard to do that and still have time to see your family in the evening.

If you tell someone it will be done tomorrow, you may be able to stay on

schedule but you'll have to work til midnight.

Sometimes something just puts a dent in the day — like a customer who has a wall that needs done and wants you to take a look at it. You know you can make money on it. So you go take a look and it kills an hour of your day — it backs things up.

It may be my own personal problem, but that's my biggest gripe — getting the

work out on time, and still having time to spend with my wife, Janis, and my children, Megan and Ryan. I'd guess others have the same problem, too.

When you really love this trade, I can see how it could get you into problems. There's plenty of work, plenty of chances to do what you love to do. But — you have to keep things in perspective. •SC

## Bulletin Board

**Denver's original Letterheads** are hosting a Tenth Anniversary gathering in Denver, Colorado, May 25 - 27, 1985. Workshops, seminars, a golf tournament and much more are planned. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, contact: Rick Flores, c/o A V Sign Studio, 401 S. Zuni, Denver, Colorado 80223. (303) 935-3659.

The **Chicago Letterheads Extravaganza** will be held Friday and Saturday, August 9 and 10, 1985, at Holiday Plaza Complex of Holiday Inn, Matteson, Illinois. Workshops, hands-on demonstrations, manufacturers' representation, and more. For further information, contact Peter Millar, Box 21, Dept. C, Mokena, IL 60448, or call 312-479-9383.

**Mike Stevens** is accepting reservations for his one and two-day spring layout and design workshops. Summer workshops are also being sched-

uled. The intensive workshops are held in the historic Pennsylvania Dutch County. For more information contact Mike at 703-A Main Street, Akron, PA 17501.

**Paul White** informs us that many of the students from his two-day workshops have gone on to work full time as sign carvers. The workshops at his shops on Cape Cod cover all aspects of sign carving. Send your name and address and \$1 for information to Paul White Woodcarving, Rt. 6A, E. Sandwich, MA 62537.