



# Press Release

**Society of Collision Repair Specialists** • P.O. Box 909, Prosser, WA 99350 • (877) 841-0660 • Fax (877) 851-0660

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Further Information

Contact Dan Risley, SCRS Executive Director

Phone: (708) 598-3384 or Email: drisley7@comcast.net

## Grass Roots Approach Distinguished SCRS from the Start

*Willingness to get “up close and personal” to help the widest cross-section of shops continues today.*

**Note: This press release is one in a series celebrating the first days of SCRS as it looks forward to its 25th Anniversary Celebration this coming April. The previous installment summarized the events leading up to the meeting at Gene Park’s Body Shop in Riverside, Missouri, a milestone in SCRS history. We continue with recollections from the perspective of SCRS’ first Executive Director, John Loftus.**

*Prosser, Washington, January 23, 2007* — By the early 1980s, John Loftus was getting the attention of shop owners—especially in Texas and Missouri—with the idea of a nationally united collision repair industry strong enough to take action on their own priorities. Truth be told, these concepts almost never had a chance to get off the ground.

“My wife, Rosie, and I are native Californians,” Loftus begins. “A lot of the professional growth I experienced was the result of being a shop owner, member and President and Executive Director of the California Autobody Association (CAA) where we successfully initiated breakthroughs like an insured motorists rights brochure, increased emphasis on training and professionalism—even such things as media relations. This led to my becoming more active with the national organization that exists today as the Automotive Service Association (ASA). I was approached to head up their collision repair division based, in part, on what we accomplished in California.”

“That meant moving to Texas where the organization was headquartered, so in 1979, Rosie and I pulled up roots and made that commitment. It was gratifying to see collision repairers, large and small, from all parts of the country respond to our efforts to address their needs. People had a great desire to be professional; they felt they were being pushed around by a number of factors, and they wanted it to stop.”

But as the years rolled on, the transition began to wear on John and Rosie. By 1982, the couple was convinced they should return to California. “A number of things contributed to that feeling,” Loftus says, “but the bottom line is that we missed our family.”

If the Loftus’ had left then, SCRS as we know it today, wouldn’t have existed. However, a handful of shop owners—including Jeff Cowan, Bill and Rochelle Wicklund, Bill Eveland, Bob Jones and Don Caldwell (who later became the first SCRS Chairman)—were energized by Loftus’ fiery gospel of

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industry improvement. They decided to take the kind of grass roots action that continues to characterize SCRS to this day: direct, to the point, and ultimately, effective.

“They started bringing me to informal meetings—the first one being at Jeff Cowan’s, and another eventually at Gene Park’s—and we began to brainstorm what a national association could be,” Loftus recalls. “People began to talk to other people and momentum grew. Rosie and I put off the move to California. My house in Texas became a hub for communication and information distribution. In a matter of days, we were talking to collision repairers in twenty-five states. The Wicklund’s were as determined as I was. Their home became the communication center for Missouri. To make sure that we got the message to other states, Bill Wicklund flew me wherever we were needed.”

SCRS Past Chairman Bob Jones was there from the start, and can attest to the power of the movement’s formative stages. “I was like a lot of guys in those days, in that my business had begun to get the best of me,” he says. “I had just borrowed a lot of money for a shop renovation, and found myself in a rut; existing month to month just to pay my bills. I began to think there had to be more to the business than this.”

Jones started to become active in the organization that would become ASA, and it was through this involvement that he first gained exposure to Loftus and those that would go on to found SCRS. The experience made a lasting impression.

“Even though I was ‘up North’ in Iowa, people like Bill Wicklund made sure I made it to the meetings,” Jones adds. “I could tell from the start that these were people with whom I wanted to associate. They weren’t targeting shops with a certain profile or philosophy, they wanted to help everybody—especially guys like me that were floundering. Something about that grass roots slant—making a personal connection and then rolling up your sleeves to get the job done—just clicked with me. To this day, SCRS is known for that kind of approach. I’m glad it hasn’t changed.”

Loftus emphasizes that even though those first meetings were full of talk about the realities of membership numbers, dues and logistics, none of these concerns ever got into the way of the vision propelling SCRS forward. “Once we saw what could be done, we never worried about money or any of the dozen other crises we faced in those first days,” he states. “We knew we would bounce back from any obstacle if we met the challenges faced by the collision repair industry, and demonstrated that we could do something to change their businesses and the way they did business. It was a tremendously defining time for us, as we were driven—even then—by the knowledge that ‘Working Together Is The Most Important Work We Do’.”

The SCRS 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration is at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia on April 10, 2007. Additional details about the event will be forthcoming.

Through its direct members and 34 affiliate associations, SCRS is comprised of 6,000 collision repair businesses and 58,500 specialized professionals who work with consumers and insurance companies to repair collision-damaged vehicles. Additional information about SCRS including other news releases is available at the SCRS web site: [www.scrs.com](http://www.scrs.com). You can e-mail SCRS at the following address: [info@scrs.com](mailto:info@scrs.com).

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