

LOCAL

Piscataway man is heart of dragsters

By **CRAIG YETSKO**

STAFF WRITER

PISCATAWAY: Charlie Weston admits that being a race car driver is not something he excels at.

It's when he is in his machine shop that Weston is in his element.

For the past 25 years, Weston, a Woodbridge resident, has established himself among the Pro Stock drag-racing community as the man to go to for specialty engine work.

Pro Stock cars may look like their showroom counterparts, but they feature extensive engine modifications and high-tech chassis and suspension work, according to the National Hot Rod Association.

Weston talks the language of engine-builders — peppering his explanations with mechanical terms. The work he does on an engine at his Piscataway shop, Weston Machine, depends on the customers' needs.

"(The jobs) are all different," he said. "We do it according to their specs."

Engine work can take as little time as two to three hours while other jobs can take two to three days.

Among Weston's clients are five of the drivers who make up the top 10 in points (as of April 28) in the NHRA's Pro Stock

racing category. The list includes, Greg Anderson (second in points), Jeg Coughlin Jr. (third), Scott Geoffrion (sixth), Mike Edwards (seventh) and Ron Krisher (ninth).

This weekend these drivers are competing in the NHRA's SuperNationals at Old Bridge Township Raceway Park.

Before starting his own business, Weston worked at a machine shop full-time, coming home to do work on engines until 10 or 11 at night.

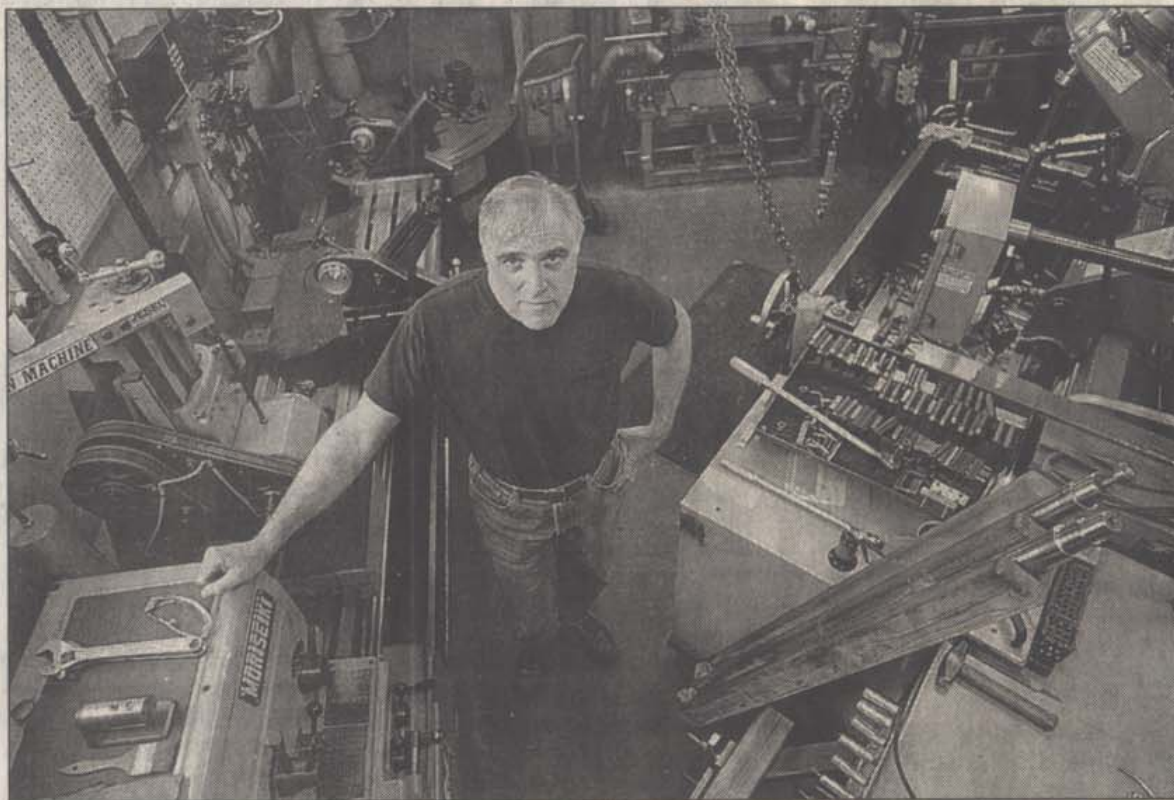
"I can't keep doing this, it is going to kill me," he recalled thinking.

When Weston's business began, he first catered to local racers. It steadily grew to include the tri-state region, and now he gets requests from people around the nation, sometimes even overseas.

Weston said he has received orders from people in Indiana, Michigan, Texas and California. Amid myriad engine blocks in one room of his shop, Weston, sporting blue jeans and a black shirt, shows off one that was shipped to him from Australia for work.

Weston said some of the business he receives is based on word-of-mouth. "It is nice to get recommendations like that," he said. "It makes you feel good."

During a tour of his shop,



JASON TOWLEN/Staff photographer

■ Charlie Weston of Weston Machine works in his Piscataway shop, which specializes in boring racing engines.

which contains posters of race car drivers and new and classic race cars, Weston points out the different machines that are used, many which he built himself.

One is a 10,000-pound machine which took two years to build that expands the cam tunnel bore, giving an engine more power. He said the process takes around 2 to 2½ half hours

to complete.

Another machine uses a computer to rotate an engine block so Weston can work on different parts of the engine without having to move it manually.

Weston credits his teachers at Perth Amboy Vocational Technical High School for helping him develop his craft.

"I am forever thankful for the education I got there," he said.

Although he said the work may be tough — he averages 60 hours a week at the shop — Weston said it is satisfying, especially when he hears that a racer that he did work for won a race.

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