

Donated tools give career a jump-start

Vintage Snap-On equipment amassed during career as mechanic, instructor

By J.P. SQUIRE

The Okanagan Saturday

Sarah Luxmore has always been interested in what makes cars and trucks run, and how to repair them when they don't.

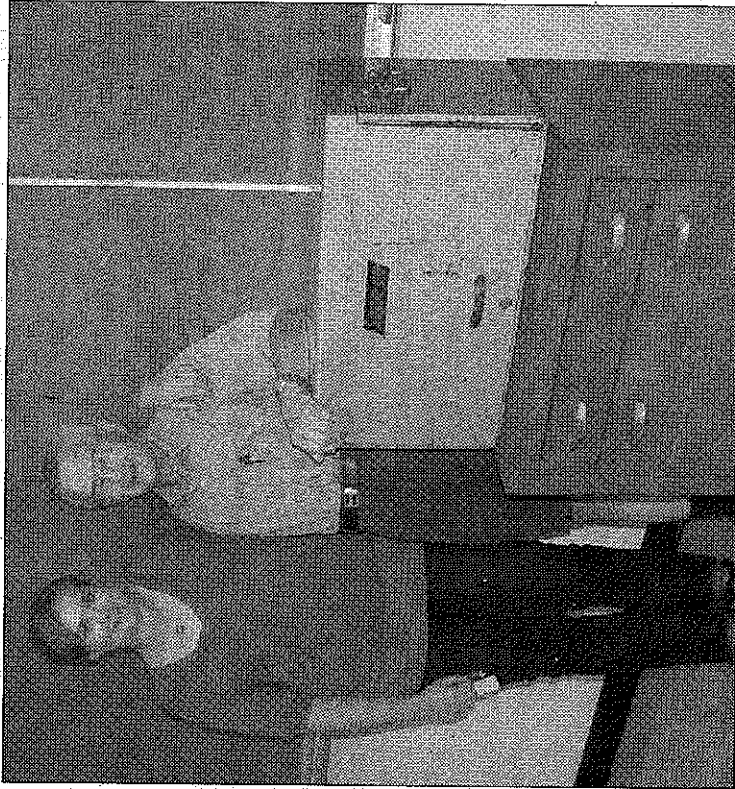
So the 18-year-old Kelowna resident entered the first year of Okanagan College's automotive service technician. She completed the seven-month course this week with \$7,000 worth of tools from a retired college instructor.

George Turner taught automotive servicing at the college for 17 years after several decades as a mechanic at the former Victory Chev-Olds dealership on Pandosy Street.

He retired 20 years ago, but he couldn't take his 40- to 50-year-old Snap-On tools and toolboxes with him when moving to an intermediate care home with his wife.

Instructors decided to offer his donation to an entry-level student who wrote the best essay on what the automotive industry would mean to him or her in the future, explained Al Cohoe, chair-man in the motor vehicle trades department.

"It's a pretty awesome gift. I'm really glad that I got it. He was a very nice man for giving it to us,"



Submitted photo

Sarah Luxmore completed the first year of Okanagan College's automotive service technician this week. Thanks to a strong essay on what the automotive industry would mean to her in the future, she will continue her studies with \$7,000 worth of tools donated by retired college instructor George Turner.

Luxmore said moments after completing the three-hour final exam in just over an hour.

The only woman among the 11 successful students already had the basic mechanic's tools but, like all mechanics, had her eye on a number of other tools.

"Those toolboxes are actually

instructors.

"I said I definitely would like to see more women in the trades; it's an awesome trade to get into; and it would be cool to have another couple of girls to talk to every once in a while," she said.

As for the final exam: "Some of the questions are pretty complicated. The electricity is probably the hardest thing. Other than that, it's pretty easy," she said.

In another three years — with 450 hours of work experience each year — she will become a journeyman.

"Automotive has always interested me. I'm pretty adept at mechanical stuff. It's fun. There's always something different to do," she said.

Over the years, she has worked on her own vehicle and others.

"My fiancé and I are building a Ford F150 four-wheel-drive truck right now, swapping out the front and rear axles."

Her fiancé used to do mechanical work before becoming a plumber.

When asked if she will share her tools with her fiancé, Luxmore forcefully responded: "No. He has his own tools that he can use."

Coincidentally, it's the second such donation to Okanagan College in recent months.

After her husband died, a Kelowna woman donated his entire shopful of heavy-duty and auto mechanic equipment to the trades department.

pretty cool; they're pretty old. They're from 1948, vintage Snap-On styling," she said.

As a bonus, Snap-On has a lifetime warranty so anything that breaks will be replaced with the modern equivalent.

Luxmore's winning essay obviously made an impression on her