DRIVING TO THE TOP

Service Chevrolet
Ranked #3

BY LESLIE TURK

If car sales are an economic barometer, Acadiana's economy is definitely swinging upward. Topping the list of car dealerships that had an excellent year in 1993 is Service Chevrolet.

Last year, Service Chevrolet customers drove off in 2,812 new vehicles, and the dealership's revenue increased from $44 million in 1992 to almost $64 million last year. "We did have a $20 million increase," said owner Jose Laquette Sr. "The positive effects of this year's revenues are a pleasant contrast to the drop from 1991 to 1992 of some $300,000 in revenues. Success has landed the dealership at No. 3 spot in the Top 100, a move up from No. 7 the previous year."

Laquette says his dealership's progress over the last year is not concentrated in any one area. "Actually, all the departments increased. We had a 62 percent increase in new vehicle sales, which includes new and used car sales, service and parts—a 47 percent increase. Employee numbers grew by 12 percent, and total payroll was just over $4.5 million."

Laquette attributes much of this accomplishment to a healthy economy in Lafayette and the surrounding towns. "It was not great," he says, "but it was a good, stable year."

Greater sales in more expensive units, like the popular Chevrolet Suburban, also contributed to the growth. Trucks and vans were big sellers, as well. Additionally, an entire year of low interest rates was a contributing factor.

Growth in industry can somewhat be measured by the dealership's best sales. Laquette says, which rose 85 percent to 630 units sold. "Companies, small industry—they were doing better, too," Laquette says. "They were buying more units. It seems as though the oil patch is picking up a little bit."

Laquette thinks he just may have what is the largest Chevrolet facility in the state. The Cameron Street business sits on about 25 acres, with approximately 110,000 square feet under roof. Says Laquette: "Usually, we have either what they want or close to it. People can come in and drive out in what they're looking for."