

THANK YOU AND GOODBYE



Joel Gausten
Editor

After 21 years covering the automotive industry on a full-time basis, I have made the difficult decision to move on from my role as editor of *Texas Automotive*.

Way back in 2000, Greco Publishing hired me right out of college and put me in charge of running several automotive trade publications. At the time, I was new to the inner workings of the collision repair industry; I couldn't even change a tire! Thankfully, Tom Greco saw something in me and gave me a shot.

Since I was not an industry expert by any means back then, I figured the easiest way to learn about the auto body world would be to focus on its people. Every person I encountered had a story to tell, and I soon discovered that the collision repair industry is comprised of dedicated professionals who deeply care about doing the right thing and protecting their customers. It was inspiring to see so many volunteers taking time away from their businesses to improve the profession.

My experiences in automotive journalism grew to new heights in 2018 when Greco Publishing partnered with ABAT to create *Texas Automotive*. Since our very first issue, the members of the ABAT community have been everything I hoped they would be: Friendly, approachable, dedicated to their craft and incredibly warm and welcoming. There's no pretense with y'all – what you see is what you get, and I love and respect that so much. I'm immensely honored to have had the privilege of working with so many of you over the past three years.

There are several people from the Texas collision repair industry who made my experience with *Texas Automotive* particularly unforgettable. I could easily fill this magazine with names, but since I'd run out of space before getting to the end of that list, here are a few folks who've really made it a great run: Burl Richards, Jill Tuggle, Robert McDorman (the most passionate defender of consumers' rights I've ever known), Ozzy Osburn, Larry Cernosek, Greg Luther, John Kopriva, Manuel Rubio, Eric McKenzie, Chad Kiffe and Chad Neal.

About my picture in this message: When Burl and Jill asked me to make sure I was there to cover and photograph the awards ceremony at the end of this year's Texas Auto Body Trade Show, I had no way of knowing or suspecting that part of it was for me. They presented me with that amazing Stetson hat – which Burl called “**The Man in Black Award**” – for my years of service covering ABAT and the industry it supports. It was unexpected and truly touching to hear the applause from so many of you; I'll always remember that moment. Thank you! (And for the record, I wore that hat on the plane ride back and have donned it on more than one occasion since returning home – I love it!)

Naturally, my 21 years in this industry would not have been possible without my second family at Greco Publishing. Throughout this fast-paced job of mine, Tom Greco has remained a man of quiet strength and guidance, always inspiring me to shine and grow through his trust, support and peerless generosity. I'm lucky to have built my career with him. I was also fortunate to have such a fantastic co-worker and sounding board in Alicia Figurelli; her natural ability to find a sense of calm and good humor in tough times has set a bar for me that I'll always strive to reach. It was great fun working with former Art Director Lea Velocci for nearly 20 years, and it's been a joy working with Alana Bonillo, Joe Greco and Donna Greco in more recent times.

Also, I'd like to welcome Chasidy Rae Sisk to the Greco Publishing family in her role as managing editor. ABAT will be in good hands moving forward, thanks to her talent, drive and vast experience in the auto body world.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the members of ABAT for welcoming me into your world and giving me the opportunity to be your voice every month. You're among the finest people I've had the pleasure of knowing. **TXA**