

Updated Joe Davis Seminar Debuts

By Traci Matt
STAFF WRITER

"This is my fifth Joe Davis Enterprises school and I have learned something new each time. Thanks for adding the generator section."

"I am not a rebuilder, but it helped me understand how the parts I work with work together."

"When you learn at least one thing, you can't put a price on it."

After logging hundreds of hours teaching and thousands of miles on his RV, Joe Davis has taken his legendary electrical rebuilding seminar to a new level. Judging from attendance and comments on evaluation forms, the effort has paid off.

Chris Thompson of Electric Motor Service in Logan, W. Va., hosted the premiere of the revamped 2005 Electrical Rebuilder's Association-sponsored sessions over the first weekend in April.

"It was a great turnout with about 80 people there Saturday," said Thompson. "A lot of people liked the open discussion in the afternoon, and I got a lot of comments about the new seminar Joe is doing."

Thompson attributed his outstanding turnout to a well-thought-out plan which was put into motion months before the seminar. This included an initial mailing more than five months in advance, a staff which consistently reminded customers to register, direct telemarketing, and brochure information stuffed in orders.

"Every time a customer called in to place an order, I had all the counter guys ask 'Are you coming to the seminar?' so we were always reminding them about it," said Thompson. "Then I had our telemarketer that calls all the rebuilders each month ask the same question, and she hammered them the last 30 days prior to the seminar. I think constantly reminding everyone about it makes a big difference. You just have to push it."

Attendee Dan Smith of Boston Auto Electric certainly pushed with every ounce of his strength to get to the semi-



nar. For starters, after initially driving five hours, Smith had to turn around and take a sick traveling companion home. After that ten hour drive, he caught a flight from Boston to Washington, D.C., where he was sent to the wrong gate by the airline and missed his connecting flight. By the time he realized the mistake, the last flight had flown.

The woman behind Smith in line had missed the flight for the same reason and had an even more compelling reason to get to West Virginia. She was serving in Afghanistan and was on the way to her mother's funeral the next morning. So at 11 pm, Smith rented a car and offered to drive the woman through thick fog and rain to West Virginia, arriving at 5:30 am.

"If I had known what I would have to do to get there I can't say I would do it again," he said. "But what I got on Saturday was well worth going. There was a lot of new information. The discussion period after was one of the best I've been involved in. I learned an awful lot about the clutch pulleys and failures that are happening on those, and some helpful testing tips on new rectifiers that

I've already passed along to customers."

Smith said that although this was his eighth Joe Davis seminar, he got so much new information at a good pace that it kept him awake after not sleeping for more than 24 hours.

He is hosting a Joe Davis seminar at Boston Auto Electric on September 9 and 10.

One of the things Smith missed on Friday night was a notable departure from past presentations. This session is now titled "How Generators, Starters & Alternators Really Work." Davis said after reading evaluation forms over the years he's realized that most rebuilders lack formal training in electrical systems which create the framework for alternators, starters and generators. He now includes an introduction to the theory behind electrical rebuilding.

"They can see why it does what it does, not just how it does it," he said.

One portion of this hands-on demonstration includes making a battery out of a lemon, copper wire, and a zinc nail. Davis said a 12-year-old attendee in Logan was "just beside himself" watching that demonstration.

Davis' trademark foray into new parts and their potential problems is still a cornerstone of the weekend presentation. He said one attendee "had the daylights scared out of him" after seeing all the new information, but they agreed that it was good he was there because the competition wasn't learning all he was.

The Saturday session now begins with a pre-discussion questionnaire made up of "technical questions that rebuilders should know." Davis then looks over the answers and covers topics where knowledge seems to be lacking. He also gives rebuilders a chance to write questions down, and they are addressed by Davis or his guest speakers.

"The trick is to get them involved by asking questions. I also evaluate how well it goes by how many people fill out the evaluation form. Usually 85 to 90 percent fill it out," he said.

Davis started using evaluation forms when he left WAI and went out on his own as a trainer about five years ago.

"I tell them to be as critical as possible," he said. Most of the negative comments on the new format lamented that there was simply too much information to digest in such a short amount of time.

When asked on the form how much money they made or saved as a result of something they learned, answers ranged from "don't know" to "lots," "a bundle," and even "hundreds."

Davis' next presentation will be at the ERA Trade Show in Atlantic City, May 19 through 22. After that he has eight more ERA-sponsored seminars scheduled throughout the U.S. through the end of the year. Davis said he is also available for installer seminars, and in-house training and shop evaluations. For more information see page 28 of this issue of the *Exchange*.