

# The Start of the ICAIA

The early to mid-1970s marked a turning point in the United States. The nation was facing its first major oil crisis, and public awareness of environmental pollution was rapidly growing. In response, automotive manufacturers began making significant technological changes to their vehicles.

In 1975, the Illinois EPA invited college automotive instructors to a meeting at a hotel near Midway Airport in Chicago. The purpose was to explain how both current and future automotive technicians would need to adapt to the industry's changing demands. Among those attending were Jim Lausted of Prairie State College, Paul Rickert of Waubensee Community College, and Ray Oviyach of Triton College. All three were energized by the technological shifts underway and began to consider what instructors would need to do to keep pace.

About a month later, the three met again at a new-products meeting hosted by Fred Pierson, the manager at the Chicago Chrysler Training Center. During a coffee break, they discussed the importance of automotive instructors meeting regularly to stay informed and prepared.

Shortly afterward, Jim arranged a meeting with Paul and Ray at Prairie State College to explore forming an organization dedicated to this purpose. They agreed that instructors needed direct access to training from automotive manufacturers and aftermarket companies—training specifically designed for those teaching automotive technology. Word spread quickly, and in the spring of 1976, the first official conference was held, hosted by Paul Rickert. The Chicago Chrysler Training Center hosted the second conference that fall. Jim Lausted hosted the third in spring 1977, and Ray Oviyach hosted the fourth in fall 1977. The momentum was unmistakable.

By this time, the Association had established a strong ICAIA Board. Officers advanced through the ranks and then moved into advisory roles, ensuring continuity of knowledge and experience. This structure helped keep the Association member-driven and open to new ideas that would increase its value to instructors.

The role of an Executive Treasurer was determined to be pivotal in ensuring the consistency and integrity of the Association's administrative functions. Marty Zvonar from Parkland College participated in the early conferences and was appointed as the first Executive Treasurer. He served diligently until his retirement in the fall of 2000. His tenure laid a strong foundation for the Association's financial oversight and administrative stability.

With Marty's retirement, Art Koudelka from Illinois Valley Community College took over the responsibilities of the role. Art has continued to serve as Executive Treasurer,

demonstrating ongoing dedication to the Association's governance and operational excellence. His leadership has been vital in ensuring the stability and effective management of the Association's financial affairs, contributing to the organization's sustained success and integrity over the years.

## Founding Fathers Scholarship

To recognize the extraordinary vision and dedication of Jim Lausted, Paul Rickert, and Ray Oviyach, the Association later established the **Founding Fathers Scholarship**. This scholarship stands as a lasting tribute to the three educators whose leadership, collaboration, and commitment to professional growth laid the foundation for ICAIA. Through this scholarship, their legacy continues—supporting future generations of automotive technology students and reinforcing the spirit of giving back that defined the organization's earliest days.



Left: Ray Oviyach  
Middle: Jim Lausted  
Right: Paul Rickert

## Jim Krudl Rising Star Scholarship

Jim Krudl devoted 30 years to teaching Automotive Technology at the Technology Center of DuPage, formerly DAVEA, before retiring in 2005. Throughout his career, he became known as an uplifting presence to everyone who crossed his path. Colleagues, students, visiting instructors, and industry partners all remember him as someone who radiated joy, welcomed conversation, and made people feel valued. His dedication to his students helped build one of the strongest ASE/NATEF-certified automotive programs in the state of Illinois.

Jim's influence extended well beyond his own classroom. Within ICAIA, he was a generous mentor who freely shared his wisdom, experiences, and practical insights with younger instructors. He believed deeply in helping others grow, and many teachers credit Jim's guidance for shaping their careers. As a proud graduate of Southern Illinois University, his love for SIU's automotive program was unmistakable. He championed the program at every opportunity and encouraged countless students to pursue their education there.

What truly set Jim apart was the way he connected with people. To his students, he was far



more than a teacher. He became a mentor, a role model, a steady father figure, and often a lifelong friend. Jim inspired his students to enter the automotive profession with confidence, and many went on to excel in their careers. Others followed directly in his footsteps, becoming automotive instructors themselves—and many of those new teachers joined ICAIA, continuing the cycle of mentorship Jim helped create.

Graduates who returned to visit often share the same heartfelt message: “If it wasn’t for Jim Krudl, I wouldn’t be where I am today.” That sentiment captures the essence of his legacy. Jim was a remarkable person, a phenomenal teacher, and someone whose impact reached far and wide.

In his passing, the Association, together with his beloved wife Sharon, committed to carrying his legacy forward through the establishment of the Jim Krudl Rising Star Scholarship, ensuring that his spirit of mentorship and encouragement continues to lift future generations.

