

## **MR. FIXIT: If your dog happens to sit down on your glasses...**

By Kim Underwood  
JOURNAL REPORTER

If you fall asleep on the couch and wake up to find that you've rolled over on your eyeglasses and mangled them, or if your son breaks one of the hinges on his glasses, the man who can help is Owen "Buzz" Williams.

People drive down from Surry County or up from Lexington to have him fix their glasses. He has had customers from New Zealand, Hawaii and California drop in while in Winston-Salem for business.

Williams, 48, has been a licensed optician since he was 20. He and his wife, Dianne, who is the facilities administrator at Amos Cottage, met when she was working in an optical department at a drugstore.

Fifteen years ago, he decided to stop making glasses and go into business on his own fixing them. His no-frills shop on Vest Mill Road has a no-frills name - Eyeglass Repair Shop - and a no-frills motto - "You break 'em. I fix 'em."

He doesn't advertise. A number of opticians keep his business cards on hand to give to people when they come in with an eyeglass problem that the optician can't or doesn't care to deal with.

"I order cards 10,000 at a time," Williams said. "I go through a box every year."

The other day, Jackie Golden came by with her son, Jonathan, after he broke his glasses and someone at a Wal-Mart optical department told her about Williams.

"They said they knew a man who might be able to help me," Golden said. "This is a blessing."

Patty Brown is a regular customer. Her 2-year-old son, Luke, is learning to be conscientious, she said, but "a 2-year-old is rough on glasses." Whenever he breaks them, she tells him that they are off to see Buzz Lightyear, scoops up Luke's 3-year-old sister, Emma, and drives down from Surry County.

It's worth the trip, she said. "He's quick, and he's efficient. He's very reasonable."

If an adjustment takes just a minute or two, Williams may not charge. And if he finds out that it's a teacher bringing in a student's glasses, that's generally free, too.

"It's useless to have the child sitting there and not be able to see," he said.

Most fixes fall into the \$5 to \$18 range, depending on the complexity.

Williams grew up in Durham. After high school, he didn't have a clue about what he wanted to do. A friend was going to Durham Technical Community College to become an optician.

"It was just down the street," Williams said.

He decided to give it a go and discovered that he enjoyed the work.

Williams describes himself as an AM-radio, talk-show kind of guy, so people are likely to hear someone such as Rush Limbaugh in the background when they stop in. Williams' outside interests include deer hunting, often with a bow, and martial arts. He has a first-degree black belt in tae kwon do. These days, his focus is on a form of akido called seishidokan akido.

Sharing his workbench with tiny screwdrivers and other tools are a few items that may perplex the uninitiated, such as a bottle of Wite-Out correction fluid and rolls of fishing line.

The Wite-Out comes in handy when he is soldering and wants to protect the surrounding area. Dab it on and it does an excellent job of keeping the solder from spreading. And it's cheaper than the product designed specifically to do that.

As for the fishing line, it can be used for a number of things, including standing in for a screw if the threads are stripped on a screw hole for the nose pad. Slip it in, clip it off, burn the ends so that they flatten out and the piece of line can't fall out, and you're in business.

For the most part, he takes care of people's glasses while they wait. If something is going to take a while or the person is in a rush, they leave the glasses. Over the years, he has accumulated 70 or 80 pairs that people have yet to come back for. He doesn't get rid of them because people have come back years later.

One thing that Williams has learned is that people are often reluctant to tell the full story of what befell their glasses. They may say that they dropped them and omit the part about stepping on them.

From the "dog ate my homework" school of excuses, he enjoys the "dog sat on my glasses" excuse. He's not saying that couldn't happen, but that would be some dog.

"Most people are embarrassed that they sat on them," Williams said.