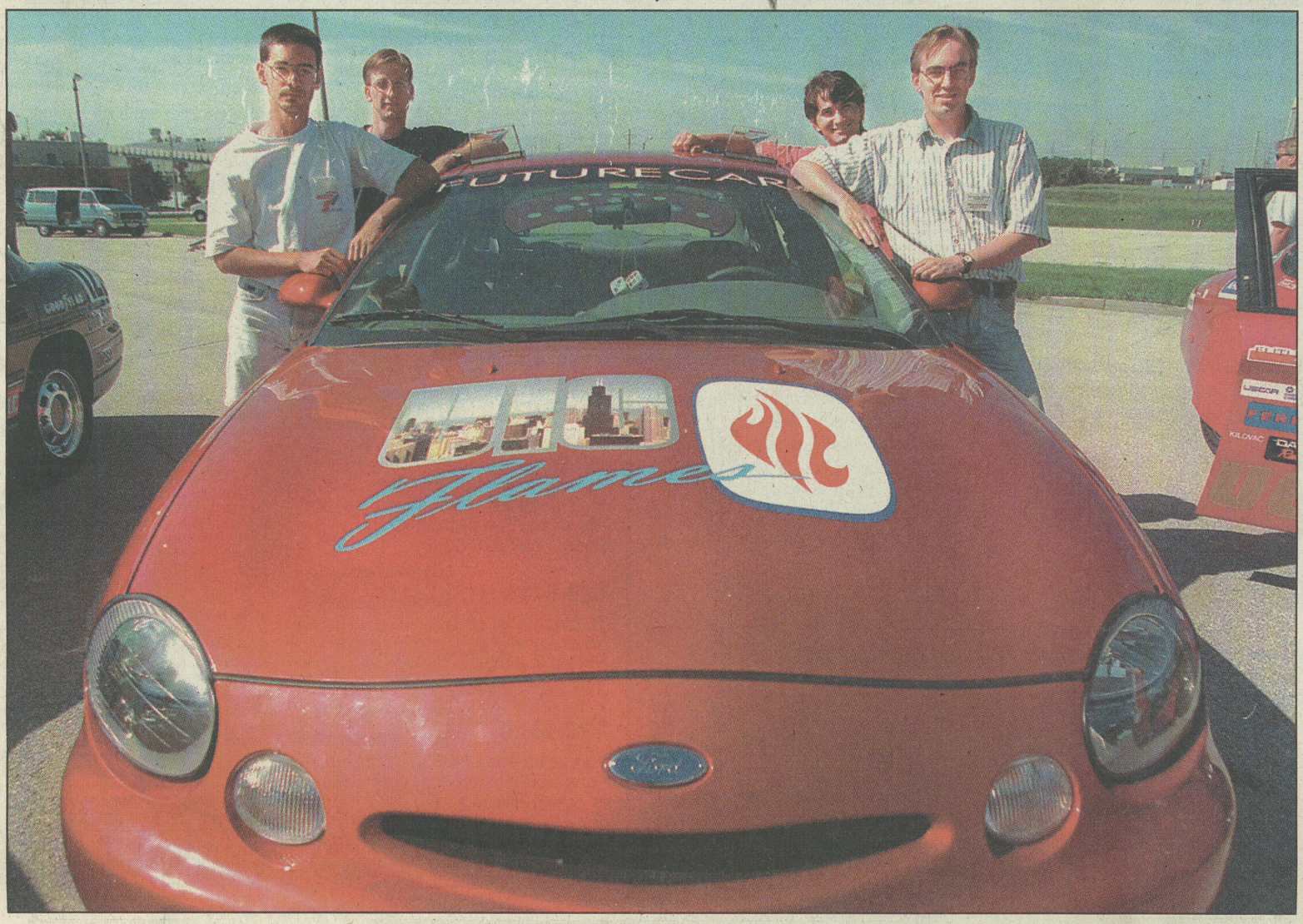

BRANIMIR KVARTUC/HERALD-NEWS

Bill Potter (front left) and Walter Gorczowski (front right), both 1990 graduates of Lincoln-Way High School, along with team members Dave Chojnowski (back left) and Kevin Smith are working on a two-year project to develop the car of the future.

Lincoln-Way grads get in gear

■ **Challenge:** Boost efficiency without too many sacrifices

By Guy Tridgell
HERALD-NEWS WRITER

Argonne — Faster than a thrown anvil, more powerful than a riding lawn mower and able to travel the equivalent of 80 miles per gallon of gas, it's the next generation of the American automobile.

Henry Ford would have been proud Wednesday as perhaps the most revolutionary Yankee invention got its latest public unveiling at Argonne National Laboratory.

The showcase was the midpoint evaluation for the FutureCar Challenge, a student contest sponsored by the Big Three automakers and the Department of Energy. The event is organized by Argonne.

The FutureCar Challenge features 12 teams representing some of the best technological and engineering schools in the nation. Two 1990 graduates of Lincoln-Way High School, Walter Gorczowski and Bill Potter, were members of the team representing the University of Illinois-Chicago.

The task for each team is no Sunday drive: Take an intact American family sedan and transform it into lean, ultraefficient automobile. The hitch is they can't forsake comfort, safety or affordability.

"That is considerably ambitious considering they were given stock model cars," said Bob Larsen, Argonne's director for the FutureCar Challenge. "They have been working for a very limited time and have come up with very tremendous results."

There is a trade-off, however. While cars entered in the contest are extremely fuel-efficient, they lack breakaway speed and power.

Most are hybrids — vehicles fueled by a combination of power sources, usually electricity and a gas-powered engine. Virginia Polytechnic Institute scored the most points for a Chevrolet Lumina powered by an electric motor and propane engine.

The University of Illinois-Chicago team built a Ford Taurus propelled by a natural gas engine aided by compressed air tanks stored beneath the rear seats.

"It is the same result as turbo or supercharged car," Potter said.

It is not running now, but Potter and Gorczowski know where the trouble spots are. Before the competition is complete next year, the team hopes to have all the luxury options working and should have delivered a boost to the car's acceleration. According to engineering designs, the car should be averaging close to the equivalent of 70 miles per gallon of gas.

"It is very promising," Gorczowski said. "We are not happy with the way it ran this year, but when it did run well, the results were very promising."

The techno-driven grease monkeys, who have been working on each other's cars since high school, found some other new challenges with their latest project.

"To keep a bunch of students involved in it is hard," said Gorczowski, the team manager who has received job offers because of his work on the car. "A lot of creativity comes out and you have to figure out a way to use it."