



Florence Barrett

At the full-service garage on Singers Glen Road, Rittenhouse Auto Service manager Rick Stroop (left) and owner Jon Rittenhouse serve customers who live miles away .

Taking care of people and their cars

By Florence Barrett

SINGERS GLEN—It's not that Rittenhouse Auto Service owner Jon Rittenhouse and manager Rick Stroop don't know where the business is located. They just can't tell you what area 5688 Singers Glen Road is in. It's not Harrisonburg, they said, but the business is listed as a city address. And it's not Mount Clinton, although that community is close by. The consensus is the Singers Glen area, though the hamlet is four miles west.

It doesn't matter to their customers where the six-bay garage is located, they're willing to travel a number of miles. Car-owners make the trip from Timberville and Broadway to the north and Clover Hill and Dayton to the southeast, as well as West Virginia, Staunton and even Washington, D.C.

Living 10 miles away doesn't bother Helen Saulton, who

praised the mechanics as she waited for her car to be serviced.

"This is the place I come for everything. If it wasn't for Jon, I don't know what I'd do," said Saulton, who has been bringing her car since the shop opened in 1996. "It's nice to trust someone. I know that what Jon or Rick says is true. I don't have to worry."

Jon is proud of being a full service, one-stop shop for his customers, he said. From tires, alignments, oil changes and services, brake and power steering flushes, coolant and transmission, Jon, Rick and four technicians are trained to do the job.

Building the Business Slowly

Jon started the business after working for 10 years as a certified Ford mechanic with Dallas Hollar Ford (now Harrisonburg Ford.) Wanting to keep his overhead low, he opened his garage across the street from its current location in an empty warehouse owned by his father-in-law. "It was made for the taking," Jon said.

To keep control of the workload, he specialized in what he knew best—Ford, Mercury and Lincoln. But word spread quickly, and the lone mechanic was booked solid.

In 1999, Rick Stroop stopped at the shop to have a new vehicle checked out. After 30 plus years as a mechanic, Rick worked in auto sales. But that didn't stop Jon from wanting him to work for him.

"I knew he was a competent mechanic," Jon said. "I asked him, 'You still got your tool box?'"

"And here I am today!" Rick said, laughing.

With Rick's additional help, services expanded to include all makes and models.

The two friends joked that "we fight all the time." Friends call them Oscar and Felix after the Neil Simon characters in the play and television series, "The Odd Couple." Oscar was a slob, while Felix was a neatnik.

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