



3440 Chicago Drive
Hudsonville Michigan 49426
Hours: Monday - Friday 8am - 5pm Closed for Lunch 12pm to 1pm
Telephone (616) 669-9169 Email: service@bjar.com



History of Bob & Jeff's Auto Repair, Inc.

It was a day of celebration on April 27, 1961, complete with banners, flags and a clown. Bob Altena was opening the station "Bob's Gulf" at 3440 Chicago Drive in Hudsonville, Michigan, and establishing his own business after many years of working at General Motors in Grand Rapids.



His brother-in-law Merle Cook assisted Bob the first day while Paul, Merle's son, played the fully costumed clown and handed out balloons. The very first customer that memorable day was Judy Brower.

The station, built in 1957, had two short-term operators and then stood vacant for four months before Bob took it over. It was a success from the first day and continued to prosper because of hard work and long hours. The first four months, Bob worked from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. six days a week. Al De Vries was then hired as the first employee.

Gas sold for 33.9 cents per gallon at that time. Later on, it went as low as 17.9 cents per gallon during the gas wars and as high as \$1.50 per gallon in late 1980's.

Bob continued the fuel oil route that he had started a couple of years before acquiring the station. He started with a 1949 International oil truck, then used a 1952 Ford and finally got 1972 tilt-cab Chevrolet. It was the Chevy that was rolled over in an accident on 32nd street. Luckily, no one was hurt but there was extensive damage to the vehicle.

Bob soon provided auto repair at the station and later also added snow plowing services in the winter. In July, 1961, because of increased business, he hired Gord Bronsink, who stayed with him for more than 20 years. The crew in the early years consisted of Harley Mulder, Bob Holleman, Don Scholten, Darryl Redder, and Neal Woodwyk and his sons. In 1976 Ross Peuler was hired as a mechanic. By that time, it was mostly a new group of employees: Dirk, Jon and Dave Piersma, Rod Westveer and Steve Verkaik. Those were the days of water fights, mostly between Ross and Steve. All summer long, they were at it until one day Steve went up on the roof in order to throw water down on Ross. Unfortunately, it was Bob who walked out the door and got hit!



For many years "Dum-Dums" were the candies that were handed out at the pumps to the customers with children. At Christmas time, boxes of chocolate covered cherries were given to regular customers in appreciation of their business.

Remodeling of the office, adding a third stall and refinishing the front of the building with brick was done in 1981. That same year Bob discontinued the fuel oil service and in 1985 he decided to stop snow plowing. At this time there were again new employees and Jeff Smit, Brett Huizenga, and Cris Nederveld were working for Bob.



Bob's son, Jeff Altena, had been working at his dad's side since 1974. While in elementary school, Jeff had tasks such as stocking the candy shelves and mowing the back lawn. In Junior High he started pumping fuel on a regular basis. By high school he was working on some vehicles. After college and a Master Mechanic Certificate, Jeff became Chief Mechanic. In 1985, Bob relinquished sole proprietorship and entered into partnership with his son Jeff. Thus the business became "Bob & Jeff's Auto Repair" and Jeff entered them into a new era by adding a computer in 1988.

Early in 1992 after 31 years of selling gas, the tanks were removed. This was due to new regulations, the Clean Air Act, and pressure from the EPA. Jim Brower, of Hudsonville, was the last customer to receive gas on that sad February day.

That same year, in the spring, Bob decided to retire and sold his share of the business to Jeff who at that time had worked at the shop 18 years. On April 1, 1992 Jeff had the business incorporated and now it holds the name "Bob & Jeff's Auto Repair, Inc."

Even though he was retired, Bob continued to spend time at the shop when he was not golfing. In 1998 Bob's health failed and he passed away July 2000. After Bob's death, Jeff's wife Annette took over the office duties such as scheduling and the telephone.

In 2006 they transformed the front office with paint, slate floor and new office furniture which has created a warm and comfortable waiting area for their patrons. They are happy to continue working with the third generation of loyal customers with state of the art diagnostic tools, high speed internet and a little dog named Mickey.