Dalena does all the dirty work of auto repair

By CHARLES PAULLIN
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NEW BRITAIN — It started in 1953 and has been operated by the same family ever since.

Dalena Auto Parts, at 63 Glen St., is owned by Peter and Dan Dalena, the sons of Don Dalena, who began the business with his father, Peter Dalena Sr.

"We can do anything to repair vehicles," Don Dalena said, "engine work, crankshaft jobs, grinding and cylinder operations. Most car dealers and auto service chains don't want to touch this kind of work. For them, it's too difficult, too messy." The shop can take the dirtiest of auto parts and make them look brand new, he said.

The shop, which will celebrate its 65th anniversary in September, doesn't work directly on vehicles, as it doesn't have a repair license, but it can work on the parts. It offers a full line of parts for domestic and foreign cars, trucks and buses.

"As far as the parts go, there's nothing that we can't get, as long as it's available," said Don Dalena. "My two boys here, they're pretty damn well up on in it, because they've been into racecars and trucks, and worked on them."

Wesley Bunnell | Staff

At the front counter at Dalena Auto Parts are, from left, Peter L. Dalena, Dan J. Dalena, Peter D. Dalena and Dan Dalena.

In addition to its business roots in New Britain, the shop has ties to racing cars at Plainville Stadium and Riverside Park Speedway in Massachusetts.

The shop also runs a complete machine shop for commercial customers, including Tilcon, Manafort, Dattco and the city of New Britain.

"People will spend two or three hundred dollars at (national retailers) for an auto part, then bring the part down here and let us do the dirty work of putting it in," Don said.

"New Britain is incredibly fortunate to have such dedicated businesses like Dalena Auto Parts, which has called our city home for more than six decades," New Britain Mayor Erin Stewart said in a recent article about the business. "Their success is testament to the quality of their business and attention to customer service."

One man who recently completed some engine work of his own stopped by the shop on Tuesday to drop the parts off. Although, the engine parts still had heads, on which Dalena can't use the machines, Don Dalena provided the quality customer service he's been providing, and told him that they needed to be removed, still willing to help him.

"I don't think there's any more shops that do machine work like this," said Don Dalena, although he said a couple might still be in Bristol and Berlin.

The shop also isn't afraid to help any project it can't handle, as it recently worked on two V-8 boat engines that stand over three feet tall, for a Mercury MerCruiser.

It's clear from the memorabilia photographs lining walls, and abundance of parts in storage and lying around the shop, auto mechanic work throughout Central Connecticut is in the blood and brains of the Dalena family and its business.

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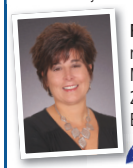
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