

# POAGE'S AUTOMOTIVE & TOWING

—BY DON TROSPER, WINTER 2010

History can be as old as the horse and buggy era or as recent as last month. In this issue I want to feature more recent history. You may have noticed that just a couple months ago a long-time Tumwater business closed shop. Poage's Automotive and Towing on Capitol Boulevard owner, Warren Bergh, decided to retire and due to the current economy chose to shut down and sell the assets.

There are no doubt many local residents who have seen the Poage's auto repair facility near the Trospers Road intersection with Capitol Blvd. and have seen the many tow trucks and heard of their good reputation and expertise in both auto towing and their specialty of heavy towing and accident recovery. For quite a few years Poage's was the only towing business that could handle the big rigs and buses, helping the authorities clear the highways and ditches of larger vehicles involved in collisions. Poage's also gained a good reputation with their honest dealings and interactions with their auto repair customers.



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The name Poage comes from the founders of the business, Terrell Poage and his son Earl. Terrell was a welder at the Highway Department on Capitol Boulevard when he decided to begin a service station in 1958. The "Flying Horse" symbol on the Mobil Gas station on the corner of Trospers and Capitol became a landmark of that increasingly busy intersection. Today there is a Jack-in-the-Box restaurant on the site. Originally it was the site of the old Thompson Grocery store. Terrell not only ran the station, but also formed the Cogs Car Club, which focused on street hotrods and dragsters and helped teach young club members driving skills, safety and where to race on tracks and drag strips rather than on the town streets. Cliff Burkhardt was one of the more well-known members of that club that attracted a young man just out of high school named Warren Bergh. Terrell's son Earl took over the station and the tow truck service. By 1975 Earl bought the building that became Poage's Automotive and Towing. It was a building owned previously by a plumber. Earl added the garage additions and eventually gave up on the Mobil station. Earl passed away in 1986. He sold the business to Warren Bergh a couple years before his death.

Warren is the son of Stanley and Margaret Bergh and grew up on their farm in the South Union area. His dad was active in the Grange and was on the Tumwater School Board at one time. His mom was a homemaker and in later years worked at Miller's downtown in Olympia. Warren was a shop foreman for Sears Auto Department when he became dissatisfied and quit, going to work for Earl Poage as a mechanic. Within a couple years he was made shop foreman, not quite realizing that Earl was grooming him to take over the business as his health was failing. Warren owned and ran the business from the mid 1980's to 2010. He is now in the process of selling the old trucks, equipment and the building and going into retirement with his wife on the family farm, raising cattle and hay, occasional boating out on the bay and working on his hobby of restoring old radios. He is very thankful for the many business relationships he has enjoyed over the years and greatly appreciates all his customers he has served so well. Poage's Automotive and Towing has been an important part of Tumwater's business history and we honor them for their service.