



DJ's Bump & Paint owner Dirk Johnson opened his shop at the corner of Third and G streets more than 30 years ago. He has five long-standing employees who help repair hundreds of damaged vehicles each year.

TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

## Just like new: DJ's Bump & Paint has been repairing damaged vehicles for nearly four decades

By Linsay Cathey  
for the Daily Courier

Dirk Johnson got his first job at a body shop in November 1977, and he's still in the auto body business today.

"Before the end of the year, I was painting complete cars," he said. "It was something I really took a knack to."

"I got a raise on the first day. They said I was better than the guy I was replacing."

Just a short few years later, Johnson opened his own body and paint shop at the corner of Third and G streets, DJ's Bump & Paint.

"I had just a few tools. We were just a little two-guy shop," Johnson recalled.

Fast forward 37 years and Johnson, now 60, is still in the same shop. He has five long-standing employees who help repair hundreds of damaged vehicles each year. His longest employee, Eric Dunnely, has been working with him since 1982. His "newest" employee, Noah Emptage, started in 2006.

Dennis Epple, another longtime friend and employee, has become known for his motorcycle paint jobs he does as side work.

"We're a team that's been around and worked together a long time," Johnson said. "It's kind of like a marriage."

The body and paint shop mainly deals with exterior body work and paint on newer cars, not your old classic cruiser. He said the shop takes care of other smaller needs such as replacing the motor in a power window. The only tasks the shop refers out to other local auto shops include

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— DIRK JOHNSON  
owner, DJ's Bump & Paint

wheel alignments, air conditioning work or replacing windshields.

"We like to pick and choose," said Johnson, adding that most of the shop's work comes from word-of-mouth and repeat customers. "It's part of being small and having plenty of work."

Over the years, Johnson has supported the Boys & Girls Club, Josephine County Food Bank, and helped out at the local high schools. Working with the Grants Pass High School's metal shop students, he helped create a metal "GP" logo that needed some color.

"We painted it and gave it some depth," Johnson said, adding that you can see the logo from A Street, near the football field.

There was a time when Johnson tossed around the idea of expanding, having more employees and taking on more work. He decided that's not what he wanted. He wanted to keep his business small and have his solid group of trusting employees. He said he pays them hourly, which encourages them to take their time and do things right.

"I think that's part of our success, other than them being great at what they do," Johnson said.



Photos by TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

ABOVE: Eric Dunnely, bodyman with DJ's Bump & Paint, grinds a tailgate support for a custom fit of a logging company's pickup truck. Dunnely has been working at DJ's for 36 years. "A lot of times there's just no instructions on what we do," he said. "You just do what you gotta do."

BELOW: Noah Emptage, auto-body painter with DJ's Bump & Paint, preps a door molding for a Toyota Corolla.



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