



Ken DeMartini: Beyond the Shop

By JAMES FLORENCE, Diamond Certified Resource Reporter

When asked what drew him to a career in auto repair, Ken DeMartini credits a lifelong fascination that began in his childhood. “I got my first car magazine when I was five or six years old and that was pretty much the beginning,” he remembers. “It was the 1960s, so cars were all the rage. I started doing automotive work as soon as I was old enough to drive, and it just came naturally to me, so I stuck with it. I took auto shop in high school and continued to pursue it

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in college. Thirty-five years later, I’m still working on cars.”

After 20 years as a mechanic at Japan Auto Repair, Inc., Ken says

he enjoys the dynamic of working at an independently run shop. “We don’t have to deal with the politics of a big dealership, so we’re able to focus on what matters most: doing great work and taking care of our customers.”

Ken resides in Marin County with his wife, Sue, where he appreciates the temperate Bay Area climate. “The weather here is not only nice to live in, it also affects my work,” he says. “I lived in Alberta, Canada for several years, and the extreme cold caused a lot of rust issues with the cars. When you’ve worked in those kinds of conditions, you realize that the climate here is pretty accommodating.”

Outside of work, Ken extends his love of cars beyond the shop to his personal life. “I do some hobby racing, which is the least expensive form of car racing you can do,” he explains. “We built our car from a 1985 Toyota MR2, and we race locally at the Infineon



Ken DeMartini is a certified auto mechanic at Japan Auto Repair, Inc.

Raceway at Sears Point.” When he’s not on the racetrack, Ken enjoys spending time with his family, including his and Sue’s three children and two grandchildren.

In his professional career, Ken espouses the importance of keeping his customers’ best interests at heart. “We always try to look at things from the customer’s perspective, especially when it comes to costs,” he says. “That’s why we only recommend repairs that are really necessary, which isn’t always how the dealerships operate. Customers will often come to us after being told by a dealership what they needed, and we just shake our heads.”

When asked the first thing he’d do if he could retire tomorrow, Ken says he’d spend more time in the shop—the one in his garage at home, that is. “When you’re obsessed with cars, you tend to accumulate parts, usually for future projects. If I retired tomorrow, I would probably start going through my parts collection and get it sorted out. Once I finished that, I’d get to work on a few car projects I’ve been putting off.”