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## Joe's Towing in Brick reveals how much gas stations have changed

**By: Susan Bloom, May 29, 2019**

BRICK - Growing up in Kearny, Joe Ocello, second-generation owner of [Joe's Towing, Auto Pit Crew Lube & BP](#) in Brick, was no stranger to auto repair.

“My father Mimi, who served in the Air Force in World War II, started a repair shop called Manor Automotive in Kearny in 1947,” said Ocello, today a 64-year-old Toms River resident. “Around the time I was 5 years old, he started bringing me to the shop and was an excellent mechanic and teacher.”

Ocello honed his craft both in his father's shop as well as in school, where he excelled in shop classes and was even asked to help set up the new auto shop his high school was establishing during his junior year.



L to R - Joe Ocello and Terri Ocello (second generation owners) and Jesse Georgaklis (3rd generation owner) with wife Stacey Georgaklis. “Joe’s Towing/Pitcrew Lube,” an over 60-year-old, third-generation lube and repair shop, gas station, and towing service based in Brick. (Photo: Peter Ackerman)

“In 1974, two years after I graduated from high school, my father decided to retire and I bought the business from him,” Ocello said of a professional move he was more than ready to make as a 20-year-old.

By 1984, in search of “a more laid-back life,” Ocello sold Manor Automotive in Kearny, moved to Point Pleasant, and relaunched his business in Ocean County.

“I bought a Mobil gas station in Brick, followed by other locations in Brick and Manasquan, but in 1988 I relocated to our current site on Midstreams Road in Brick and decided to concentrate on that location and expand its range of services,” he said. [to open at Monmouth rest area](#)

## Every type of service

Today, at Joe’s Towing, Auto Pit Crew Lube & BP, “we offer every type of service for your car, from full car repair in our four-bay garage to our 15-minute drive-through ‘Pit Crew Lube’/oil change shop, Hertz car rental, BP gas station and towing service, which we’ve done for over 30 years for the local police department,” Ocello said.

“In addition,” said co-owner Jesse Georgaklis, 40, Ocello’s stepson, “we recently added our new ‘Pitcrew Extreme,’ which provides such services as window tinting, alarm installation, detailing, custom work, and accessories.”

At the busy 13-employee shop, former mechanic Ocello currently focuses more on managing inventory, scheduling repairs, ordering gas and serving as vice president of the [New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store and Automotive Association](#) while wife Terri handles financials and back-office logistics and Georgaklis manages day-to-day operations.

“We probably have between 50 to 75 customers a day between repairs, oil changes and rentals, not including our gas customers,” Georgaklis said.



Jesse Georgaklis (3rd generation owner) and Joe Ocello (2nd generation owner) at "Joe's Towing/Pitcrew Lube," an over 60-year-old, third-generation lube and repair shop, gas station, and towing service based in Brick. (Photo: Peter Ackerman)

Among trends in the industry, "automation has grown tremendously and continues to change daily, which requires constant training," Ocello said of the increasingly electronic and computerized nature of modern-day vehicles. "Cars used to need tune-ups every 30,000 miles, but now they only need them every 90,000 miles, which reflects how much more efficient cars have become."

"Things also move faster than ever and you can have parts delivered on the spot within an hour," said Georgaklis. "People expect that today, so we work hard to ensure that our customers receive high-quality and prompt service, with many of our repairs completed same-day."

Environmental regulations have also tightened over the years, but Joe's Towing has stayed ahead of that curve.

"We're a 'green' location and one of the first in our area to heat our buildings with waste oil furnaces over a decade ago," Ocello said. "Eight years ago, we installed a 34kWh solar system that enables us to produce all or close to our electricity needs, and we were also the first gas station in New Jersey to install an electric vehicle (EV) charging station, which also runs off of our solar system."

Georgaklis believes that the combination of modern services with old-time values is what makes Joe's Towing so unique.

"We're a cutting-edge shop with all of the state-of-the-art equipment and services, but at our heart we're a family-owned business that prides itself on our strong customer relationships and personal service," he said.



L to R - Joe Ocello and Terri Ocello (second generation owners) and Jesse Georgaklis (3rd generation owner) with wife Stacey Georgaklis. “Joe’s Towing/Pitcrew Lube,” an over 60-year-old, third-generation lube and repair shop, gas station, and towing service based in Brick. (Photo: Peter Ackerman)

## Caring about people

All of those qualities and more have secured customer John Ciocco’s loyalty for over 20 years. “I started going to Joe’s Towing in 1997 and my in-laws went there for auto repairs too,” said Ciocco, a Brick resident and real estate agent.

In addition to their expert diagnostic capabilities and quality work, “Joe’s is an old-fashioned neighborhood business where they’re honest, know your name and don’t try to sell you anything you don’t need,” said Ciocco, who’s brought his cars there for everything from brake repairs to simple maintenance, oil changes even engine and transmission repairs over the years. “They’re a great family and customers can expect a friendly experience, quality workmanship, and honest mechanics who stand behind their work.”

Ocello said that ever-expanding environmental regulations associated with the sale of gasoline as well as the prospect of a \$15 per hour minimum wage have posed challenges for the family business. In addition, several chain convenience stores such as Wawa and Cumberland Farms are increasingly getting into the gas station market, “though competition is a good thing because it keeps you on your A-game,” Ocello said.

One thing that hasn’t changed over the years is the firm’s dedication to being a strong community partner. “We sponsor many school sports teams, run customer appreciation days with free hot dogs

and activities for children, and like to hire neighborhood kids to work at the gas station, where we try to teach them good values and give them strong professional building blocks,” Ocello said.

He and Georgaklis are also proud to have participated in mentorship programs at Brick-area high schools and at Ocean County Vo-Tech.

In their most recent community initiative, “we fixed up a minivan and, rather than sell it, decided to donate it to a local family in need,” said Georgaklis of the vehicle, which was presented to a mother of three on May 25 in a ceremony attended by Brick Mayor John Ducey.

“We received over 300 entries and all were so deserving,” Georgaklis said. “We feel so blessed as a family, are honored to give back to the community, and hope to be able to do this twice a year in the future.”

As a thriving business currently in its 72nd year, “we love what we do and hope to continue the tradition of caring about people, helping our customers, and doing business the way we have since 1947,” Ocello said. “We’re a third-generation business serving generations of families.”

“I love that we’re able to meet new people and become part of our customer’s lives,” Georgaklis agreed. “Every day is a new adventure.”



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## Joe's Towing, Auto Pit Crew Lube & BP

Location: 100 Midstreams Road, Brick

Phone: 732-295-0274

Owner: The Ocello family

Opened: 1947

Website: [joestowingpitcrewlubebp.com](http://joestowingpitcrewlubebp.com)