

Collision Shop of the Month

A regular column focusing on the people of the collision repair industry

Lisle Auto Body Shop
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Ken Lorenz founded Lisle Auto Body in 1960. The shop is in Lisle, Illinois, a southwest suburb of Chicago with a population of 22,000. After 58 successful years in business, it is the second oldest business in Lisle.

At the age of 24, Ken Lorenz decided to open his own shop in 1960. "I literally almost built the place. I bought the property and helped the bricklayer." He started as a two-man shop and only ever increased to three employees. Like so many shop founders, he had the ability to fix anything. He was a longtime avid pilot who enjoyed flying his Beechcraft Bonanza and Navion, frequently traveling to Colorado and throughout the country.

The shop has a comfortable, old-timey feel, with 3 distinct work areas, fully equipped to each man's preference. Axalta is the choice for paint



Ken Lorenz

and the original Lisle Auto Body sign graces the front of the building.

Mike Lugo is now the shop manager and has been with Lisle Auto Body since 1991. Mike and Tom Murray, who also joined the company over 25 years ago, formed a 3 man all-star team with Ken Lorenz. It's a team with 120 years of collision repair experience.

These are rare, skilled workmen in today's specialized shop world, each man a combo technician capable of handling the entire collision repair from intake through painting. Their expertise is certainly counter to today's gig economy trend of breaking the combo tech jobs into smaller pieces.



Tom Murray, Marcia Lorenz, and Mike Lugo

"We usually have a two to three week backlog of work," Lugo comments. "We don't get too many heavy hits. Often those are totals. We work on the Lisle police cars and an unusual repair for us would be like the day the Morton Arboretum brought one of their trolley cars to us for dent repair and paint."

Mike Lugo adds, "Sometimes, when people pull in with something simple like a loose piece underneath or a sprung mirror, we just fix it in the parking lot and send them on their way with no charge. I tell them to come back when they have some real work for us to do. It takes five minutes of our time and they will tell ten people to come see us."

Marcia Lorenz and Mike Lugo comment, "We are now seeing the third generation of families who bring their cars to us. That is where a lot of our business comes from as well as being right on Ogden Avenue where a lot of people pass right in front of our shop. Over the years, State Farm has provided a steady flow of work for us. I think people also check the internet for shop reviews and ours are always 5-star positive. We have never needed to advertise.

A few years ago, shop founder Ken Lorenz began a long struggle with a degenerative muscle disease similar to Lou Gehrig's disease. Mr. Lorenz passed away earlier this year. What words can describe how life at Lisle Auto Body changed when, after 58 years of his being in the shop every day, Ken Lorenz was gone? Mike Lugo assumed the role of shop manager and has taken over a lot of the daily responsibilities. Marcia Lorenz is learning to handle some of her husband's front office duties with an inquisitive and spirited charm. Tom Murray is rock steady in repair. They are looking to add another combo tech to their team so they can continue to grow.