

Bergstrom buys auto dealership

By KEITH MURAOKA
Sentinel staff writer

CAPITOLA — Local automobile entrepreneur Steve Bergstrom said Wednesday he is taking over closed Bob Dee Motors in Capitola's Auto Plaza.

In an interview, Bergstrom said the Oldsmobile and Jeep-Eagle dealership will be open for business at 8 a.m. today. He said his deal involves two separate contracts — a franchise agreement involving departed former dealer Bob DeJarnett, and purchase of the property the dealership sits on from owner Roy Baldwin. The purchase price was not revealed.

Bergstrom's attorney, Tom Griffin, also said agreement has been reached between Bergstrom and Pacific Western Bank, which obtained a court order last week after DeJarnett defaulted on a \$2.7-million bank loan and disappeared.

That court order gave the bank the dealership's inventory, worth \$1.5 million.

Bergstrom already owns seven local auto dealerships, including Porsche-Audi two doors down on Capitola's Auto Plaza. He also owns the vacant parcel between the two. He owns all of the dealerships in Capitola except for Marina Pontiac-Buick-Cadillac-GMC Trucks.

When asked whether he was interested in obtaining Marina and turning Capitola Auto Plaza into Bergstrom Auto Plaza, Bergstrom laughed. "I didn't go after this deal, it just happened," he said. "I wasn't even contacted about it until Monday afternoon."

While Bergstrom conceded the dealership's reputation has been hurt by the adverse publicity, he expressed confidence that his reputation will overcome problems.

"I think people will be impressed by the fact it's locally-owned and I'm a stable dealer," he said.

The new dealership will still be known as Bob Dee Motors for the next 30-60 days, Bergstrom said, until Oldsmobile and Jeep-Eagle approves him. He said that approval is simply a formality.

Before today, attention on the auto dealership was on Tom Mantz,

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a former partner in a collapsed auto dealership in Modesto who is entangled in a multimillion-dollar lawsuit with his former partners.

Papers filed in court named Mantz as the new owner, but Mantz said Wednesday that he never intended to take it over. He described his role as that of middle man, but did not elaborate.

Mantz said that he has been in

touch with DeJarnett. "He calls me; I don't know where he is," Mantz said.

Mantz added that he doesn't know the particulars of DeJarnett's activities since leaving the area. "I've heard he's in Las Vegas and St. Louis, too."

Bergstrom said DeJarnett has signed all the required documents, transferring his franchise to him.

"This would have been a normal

sale," Bergstrom said. "It was just made public by him (DeJarnett) flying the coop."

The 36 employees, who have not been paid in more than two weeks, have been promised to be paid by Bergstrom. But some of those employees were still skeptical Wednesday afternoon.

Said one employee: "We'll be happy when we see the cash."