

The Arlington Grocery Store

I was visiting with Bob Fancher a few weeks ago and we started talking about the grocery store located in Arlington. Bob had a long history with the store and he learned a trade as a meat cutter while working there.

In the 1950's the store was owned by Ivan Schaekel. Ivan hired Bob when Bob was in the eighth grade to work in the grocery store. Maxine Earnest, Ivan's sister-in-law, worked with Bob at the store. Jim and Jeff Hawkins were younger than Bob and they worked at the store while they were in high school. Ivan hired several high school boys to work part time at the store over the years that he owned it.

The store was a very important part of the community during the 1950's and 1960's. Many of the families only had one car. During the week, the wife would walk to the store and buy groceries on credit. This was before credit cards became popular. The husband would come in on Friday night after he received his paycheck and pay the bill. During this time period, most of the families lived from paycheck to paycheck. It was much like today, but they did not have the credit cards where they could accumulate the debt. They would pay their grocery bill each week.

Bob worked at the store for over twelve years, excluding the time he was in the Army serving our country. He would get to the store at 6:30 AM and there would be several of the older men waiting on him to open the store. They would usually tease him for not getting there sooner. They would grab brooms and sweep the sidewalk, curbs and floors for Bob which was a great help to him. However, in return, they wanted him to furnish them with fresh coffee.

Almost everyone that lived in Arlington and the surrounding area were customers of the store. Bob would cut as much as 6 quarters of beef per week for their customers. Several customers would ask Bob to pick out a turkey for them for Thanksgiving or a ham for Christmas. Some customers would have him cut a half of beef to put in their freezer at home.

He told me about one customer that always wanted to buy 25 cents worth of cheese. So Bob would cut a piece of cheese off the block and weigh it. Seldom would the amount of cheese he cut off equal 25 cents worth. One day the customer became very upset because Bob could not cut off the exact amount of cheese to equal 25 cents. Bob told Ivan about the situation and ask what he should do. Ivan told Bob the next time the customer came in and asked for 25 cents worth of cheese, cut the slice and if it was over 25 cents, take a bite off it until it equaled 25 cents worth. So, the next time, Bob did what he was told to do. The customer left the store in a hurry. However, the customer continued to trade at the store. The moral of the story is that it is not always easy to satisfy the customer.

Another story Bob told me was about a customer that always came in about 5 minutes before Bob was to close the store. The store was to be closed at 7 PM. This customer would arrive at

around 6:55 and would order some groceries. Bob would not be able to get out of the store to go home until about 7:30. When Bob discussed the matter with Ivan, Ivan told Bob to close the store at 6:50 PM. So the next night, Bob closed early and the customer could not get in. When the customer told Ivan about it, Ivan backed Bob. He told the customer to get there earlier so Bob could close on time. The customer continued shopping there and Bob became very good friends with him over the years.

Many of the customers as well as Ivan are buried in the Arlington East Hill Cemetery. Over the years, Bob has helped mow at the cemetery. As he mows, he recognizes a lot of the names of customers he once served. He told me it brings back a lot of good memories from the 1950's and 1960's. Ivan served the community well by having the grocery store. He furnished a much needed service for customers and provided work for several young individuals after school.

Information for the story was furnished by Bob Fancher.
The story was written by Larry Martin