



Volume 24

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Issue 1

Strasburg, Virginia

NEWSLETTER

strasburgvaheritage.org

President's Message

Tim Taylor

I hope everyone's year has gotten off to a great start. The Strasburg Heritage Association is looking forward to another year of serving you and our community. I am excited about our

**Annual Membership Program Meeting which will be on
Sunday, February 18 at 2 pm
at St. Paul's Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall.**

Our program is entitled, "Queen Street and Sunset Hill Schools: Names Matter."

The presentation is a discussion about these historic schools that continue to exist in the lives of students and teachers who educated and were educated in their halls. The history of these schools continues to be researched and the results are finding their rightful place in the annals of history in Strasburg, Shenandoah County, Virginia, and in America. The presentation will include names of the most recent discoveries of some of its educators.

This is our annual membership meeting so we will be conducting the business of approving board members and officers for the upcoming year. We need at least 10% of our membership to constitute a quorum, so I hope you can join us. The Nominating Committee's Proposed Slate of Board Members and Officers will be shared at the meeting and listed on our website as well.

It is the time of the year we ask everyone to renew their membership by paying their annual dues of \$20. We appreciate any financial support you can provide. We continue to support our community by giving scholarships to graduating Strasburg High School students, providing support for two community meals, sharing Strasburg Community history and folklore via our awesome newsletter, a podcast channel, informational programs, and assist with various events such as Vintage in the Valley and Shenandoah County Heritage Day. Any donations are appreciated in helping us serve our community! Thanks for your continuing support! We look forward to another exciting year of sharing Strasburg community culture, heritage, and history.



We recognize

CARLA WALLEN

For all she has done for the Strasburg
Heritage Association, we say...

Thank you!

Carla is a founding member of the Strasburg
Heritage Association. She will be retiring from
the Board this year. She has served faithfully
and with a constant smile.

We will miss you!

Board of Directors 2023

Tim Taylor, President

Laura Ellen Wade, Vice-President

Mary Mauck Cottrill, Treasurer

Barbara Adamson, Secretary

Kathy Kehoe, Newsletter Editor

Sue Foster

George Hoffman

Dennis Hupp

Dee Keister

Mary Redmon

Carla Wallen

Joan Williams

Linda Williams

Nanny 's Quilt

Display and Presentation by Ruth Hoffman

Saturday, February 24, 2024

(Snow Date, Sunday, March 3rd)

1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.



There are 225 names on Nanny 's Quilt. Come learn about the interrelationships within the local communities of the Valley, as represented in this quilt, and help us complete some of those connections with your own ancestral information. Contact The Strasburg Visitor Center at 540.465.5884 for additional information.

Shenandoah County Heritage Day 2024

Barbara Adamson

Annual Shenandoah County Heritage Day

Saturday, April 13 from 11am-3pm

at the New Market Fire Department.

As is customary, Heritage Day moves throughout Shenandoah County each year. In 2023 it was held at the Strasburg Fire Department. In 2024 we hope that you'll visit New Market to learn about their local history as well as history from around the county. All local historical organizations are invited to participate as well as individuals who have history they would like to share. You are encouraged to bring and exhibit histories of family, farms, houses, churches, schools, villages , businesses and more. There is no fee to participate. Tables and chairs will be provided. Call and leave a message at 540-459-1795.

Heritage Day is co-hosted by the Shenandoah County Historical Society and the Shenandoah County Library Archives.

Deadline for reservations is April 1.

Peggy's War Presentation

Tuesday, March 19, 2024. 7PM. St. Paul's Heritage Center. Edinburg.

You are invited to celebrate the 193rd birthday on March 19 of Margaret "Peggy" Rhodes, when her great-great-grandson, Karl Rhodes, presents this remarkable story. Karl is the author of Peggy's War, a historical novel of Peggy's life in the Valley during the Civil War. Peggy, like most Mennonites, opposed slavery, secession and war, but she also clearly sided with the Union in the conflict. She went a step further by running a depot on the underground railroad for Mennonites and Dunkers who refused to fight on either side. Peggy did so while tending to her five children, ailing husband and 120-acre farm.

Hosted by the Shenandoah County Historical Society.

Community Dinners:

Community Dinners were started in 2005 to offer good nutritious meals, fellowship and socialization for people of the community.

The Strasburg Heritage Association sponsors two Community Meals a year at St. Paul Lutheran Church, one at the beginning of the year and one at the end of the summer season. St. Paul holds two meals a month on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Wednesdays and the Strasburg United Methodist holds a meal each 2nd and 4th Wednesday. Each meal is sponsored by a civic organization, school group, or church committee. The Strasburg Presbyterian Church women also sponsor a meal. They are very appreciated by the community. We are averaging about 40 attendees on Wednesdays, and 40 to go meals. Meals are served at 5:30. There is no cost for the meals, but a free will offering is accepted. All donations are divided between The Compassion Cupboard and Strasburg Local Relief. All organizations are welcome to volunteer for these events. If you know of someone who would benefit from a hot meal or getting out of the house to visit with others, pass along the information.

All are welcome. —Linda Williams, Coordinator

A Little Bit of Folk History

The Folklore Corner

by

Larry Vance

Folklore is a part of our heritage. As has been noted many times, many a legend is born at the Thanksgiving Day dinner table and the village tavern. Quite often the lore is not written down, but transmitted orally. I'd like to share a bit of folklore told in my family.

One of the main sources of meat for the early settlers of the Shenandoah Valley was hogs. There were several reasons for this. The woodlands were rich in acorns and chestnuts which allowed the hogs to "free graze" and there-by fatten for slaughter. (The Chestnut Blight of the early decades of the 20th Century killed off most of the Chestnut trees.) If there was an abundant corn crop, the animals would be brought in to top off the fattening process. Another reason for the hogs as a food staple was that almost no part of the hog went to waste. As has been spoken many times on butcher day "the only thing going to waste is the squeal." Finally, many of the recipes and curing techniques created food preservation long before refrigeration. For example, a properly cured and taken care of ham could hang in the smokehouse three or four years before being used. The same for the cured shoulders, but they were usually used much sooner. Cured side meat, bacon, would last six months. The same for jowls. A favorite cure recipe was six and a half pounds of salt, three pounds of black pepper and one pound of brown sugar. The meat would be laid out on the curing boards and allowed to take in the cure, turning the meat to ensure proper ventilation throughout and propped up with a small slat of wood. After about six weeks, the hams and shoulders would be brushed free of the excess cure and a paste of 20 Mule Team Borax applied with red pepper added. This was done to deter bugs, also known as skippers, from devouring the meat. The meat would be placed in a bag such as a pillowcase or cotton flour sack and hung up to finish aging. Some folks would put their cured meat in a wooden box, perhaps a cracker box, and cover the meat with lime. Still others would coat the meat in lard before hanging it up. Sausage could be placed in a crock and sealed on top with lard or stuffed into the bladder or intestines of the slaughtered hog and allowed to age before using it. Hence the term for sausage aged in a bladder, Summer Sausage. Canning many of the other cuts of meat was also a means of preservation. Butcher day was an event attended by many neighbors, friends and family. Seemingly, all who attended would go home with some part of the butchered hog be it fresh sausage, scrapple, puddin' or maybe a few pork chops. And there was great reciprocity and sense of community. Much of what is described above is still carried on in some parts of the area today, but fewer in number. Due to no refrigeration, butcher day had to take place during the winter months, usually from Thanksgiving thru February. In our area it was a maxim that "March meat doesn't cure." This process provided many families with the meat they needed for an entire year. Unlike the home butchering of a beef. The beef would be slaughtered in the depths of winter and hung up in the barn using the ropes and pullys there for putting the loose hay in the mow. After days of aging, the meat was sliced off the bones as needed. A favorite was to make beef and gravy and pour it over biscuits. As one area lady remembered, "winter was the only time we had beef. And that gravy was so good." Refrigeration, mass production and the super markets changed people's reliance on acorn fattened hogs, winter only beef and Butcher Day.

Many decades ago, a man retired from the USDA and bought a farm adjacent to the Shenandoah River and Massanutten Mountain. He too wanted to butcher hogs for his own use and arranged a butcher day with local help to perform the butchering. When asked by the "head butcher" if he wanted pork chops or tenderloin, he replied neither. He wanted the tenderloin ground into the sausage. That would make it so much better he said. One of the attendees to the butchering was wearing a canvas hunting jacket with a lined game bag. While the host was distracted, the game bag was filled with tenderloin and the jacket put in a truck. The host boasted for weeks about how good his sausage was because of the addition of the loins. The following year on his butcher day several people showed up to help wearing canvas hunting jackets with lined game bags. The USDA retiree was never told anything different.

A man west of Strasburg butchered his hogs and put his hams and shoulders on the curing boards. One day he went out to the smokehouse to check on things and all of his meat was gone. He never spoke a word to anyone of this, not even to his wife. Several months passed and on his way home from work he stopped at a country store that served "On Sale" beer and to spend some time with his neighbors and acquaintances. He got up from the bench where he was seated, said see you later and paid his tab. Just before he reached the door, one of his neighbors asked "Hey, did you ever find out who stole your hams last winter?" He turned and looked his neighbor in the eye and said "Yes, I found out just now."

One last piece of folklore involves an attorney from yesteryear and a client accused of stealing hams from a smokehouse. A citizen of Shenandoah County was accused of stealing hams from a neighbor's smokehouse. He retained the services of a reputable local attorney and during one of the initial interviews, the defense attorney determined that his client had indeed taken the hams. The attorney advised the accused to plead not guilty, but to bring him a couple of the hams which he would accept as his fee. A jury trial ensued and during the final arguments to the jury, the defense attorney stood and said that his client was not guilty and he had not eaten anymore of those hams than he had. The verdict? Not guilty.

Ben Franklin is credited with the following: "Three people can keep a secret if two of them are dead."

A Little Folk History

Stickley Esso and Holsingers Strasburg Service Center

by
Kathy Kehoe

In 1937, a vacant lot on Massanutten street would soon be transformed into a small town landmark. Starting as an Esso franchise, Stickley Esso, the little building with one set of gas pumps out front would grow into a full service station, employing many local men and boys for the next 86 years. It would become a gathering place, an example of good customer service, hard work, and pride in operating a small business. As automobiles became more affordable, and more were being mass produced in factories, people began traveling by car instead of by passenger train or horse drawn buggies or wagons. Standard Oil saw the need for gas stations in all the towns along the Valley Pike and began to offer franchises, much like the charging stations for electric cars that are now in our area. One is behind the Strasburg Diner on Rt. 11. In the coming years, Linden Stickley's Esso station and then Holsingers Exxon and the Strasburg Service Center would become home to parking lot congregating, hot rods and the familiar *ding*din*g* sound of a customer's car driving into the station. Gary Holsinger and Carroll Estep are the names everybody knows.



The name "Esso" originated in 1911, when Standard Oil of New Jersey broke from Standard Oil and began using the phonetic pronunciation of "S" and "O", spelling it as Esso. Esso had high standards for its operators. They advertised clean rest rooms for travelers and gave away free maps for drivers on vacations or road trips. "Esso ranked 31st among American corporations in the value of World War II production contracts. During the years of racial segregation in the United States, Esso franchises gave out The Negro Motorist Green Book: An International Travel Guide. In 1973, Standard Oil of New Jersey renamed itself Exxon Corporation, and adopted the Exxon brand name throughout the country." (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esso>)

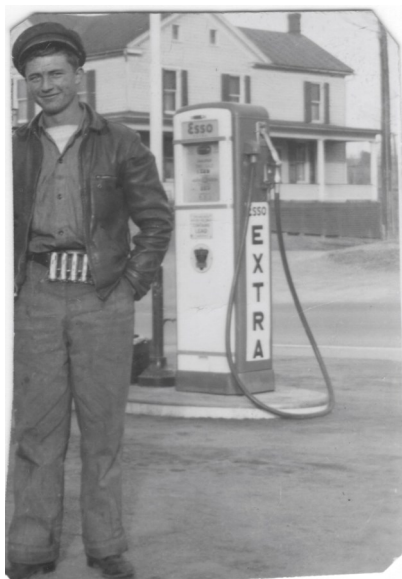
Carol Guard Fogle lived across the street from the station in the "Cayton house, belonging to my grandparents, Harry and Gussie Cayton. I lived there most of my growing up years and after." said Carol. Years later, when her only remaining family member in the house needed to move to a nursing home, Carol had to sell the house to pay for his care. The new owner, Leo Bernstein, found a photo album in the house and gave it to Gary Holsinger, at the station across the street, as there were snapshots of the gas station taken from the house. Gary passed that album onto Carol and she has shared them with the Heritage Association. "My grandfather had many photo albums and scrapbooks." Carol remembers Linden Stickley as "such a nice man. We kept his books for many years. He would come over and sit on our porch". You can see in these photos, that Washington Street, to the left, was un-



paved. Larry Allamong, who grew up on Washington Street, recalls that the street was unpaved when he was a child. He remembered that local people called it "Mud Lane".

Peggy Shillingburg Baseler shared that her father, Marvin Shillingburg, worked for Linden Stickley; he would go to work at 10 p.m. and work all night. Peggy had just gotten her drivers license when she was a sophomore at Strasburg High school in 1964. Her father would let her drive his car if she took him to work at ten o'clock. She could go places like the Valley Diner with her friends, but she had to be home by midnight. But then she had to get up early to go back to the station at 6 a.m. when her dad got off work because they only had one car. She was a teenager and soon decided "it wasn't worth having the car" when she had to get up so early. One morning as she was leaving before 6am to pick up her father from work, she had a flat tire. Mr. Stickley brought Marvin home, but that was when her dad taught her how to change a tire. Her dad would take a nap when he got home, before leaving again to drive a school bus, so he was on a tight schedule. Because her father worked at night, he saw the teenagers and young people driving their cars past Stovers Funeral Home on Holliday Street, down main street and past Stickleys Esso on Massanutten, then turn onto West Washington street—they called that their "cruising lane", and he saw how late these kids stayed out. They didn't seem to have a curfew like he'd given his daughter. Her dad told her, "Don't get in with those Strasburg kids." After the Virginia Department of Transportation opened Interstate 81, there wasn't as much traffic coming into town, and the station stopped staying open all night. Young people were still making noise on the lot though, even after the station was closed for the night. Peggy recalled that her father told

her that when he was working at night, when people needed an ambulance, they would call the station, and then he, or whoever was working, would call the funeral home. This was before the volunteer rescue squad was formed in 1966. Stover Funeral Home used their hearse for transporting people to the hospital. "I liked Mr. Stickley" said Peggy. The station sold ice cream and her dad would bring home peppermint ice cream, telling her that, "Linden sent it to you".



Believed to be Linden Stickley wearing a coin changer.

Walking through the door of Gary Holsinger's service station is a step back in time. The walls are covered with snapshots of employees, friends and family posing at the station, advertisements for Atlas tires and Harley-Davidson, a framed copy of the Northern Virginia Daily's article on the station's 50th anniversary and an old poster from March 1972 of an Open House with a picture of Gary and his late brother and partner Gene. Gary says he doesn't know where the picture of Wild Bill Hickock came from, but somebody put it on the wall a long time ago. There is one very faded photo marked "Coy France, Keith Wymer and Jay Beeler. In Background, Lynden Stickley's car". The lettering on the car looks like "Crystal Cab" which may have been a taxi service. The photographs on the wall are faded from the sunlight and time, but Gary has a cigar box full of photographs taken at the station. There are pictures of Gary and his brother and partner Gene, of his son Shane who also worked



1937 Courtesy of Carol Guard Fogle

There are pictures of Gary and his brother and partner Gene, of his son Shane who also worked



there, his grandson John David, employee Neil Coverstone, town policemen and a few of “Santa” Buryl Stickley in his red suit.

Gary Holsinger was a teenager at Strasburg High School when he went to work for Linden Stickley. He also worked for Brills Grocery and the News Stand. He graduated from Strasburg High School in 1965, and worked for Linden Stickley from 1966 until 1972. His brothers Gene and Donnie also worked there. When Linden Stickley retired in 1972, brothers Gary and Gene operated the station for the next 25 years together. Then Gene left the station but Gary has kept the station running. Gary celebrated the 50th anniversary of the business on January 1 of 2022. The Northern Virginia Daily newspaper interviewed Gary with a front page article. According to the NVD,

Gary was 25 years old and Gene was 35 when they each paid around \$3,500 to take over the building. Their brother Donnie Holsinger also worked for Stickley “off and on”. In 1971, Donnie opened his own Sunoco service station near the Interstate 81 entrance/exit ramps on Rt. 11 North. He retired in 1995 and sold the business to Bill Holtzman. Donnie remembers that Linden Stickley started Stickleys Esso in 1938 and that Linden had Oldsmobiles, “he’d get a new one every year”. Donnie believes the photo of the young man in front of the station is Linden as a young man. Noticing the coin changer the man was wearing, he said he had one. They didn’t use them at his Sunoco station, but he had a young employee who preferred them so he got him one. The coin changer was convenient in the days when almost all customers paid cash and change had to be made. The coin changer has slots for quarters, dimes and nickels and made giving change easier and faster. Donnie, retired now, will turn 90 years old in March.



Gene Holsinger inside the station.



Holsinger brothers Donnie, Gary, Gene & Kenny

Today the Strasburg Service Center is the only full-service center in town. Nancy Cameron’s husband Tommy ran the other Esso station in town, on the corner of King and Capon Streets. Nancy never had to put gas in her car; her husband always took her car to fill up the tank even after he retired and sold his station. But when he got sick and couldn’t drive her car to the gas station, she, for the first time in her life, had to learn how to use the gas pumps. The only gas station in town that wasn’t self-service, was Gary’s Strasburg Service Center. She drove there, got out of the car and asked Gary if he would teach her how to use the gas

pumps. Gary told her, “You get back in the car, I’ll pump your gas for you.” Nancy, now a widow, continues to be a

loyal customer. Gary said that his late wife Linda Ritenour Holsinger, also never had to pump her own gas. The station added self-serve pumps after the gas crisis but still have many regular customers who drive up to the full-service pumps.

Long time employee Carroll Estep started working for Gary Holsinger in 1975. He had graduated from Strasburg High School and Lord Fairfax Community College. When asked about working there, especially on the night shift, Carroll said that sometimes “you saw stuff you wish you hadn’t seen.” His father advised him to ignore anything he saw: “Remember, you don’t know anything.” he said to Carroll. Carroll said, “I knew everyone who rode by”. He worked part time Tuesday and Friday. Friends would come by, buy gas and “loaf around with me”. One boy I knew would work with me to get people out of here,” said Carroll, so they would get it done and then could “loaf” until the next customer showed up, or, to close up if it was time to close the station for the night.



Carroll Estep, Shane & Gary Holsinger

The station survived the rationing during both world wars, but what Gary and Carroll remember is the Gas Crisis of 1973. The Arab oil embargo of 1973 caused fuel shortages, an increase in the price of oil, and created long lines at gas stations. The government established a rationing system that all gas stations had to follow. The stations could only buy a specified amount of gas and “when you ran out you couldn’t get more,” said Carroll. Sometimes, “we had to crawl out of here.” Gary and Carroll would have to hide, because if someone came by and saw the lights after they’d closed or even run completely out of gas and they had no more gas to sell, their local customers, their neighbors and friends, would try to get them to open up for them. Gary said he could buy gas “on the spot market’ but for a much higher price and then he’d have to sell it for more. “If you wrote a letter to the state”, said Gary, “they might allow you more gas to sell.” But when the station ran out, “you couldn’t get more until Monday morning.” It was against the law for Gary and Carroll to sell gas except on the rationing system the government had established. They were required to sell gas according to the customers license plate number. The customer whose last digit on their plate was an odd number could buy gas for that car on odd number day—the first day of the month, the 3rd, the 5th, and so on. If their plate ended in an even number, then they could buy gas on the 2nd, the 4th, the 6th etc....but they would have to wait in line with a lot of other people and sometimes the station would run out of gas before everyone in line got to the pump. Then they would have to wait 2 days to try again. The political reasons were many and confusing. People were angry. “Cars were lined up all the way to the railroad bridge”, said Carroll. Nancy Cameron remembered how during the Gas Crisis, her uncle in Michigan passed away. She was very close to this uncle and wanted to attend his funeral. Her husband told her that they’d have to have two license plates to drive to Michigan so they would be able to buy gasoline when they needed it as they drove. One license plate would have to end in an even number, and the other end in an odd number, and he might have to change the plate before each time they stopped at a gas station. It would take more than a tank of gas to get to Michigan. Tommy laughed and said he couldn’t do that. Nancy said they flew to Michigan, her first and last time on an airplane.



Matchbook cover courtesy Carol Guard Fogle

Bill Stover Jr. was just out of high school and was working the night shift at the Viscoe plant, (American Viscoe Corp.) riding the factory bus to Front Royal. Not easy for a 19 year old. He heard that his friend who worked for Linden Stickley had quit. “Dad did business there,” said Bill and suggested he go talk to Linden. Linden said, “Can you

start tomorrow?" So Bill started with Stickleys Esso in 1970, then also worked for Gary Holsinger when he took over the station in 72. Bill said that "Mr. Sticklely was all about service. We cleaned the windshield and checked the oil." Bill said that as soon as Mr. Sticklely saw the wheels of a car hit the parking lot, he would say, "car in the drive" and Bill had to be out waiting at the gas pumps. He recalls that Mr. Sticklely would come in at ten at night to check the fuel and cash register. "Linden was an easy going guy--good to work for", said Bill. There were always pieces of paper stuck in the cash register with names of customers who had bought gas and would pay their bill at the end of the week or month. Before credit cards, most places of business would open charge accounts for their regular customers. Bill worked during the day, working 40 hours a week, and sometimes 50 hours a week depending if he got off work at seven or at ten p.m., making about 80 dollars a week. His friend Morgan Pangle, who worked the night shift had an old car, a '38 Chevrolet, that didn't run. When business was slow, Morgan used the garage to work on it. Bill would help him push the car into the garage, work on it, and push it back out until they finally got it running. The car had no tags on it, but the boys would drive it across Washington Street to the car wash on the opposite corner (now 711). They couldn't drive it on the main road so they'd test drive it through the car wash bays and around a few times and then drive it back to the station. Bill reminisces that the station was "right on the main drag". Young people would drive around the block, "cruising". "You could always tell who was out and up town." said Bill. "They'd pull in to talk. We weren't busy all the time." Since they were open 24 hours, "at night time, things would happen" said Bill. One night a man came in who had too much to drink and he was hurt and bleeding. Bill wanted to call the rescue squad and the man said, "No, just call Jim Moore". Jim had the local taxi stand and had his own brand of small town service. When Bill called him, he came right over, helped the man off the floor and took him home.

Gary remembers how a regular customer and local restaurant owner, Jazzbo Connor, would drive up to the pump, cut his motor off, and wait. He knew he'd be waited on as soon as they saw him pull in. Jazzbo would always have a dollar bill hanging from the driver's side window. Gary knew to pump a dollar's worth of gas, then slide the dollar bill from the window. Jazzbo would drive on until the next time, when he'd do it the same exact way. "One dollar got you a lot of gasoline in those days," said Gary. Gary Holsinger remembers that many times cars would pull in and only want fifty cents worth of gas. "Fifty cents was worth a lot back then. He remembers selling gasoline for 32.9 cents a gallon and his competitor across town, John Artz, at Artz Esso, would charge 31.9 cents and then he and John would switch prices so that neither got all the Esso business.

Mary Mauck Cottrill was a regular customer of the station. "I used to gas up my postal Jeep there, and they pumped the gas for me. The Post Office had an account there. I was a City Carrier and they provided the Jeeps then for us and the rural carriers had to use their own vehicles at that time. I drove the Jeep 7 miles a day and I walked 7 miles a day." Kitty Jean Morris Miller said "My dad dealt there beginning with Linden Sticklely way back in the 50's. Full service with a smile. Many fond memories of him. I recall the public restroom was convenient. And kids were never chastised or fussed at. I also am remembering all of the guys who had their first job there, continuing through the Holsinger era. Great guys."

Employee Grant Pearson shared his thoughts on the station: "I had the pleasure working for Gary for 5.5 years. I used to work from 4-7 pm Monday-Friday. 12-5 on Saturday and 9-4 on Sundays. Gary was one of the best bosses I have had. He always took care of me. During my time there I got to know a lot of great people of Strasburg. It was never boring working there. Always had people stopping and talking. Learned a lot of life skills working at the gas station that I still use to this day." Shane Holsinger, Gary's son, worked at the station. "Growing up I had the chance to hang out and work at Holsinger's Exxon. I was a car

enthusiast back then especially with old ‘muscle cars’. Doug Stover had a 1967 Pontiac GTO and Mark McInturff had two nice Mustangs and a Torino that I can remember. You don't see cars like that today and they were great guys to hang out with. Besides getting to work with my father Gary and Uncle Gene, I think they taught me the art of customer service. Always try to treat the customer right. They were also instrumental in giving some of the young men from Strasburg High School their first jobs.” Greg Jenkins remembers a story from Christmas Eve back in the 80s. “I worked for Gary and Gene in the 80’s while in high school. Christmas Eve 1986 I was working in the evening with Gary. I was sick and not feeling well that evening. Gary was feeling “down” because it was the first Christmas that Shane his son would be gone. He was in the Air Force. It was just a normal evening up until about an hour before closing, other than me being sick and Gary being depressed. The first “incident” happened when a gentleman (name won't be disclosed) brought a scooter in to pump up the tires that was going to be a gift for his daughter. He put air in the first tire and it blew up, did the second tire and the same thing. Obviously there were some choice words knowing he ruined his daughter’s Christmas. The second “incident” happened at the self-serve pumps. Again, names will not be disclosed. One gentleman had pumped his gas and come inside to pay. He never moved his truck, (and a man pulled up behind his truck waiting to get to the pump) The second man had blown his horn to get him to move. When the first man went back out, words were exchanged and one was called a “JAZZ-BALL”. Nobody knew what a jazz-ball was but the man using the word must have thought it was an insult but it struck the guys at the station as funny. “It was quite an eventful evening for those of us who were there. Gary brings it up every year around Christmas and we always have a good laugh.”



Santa Buryl Stickley & Gary Holsinger

Life-long area resident Larry Allamong recalls walking over to the station to buy pop from the machine-- five cents a bottle. When he was older, he remembers how the station was a hangout, and people used to drive into the big parking lot to visit. There was a “lot of traffic at that time”, said Larry. “A lot of traffic went through town before the Interstate 81 was built.” As young people would cruise around the block, they would see friends on the lot and stop. Larry said the station parking lot was a “hangout in the sixties.” Sometimes there were fights there, with Middletown or Stephens city guys. “Stickleys was one of the places where drag races would originate.” said Larry. “Guys would brag about how fast their cars were—‘my car is faster than your car’—and a bunch of people would jump in their cars” and drive out Rt. 55 West. Larry said there was “about a quarter of a mile straight stretch” before the interstate bridge was built. “We could have four drag races before the cops showed up” said Larry with a laugh, “and then everybody would disperse.



1937, courtesy of Carol Guard Fogle. Woman unidentified.

Bill Stover Jr. also remembered the drag races. Three or four people to a car, they'd leave the station and ride out Rt. 55. Bill would usually act as the flagman, standing between the cars, holding his hands in the air like a T and then dropping his arms to start the race. Then he'd wait for them to come back to pick him up and they'd go back to town. Bill recalls that "back in those days, guys would put air shocks on their cars that would jack the back end of the car up. It was hot rod time--muscle cars --GTOs and roadrunners." Bill had a friend who had a car like that. One night they'd gotten back to the high school on the school bus, after playing a basketball game. They had ten minutes to get to a store on the edge of Middletown before they closed at midnight. They made it up Rt. 11 driving 80 miles an hour and got there in time to find someone to buy beer for them. All the stores in Strasburg knew them and knew they weren't old enough to buy beer, but in the next county, they were anonymous. Now, at 72 years old, Bill marvels at how they ever survived their youth.

When Mike Kehoe was a child, he often rode to the station with his Grandfather R.P. Kehoe, who was a regular customer at Stickleys. Donnie Holsinger, who worked for Sticklely until he opened his own service station, told me that he remembered "R.P. Kehoe coming into the station. He was a schoolteacher out at Star Tannery and he kept an account at the station. He always kept his bill paid up." When Mike was older he remembers Holsingers being "sort of a social hub after the Virginia restaurant closed at 11, because Holsingers was open all night. People would go there to see the Holsinger boys and to meet up with other kids to find out what was going on in town." When Gary Holsinger took over, he made Bill wash windows every day. If Bill said he'd just washed the window yesterday, Gary would say, "You aren't doing anything, and I'm paying ya." They had to meet the Esso standards and keep everything clean and Gary would even have him go down in the pit and clean. Bill remembers that in those days, the car gas tank was underneath the license plate in the back of the car. It was normal for Bill to have a cigarette hanging from his mouth as he squatted at the trunk with the gas hose in his hand. "It's a wonder I didn't get blown up" said Bill. His father, Bill Stover Sr., told him that when he was young, he'd go to Sticklely's often. His generation had a game they'd play in their cars. As now, there was a white guard rail at the edge of the parking lot and the boys would gun their motors straight to the guard rail, then slam the car into reverse to see how close they could get without hitting the rail.

Carroll Estep said that he used to "know everybody that rode by, 75% of them anyway, but it's a whole different deal now than it once was." Things changed over the years and the traffic going by the station is constant. Carroll said that "at one time you could lay down in the middle of the road if you wanted to (on Massanutten Street) and there'd be no cars coming from either direction."

Gone are the long nights when one could watch the night go by, hear the sound of the traffic picking up as dawn broke, watch the sky lighten as another night passed in a small town. But with each new day, Linden Sticklely's legacy continues as Gary Holsinger's Strasburg Service Center is still there, where most everybody is on a first name basis, the place where loyal customers can depend on Gary and Carroll to help them on their way. The more things change, the more they stay the same.



Boys on bicycles are sons of Ray Stewart. Photo taken by Gary Holsinger

To Our Readers: If you have memories to add to folk histories, please contact Kathy Kehoe by emailing strasburgheritage@gmail.com, calling 540-465-4185 or contacting any SHA Board Member.



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