

Transcription of Companion Hardware Discussion
LPI 9/29/2023
Lollie Krawitt, Colleen Haag, Irv Rose, Kathy Rose, David Kelly

C: So Irv, there was just Chittenden, His and Hers, and the Frame Shop in the Village...

Irv: Vitamin Connection

They were there at the end, Chalet and Kyle

C: How Long

Irv: 7 years

And they opened another location in Williston, and another in Burlington. They had three locations at the peak, plus the mail order. Ever heard of Vita-Cost? He was ahead of them, and he would have been the

But he went the stores, and did the internet as well, but if he had focused on the internet he would have been ahead of VITA-Cost....

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C: What year was it you actually bought the hardware store

Irv: It opened in 1970, November 1970

That was Walt Companion.

I remember pricing that first order...we had the basement all full of pallets and we had to price everything.

And then we had the guys from New England Hardware were there putting in the....

DK:Walt Companion in 1970 started it, and then he went on to launch Hilson Hardware for Trustworthy, and then Irv had the option to buy it...in '73 you bought it from Walt. So you worked for Walt for three years, and then he had to basically buy it or find another job.

KR: But he sold it to you, you had the first option.

DK: I started three years after that, in '76

C: So how many people did you have working for you in '76

Walt, Myself, and Dave,

DK: and Dave Rocheleau was managing it until he left for his own business, and Betty Russell was the bookkeeper, until she retired and Peg Francis, and then Beth Rickstad, and she stayed until you sold it I think....

IR: Close to the end...

KR: When did Walt open Hilson Hardware in South Burlington...

IR: Trustworthy opened it, he managed it. They asked him to manage it, that's why he left. He ended up running that for years and years.

C: It was like a go-to place

IR: Before Home Depot and Lowes, that was the only center there was. They did a beautiful job.

...

Time 4:52

C; You basically sold anything and everything.

DK: Well Dave Rocheleau brought in Mopeds....we did heaters for a little while, three seasons I think...and then tried dog food, tried a few wines, tried and true definitely did the best. If someone came in and asked for it, Irv would either drive into Burlington and get it, which he did every Friday, or find it in the catalog. We didn't like to say no, that's what I learned from him...you don't say no, you say I'll look.

....It made it fun, too.

LK: I remember being in that store, I just loved it. You had a counter right there where you paid, and you always had all these interesting little things...Oh this would be cute in my pocket book, and I just loved that. It was fun because you could pick something up and the kids would like it....it was just great.

DK...At Christmas time those things would do really well.

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And once Costco opened up, we would go in once a week, at least every other week, and he got certain things that would go on that counter, Reese's peanut butter cups, the mints, and there was stuff that we sold that you would unpackage and repackage like packaging tape and the dispensers....they sold them cheaper than we could buy them.

7:00

IR Sell things by the each rather than by the box, nails or screws, or anything, if you wanted just a couple of nails.

DK. Now you have to buy a pound whether you want them or not.

CH Someone else who worked with you ...older man, downstairs.

IR. Bob Chutter, he is up at Wake Robin.

DK. Don is still, he does screen repair. There was Bill, big tallPete Gadue, Rick Bessette, all the old timers from Shelburne when they retired....

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CH Business has changed so much....

LK: Tell us about the dog

8:52

IR: When they had automatic doors in the supermarket, he figured that out, and he'd run back in the back, and they'd give him a bone, and out he'd go.

DK: Yes, he was a really happy dog once the automatic doors were installed. Before he would have to wait for a customer.

IR: Had a lot of dogs during that time. Every one of them came to the store, and the village kids grew up with them.

C. They would come and pet them. That was really....

DK Everybody he was as much a town fixture as anyone who worked in that plaza.

H

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LK Dog's name? Lance?

CH What was the other dog

DK Bogart, they were traveling together....

IR....that was another one, ...

10:20

DK. we called him lunkhead,, he was the one that got shot with Lance, the last one

Cody

...dog discussion

Lance, Casey (lunkhead), Bogart, and Cody

11:47

C: So when you were in Rotary, we used to do all the candy and balloons and everything downstairs [in Companion Hardware (for Halloween parade)]

IR: We used to open up in the morning, six o'clock, bagging candy, blowing balloons up,

C; That's where it started, that was a staple, every single year, basically, where it [Halloween parade] started

IR: I did it for thirty years...

KR; We used your face makeup, the clowns,And then there was the Christmas party

C: Oh yes, with Santa Claus. There were several Santa Clauses.

There was Don Condon,

....

IR: He also did Tinker Tyler....the store mascot.

DK. Trustworthy had Tinker Tyler, the Handyman.

13:34

C: and next door, you had Joya and John....in City Drug...

John and Joya are still there....

KR: What was in Cucina...

C: A computer store, Brad's

....

14:50 Discussion of Galipeau'sUncle Leo's, Harringtons, etc.

17:46

C: What's your best memory of owning the Hardware store

IR: It was really fun, knowing the people, they walk in the door,

DK: He had customers, he would be dancing out there, he was always dancing with customers.

There were always people pulling pranks and stuff....

.....Dave Palmer and he had the same birthday, so they were always trying to get each other. Didn't he come up with that float one year?

19:44

....Discussion of girlfriends

DK: All the gossip....that's what I miss the most, the people who came in the door every day, it became more family, although I didn't socialize with them outside the store, they still were like, you knew their wives, their kids, their girlfriends....

22:00

Discussion of community change, not seeing people that we know....moving away...

DK Donaldson (sp) were great customers...Ted Lokenberg and Jim Donnelson....

C: Really kind of contractors, but you worked with them.

IR You knew which ones you could joke with, lot of fun.

Disc of contracting business....

24:34

Discussion of individuals, related persons, how they're doing, not for public consumption.

The community that was....

Parade ground....

32:07 Sokoloff...in creamery (original office?)

<Shelburne News was also in there...>

33:50

DK That's what I miss at the hardware store, we would hear the real [town] gossip , we were on top of all the stories, then. The best stories, came from Dave Palmer and George Deavitt.....

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CH: Raccoon in trunk story

35:04

CH: Dog, pit bull, deemed they could euthanize it....never got rid of it

37:06

CH: What other kind of stories do you have to share....

IR: Belly dancer story...for his birthday....

38:22

DK: Apartments upstairs (and tenants); too much noise, stories, etc....

41:05

DK: That's a service that you provided, you had seminars, you had a couple on bird seed, we did sweating pipes, had a little after hours thing, and solder a pipe fitting, get the logistics, that's all there was, was copper back in those days.... We almost got into the new ways [of plumbing], we were actually looking into that when you sold...it's a big investment when you have to take into a whole other category....

It just started trickling in, I was happy cause that was my department...we had a lot of stuff in there. I think that is one of the biggest things that most people miss, <other stores> won't sell something unless they turn so many units a year. Irv would keep something on the shelf for two years, and always stock it, cause he knew that someone was gonna need it, and he wanted it there...its not going to do any good to wait a week...

IR: Plumbing parts, they would bring a sink in, a faucet, and we would rebuild it for them, show them how to do it. We had a toilet come in one time, we had to replace the washers and stuff, and ... we enjoyed that, and the customer definitely did....

42:58

KR: UPS dropped off this box, and Irv was gone. He came back from this trip, went down into the cellar. It was a whole box of bras, girdles, and... Oh you can hang them up to sell

43:30

DK: He did have clothing for a while. He had one guy who had a bunch of sweaters, and had a whole aisle, and sold sweaters for a while...and he had cape cod doormats, and Polypro Rope.

If someone came in, we'd try anything once, and if it worked, we'd stay with it. I say we, it was mostly Irv,

And Dave Rocheleau was always bringing in new stuff, trying different things....

44:30

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47:45

IR: When I wasn't having fun anymore,

DK: Here is what I always admired [about Irv] he would sell "that" versus "this", if it was all you needed, making 10 cents instead of 100 bucks...it never was about that buck. If this is really what they want, of course, buy it. But if this is gonna work....and we would actually have to twist people's arms sometime...are you gonna use this more than once? This is all you're gonna need...and we would even lend out tools to save them having to buy them...and that's why people kept coming back. [It]..became that family feeling, and to this day, I see people...

IR: They say I wish you were back there...

....Discussion of sales information not for public....why selling to Aubuchon etc....

IR: Stan Smith [just died] was the dentist, and he would do my dental work, and I would [take care of his hardware needs.]

CH: They would barter....

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