

Neighbors

Ryly Mest retires after 43 years

By Mandy Zerr
Patriot Writer

Ryly Mest recently went clothes shopping for the first time in 43 years and two months.

You don't need new clothes when you wear a uniform almost every day of the week for 43 years.

But all that's changed now that Mest, 66, has retired from owning and operating Ryly's Service Center located at 134 E. Main St., Kutztown.

"It was time to retire," he said. "I'm still healthy; it's time to get out and do something besides working."

To celebrate, he and his wife of 34 years, Elizabeth, are off to Las Vegas at the end of the month.

Other than that, he's taking it one day at a time, enjoying everyday tasks like banking and yard work. And the best part is, now he can do them whenever he wants.

"I don't have to do yard work on Sundays anymore," he said. "I can watch NASCAR instead."

But Mest won't be using his new leisure time to pursue his hobbies, mostly because he doesn't have any yet.

"You don't have hobbies when you own your own business," he said. "I didn't get to go hunting, fishing, or golfing."

But that doesn't mean it's been all work and no play for Mest, or rather, all work and no volunteer-

ing. Mest has been a member of the Kutztown Lions Club since 1960 with perfect attendance. For 25 years, he volunteered as co-chairman for the ambulance, which the Lions Club owned at the time. For his service to the ambulance, he received the Jaycee's Outstanding Young Man of the Year Award in 1973 and the Lions International Melvin Jones Fellow Award in 1989. He was also Lions Club president from 1986 to 1987.

While his small amount of leisure time was often devoted to the Lions, his working life has always revolved around a gas station.

In 1952, while he was still a student at Kutztown High School, he started working for his friend's uncle, pumping gas and washing cars. From there, he moved on to other gas stations, eventually working for Wayne's Service Center. He didn't budge for 43 years. On Dec. 28, 1960, he bought Wayne's, and it became Ryly's Service Center. He was just 23 years old.

Business boomed for Mest in the 60s. Ryly's was open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. and had about five full-time employees. A number of big industries were in town, bringing in workers who often drove by and stopped at Ryly's, one of the few gas stations between Reading and Kutztown.

Mest recalls owning a new

1960 Cadillac, one of the first cars in town to take a whole \$10 worth of gas. The pumps at that time only went to \$9.99. The car was the talk of the town.

"It was a good time to be in business," Mest said.

But business at Ryly's has declined since then. Only one part-time and two full-time employees work the reduced 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. hours. Big industry left town, and other gas stations moved in. Grocery stores now sell anti-freeze, dry gas, and other accessories that used to only be available at a gas station. And many of Mest's older, loyal customers passed away, while the younger generation has been raised on self-serve gas stations.

But Ryly's is still doing business, and the new owner, Tom Carthew, is keeping the Ryly's name and its service tradition alive.

Ryly's offers self-serve pumps as well as full-service, where they will not only pump your gas, but check your oil, wash your windows, and check your tire pressure.

They still do minor mechanical work like oil changes, and tire rotation, installation and balance. They also sell and repair tires. Carthew is also looking into getting a state inspection license.

"Ryly's is an icon," Carthew said. "As the petroleum industry evolved into the Wawas and

Sheetz, Ryly really held down the fort."

Mest still helps Carthew out with the business, gladly going in when asked to answer questions about the computer work or keeping records of inventory.

Mest is still a well-respected

staple at Ryly's, even if you'll no longer see him at the pumps.

"People keep asking me, 'Did Ryly finally retire?'" Carthew said. "I should change my name to Ryly to stay in business."

Contact Mandy Zerr at mbz-err@berksmontnews.com.



Passing the Pump. Ryly's Service Center has changed hands. Ryly Mest, pictured center, owned the gas station for 43 years. Behind him are new owner Tom Carthew, right, and auto technician Mark Eshbach, left.

Birth Notices

A daughter to Arthur and Lorinda (Graber) Dexter, Blandon.

A son to Irvin Z. and Martha R. (Brubaker) Leid, Richmond Township.

A son to Randy and Heidi A. (Sanders) Frey, Fleetwood.



Michelle L. Wagner and Robert P. Biese

Wagner, Biese are engaged

Michelle L. Wagner and Robert P. Biese, both of Kutztown, announced their engagement.

The bride-to-be is the daughter of Michael J. Wagner of Hamburg and Leslie F. Mertz of Kutztown.

She is a 1991 graduate of Kutztown Area High School, and a 2000 graduate of Cedar Crest College. She is employed at Air Products and Chemicals Inc., Allentown, as a senior IT specialist.

Her fiance is the son of Robert and Christine Biese of Wyomissing.

He is a 1986 graduate of Wilson Area High School, and a 1991 graduate of Villanova

University. He is currently attending Kutztown University for his teaching certification. He is employed by Patt, White GMAC, Allentown, as a real estate agent. He is also a private bicycling coach.

The couple plans to marry on Oct. 9, 2004.

Marriage Licenses

Joshua S. Adam, 21, of Topton, Greenwich Township, and Melissa A. Keeler, 21, of Kutztown, Rhonda R. Moyer, 45, North Manheim Township, Schuylki

Terry A. Danenhower, 45, of County.

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