

Interview of Dean & Marge Mullenix Antler's Store Owners: 1987 - 1992

Mike Walker, Education Chair
Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society
Web Page: <http://jeffnet.org/~hugo/>



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APPROVAL

Dean and Marge Mullenix were interviewed by Mike Walker April 6, 2010 from 10:00 a.m. to noon at their home. The Mullenixs had owned the Antlers Market for five years from 1987 - 1992.

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The following interview notes have been reviewed, edited, and approved by Dean and Marge Mullenix.

INTERVIEW



Photo 1. L to R: Marge, Dean, Marge's Mother Adele Loar, & Brother David Loar

Purchased Antler's Store in 1987 Dean and Marge (Photo 1) bought the store from Bob and Del Duncan in 1987 through a realtor. Why did the Mullenixs purchase the store? Dean was frustrated with his job and his employer was about to execute some major layoffs in southern California, and Marge's employment had ended. They did not want to remain in California through another crisis. This was about the time that housing was starting to slide. Over a few years they investigated several different places to relocate (i.e., Yellowstone, Nevada, Big Sky, Montana).



Photo 2. Antler's Store On Monument Drive

They eventually sold their home and reinvested it in the Antler's Store (Photo 2 & Photo 3) and house combined in Hugo, Oregon. They did not have any experience in running a store and gas station, but they knew they could both work hard. Marge laughed when she stated, "*The grocery business can not be that bad.*" There was more to learn than they thought, but it was not that bad. They met some wonderful people, and some bad people, but they would not have traded the next five years for a million bucks. It was quite an experience.

Antlers' Flavor The first topic Dean and Marge wanted to talk about was the Antler's country "flavor". They had come from the city. They had a real eye opener the first weekend they were at the store which was Memorial weekend. Folks came by in droves. It was very country and friendly. Everybody would bring their deer heads and their kill to the store to show off. And, of course, since they were the "Antlers", they had deer antlers mounted on the front of and inside the store. Marge did not necessarily want to see dead animals, but it was good for business. They just have wonderful memories for most of the time at the Antler's even though it was hard work running the business.

Business The property at the Antler's Store included the store, gasoline pumps, and a house attached to the store. It was estimated there was 1,400 square feet in store and house, with two-thirds of the footage in the home. There was a garage in the backyard, including two cabins and a public restroom from the old auto camp days.

Marge worked the inside of the store and Dean worked the gas pumps. The store carried a few tabs for known local customers and their employees.



Photo 3. Antler's Store

The old Antler's Store was made out of rough hewn lumber. Underneath the floor was mostly 12" by 12" beams which were on top of large tree rounds or big 4' by 4' concrete blocks. Dean never saw any gravestones under the structure when he was there on a plumbing job. Most of the

electrical work had to be rewired inside the store (i.e., it had old single wire connectors in the store).



Photo 4. Inside of Antler's Store, Front Counter on Left, Candy Shelves & Pastry Display on Right

Grocery Store The grocery store (Photo 4) had a large old refrigeration unit in the northern section with wooden doors and old fashioned refrigerator style handles (Photo 5). The middle section was the main part of the store which included sliding glass beverage containers, candy, staples, groceries, meat freezer, ice cream, cigarettes, video rentals, and beer. The southern section was the smaller bottle room. They were trained by the Duncans that the items that sold the best should be in the back of the store. Therefore, customers would walk by other items for sale when they made their first selections.

They purchased their groceries with an inventory sheet order from Paul Jackson Wholesale, their main supplier out of Roseburg, Oregon. And, of course, each vendor brought their own stock. Hostess was the donut provider which would bring the “past pull” items which moved fast when discounted. The pastries (i.e., donuts, little pies, jelly donuts, etc.) were on a display visible when customers entered the store. Kids loved those quarter buys instead of paying a dollar. They had basic staples. And, there was some stuff like some health and beauty products that had probably been there for 10 years. They purchased the store’s smokes from News and Smokes in Grants Pass on 6th Street.

Meat (i.e., hamburger, steaks, basics) had its own vendor in the form of Ray’s Market at the corner of Monument Drive and the Merlin-Galice Road. The Mullenixs only had a freezer to store the meat which meant the customer had to open the freezer to see what was for sale.

Penny Candy Another big draw was the candy counter. The huge candy counter was 10 - 12 feet long with rows and rows of shelves filled with candy. They sold a lot of penny candy dispensed by hand. The candy was in big jars before regulations prohibited handling the candy. By the end of the day, counting the candy resulted in your hands and the counter having lots of sugar. At that time the Mullenixs did



Photo 5. Inside Antler's Store: Northern Section

not know of any other place in Grants Pass that sold penny candy which was a big draw with the kids. Gummy worms, sour patch kids, and more!

Union 76 Gas Station Except for the two gas pumps there were no Union 76 signs. The big hanging sign advertizing the business was a large RC logo over the words, *Antler's Market* (Photo 6). They were provided with their gasoline from the Oil House. The pumps had cement barriers to protect them from the careless vehicle driver. There were two 1,000 gallon gasoline tanks in the ground for regular and high-test gasoline.



Photo 6. Monument Drive North from Antlers

They would get a shipment of fuel almost once a week. Most of their gasoline customers were local and they were providing a convenience service. They would carry monthly gas accounts for some of their customers, and especially the mill workers. There were air activated tubes on the ground by the pumps to signal the arrival of vehicles needing gasoline. The store had the old fashioned drive-through with a roof. Unlike some other old gasoline stations the drive-through (Photo 3) was of a reasonable width even for vehicles in the 1990s.



Photo 7. Front Right Building Was Public Restroom For Antler's Store

Auto Court The Mullenixs assumed the auto

court was built in the 1920s like several other auto courts in northern Josephine County, Oregon. Dean assumed the auto court originally had five or six cabins. Each cabin had a bed, chimney, and a stove. Customers would bring their own bedding.

There were two auto court cabins left and being used for storage when the Mullenixs owned the business. They were substantial, nicely built cabins for their day. One of the two restrooms built for the auto court was still a public restroom for the store (Photo 7). The restroom was of the same dimensions and size as the cabins, but without a chimney. There were no showers. In 2010 there was till one cabin left and still being used for storage (Photo 8).



Photo 8. Auto Court Cabin



Photo 9. North Side of Antlers Home

Pleasant Valley Mill A significant amount of business came from the employees of the adjacent mill next door to the store. The store had a little deli of warm-up foods. Mill employees would come over to the store at noon on their lunch hour. They would normally have 10 men buying lunch.

Vineyard Christian Fellowship School Kids Doug Thomas (2008) was the Principal and Pastor at the Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Grants Pass which was across Monument Drive from the store. The school had about 30 - 40 kids. The store sold a lot of candy to the

school kids when school was out. When they sold the store in 1992 the kids brought them a good-by card. All the kids signed it with a little comment.

House Except for the upstairs bedroom in rough lumber, everything downstairs was done in finished white painted lumber with trim, and with book shelves and cabinets built into the walls (Photo 9, Photo 10, & Photo 11).



Photo 10. West Side/Backyard of Antlers Home

There was an inside door in the store that lead directly into the kitchen which was next to the dining room. Marge's roll-top bookkeeping desk was in the dining room (Photo 11), but they never ate at the dining room table. It seemed that they were always eating in the kitchen. There was a large master bedroom and another real small bedroom in the back. The master bedroom had a shower that froze every winter. There was very little insulation in the walls of the home.

Comfortable Living The last year the Mullenixs owned the store they made approximately \$300,000.00. They worked hard and they made a comfortable living from their labors.



*Photo 11. Dining Room of Antler's Home;
Roll-top Desk to Left*

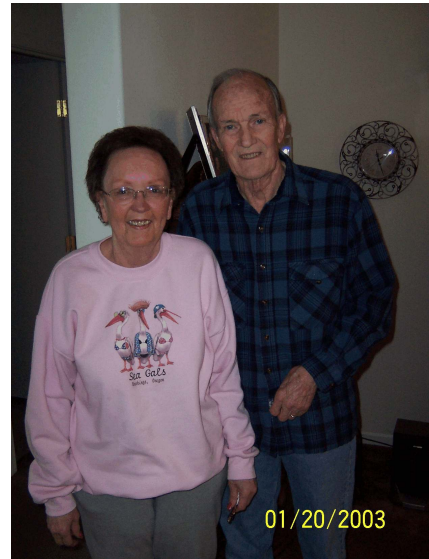
The entire store businesses included accepting food stamps, commission on public pay telephone, renting video tapes,

lottery tickets, fishing licenses, stamps, candy sales, gasoline sales, groceries, and beer. All those different entities added to the basic business helping the bottom line.

Getting to know your customers was a big part of their success. You needed to know what they wanted and to have it in the store.

Their first year they had an introduction of some folks from Wolf Creek. A couple guys came to buy their wine. They had their guns on their hips and it was quite a culture shock. Dean and Marge figured out that if they didn't want that kind of customer that they would not carry their type of cheap wine.

Sold Store in 1992 The reason they left the business was that sales begin to fall off due to the declining economy of the timber industry. They sold the store and took other jobs. Marge went to work for the Asante Health System around the time Josephine Memorial Hospital was closing and merging. Dean went to work for a candy supplier. They kept their jobs and bought another house. They finally retired to Riveria Mobile Park in 2003.



Marge & Dean Mullenix April 2010

PHOTOGRAPHS & BUSINESS CARDS

Dean and Marge Mullenix donated 19 photographs of the Antler's Store and four photographs of the 1987 Walker Mountain Fire to the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society. They also donated six business cards of when they owned the Antler's Store. Any use of the photographs and/or cards by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society will be acknowledged with a "courtesy of" statement.

The business card had a 76 gas station logo, a deer with shades on and fishing tackle in its antlers. There was a bag of groceries and a six pack of beer next to the deer. The title was a banner with "*THE ANTLERS*" in it. Below the banner were the words "Coldest Beer in Town".

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OTHER “ANTLER’S STORE” CONTACTS

Bob & Del Duncan owned the Antler’s Store before Dean and Marge Mullenix. They had a lot of information about the Antler’s Store and Dean and Marge recommended that Walker contact them.

“Del” Delphia Duncan
291 Lakeview Drive
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526
541-471-0635

Beverly Hilterbrand also knows Del and recommended Mike Walker also contact Willy Plant (Bob & Del Duncan’s son) for information.

Beverly Hilterbrand, Owner
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Willy “Bill” Plant
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Sincerely,

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