



October Meeting

~Carol Schweizer

The opening meeting of the program year was a great evening! Treasurer Darby Neahr presented the budget for the year and it was passed by the membership. Many in attendance renewed their membership as well as new members joined. Our \$10 dues per family annual membership allows members to receive our GPS journal with an interesting article each month, September-June. Our meetings are open to the public. Most meetings are available, live on Zoom, by dialing 294 161-5132

The highlight of the September meeting was our speaker, Bob Wemple, assisted by his wife, Sue. Bob gave a thorough history of the Trevett Chair Factory of Providence. The unique chairs were produced by several members of the family as well as in several locations in the town. The Wemples loaded many samples of the chairs in their truck to show at the meeting along with Bob's talk.

Galway Preservation is sorry to lose three long time members from our ranks. Alice Feulner, Herb Kopper and Ray David passed away recently. They all have contributed to GPS to make it the strong organization it is today.

Galway will celebrate Harvest Halloween Festival on October 28th at the Dockstader Field, 5078 Sacandaga Road, Galway. Galway Preservation will have a display of Galway Pottery for the community to see.

The speaker for the October 2nd meeting will be Kevin Barkley, former Galway Fire Chief. He will give us a history of the Fire Company as it celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. Please join us for the 7:00pm meeting. Bring a friend, bring a neighbor.

This Month at the Archives.

~Co-Chairs: Arlene Rhodes and Pat Sanders

Donations:

The Bi-Centennial Committee Collection found among the files of our Society, is a wonderful record of the 200th year celebration of the founding of our Town (1791-1992). This collection is a compilation of documents, notes, and plans produced by the committee in preparation for the celebration, as well as the events themselves. The planning took place over several years beginning in 1989 and culminating in 1992. The committee was comprised of Galway Preservation Society members and community volunteers.

The June Blowers Michelfelder photographic collection donated by her daughter Carol Michelfelder Schweizer, is a wonderful set of 1930s era photos taken at the Galway Free Union School, which was located on East Street in the Galway Village, and surrounding sites. The photos show the teachers at the school involved in various activities and on the steps of the old brick school building. Students are shown on the steps of the old school, as well as surrounding area sites. June Blowers Michelfelder had a long teaching career at the Galway Schools. This collection is still in the process of being accessioned.

Memories of Growing Up at My Father's Full-Service Station

~Ralph Dennison



It was 1950 and after years of working at a local Ford–Mercury dealer, minus time out to serve during WWII, my father built and opened a Texaco Service Station on Route 29 in Galway. This was a typical full-service station of the day. The building was white with a couple of

green stripes to go along with Texaco's colors. It had two bays in front, one with a lift, and another bay in the back perpendicular to the front. At first, it had a two-pump island and later three pumps. Two were for regular (Fire Chief) and One for

Premium (Sky Chief). There were three underground gas tanks totaling 6000 gallons of capacity.

In 1957, I came around. With our house next door, it wasn't long before I started hanging around the gas station. I learned to pump gas when I was about nine, and soon I was checking oil, washing windshields and filling tires with air. I'm not too sure how people felt about some kid doing these things to their car, but I don't recall hearing any complaints. Although I do remember accidentally putting a quart of transmission fluid into a car instead of motor oil. Other jobs were filling the soda machine, sweeping the office floor, and filling the cigarette machine with packs of cigarettes, which I believe we sold for \$.35 a pack! My Dad was paying me \$1.00/hour, which for a kid too young to have a driver's license, was plenty.

Back in the day, gas tank fillers in cars could be located almost anywhere. There were a few times when a customer would drive in with a '56 Chevy and expected me not to know where the gas filler was (inside the left taillight). As I recall, GM seemed the most inventive. Apparently, tail fins and taillights made for great hiding places for gas caps. Early VW Beetles had their gas tanks and filler located in the front trunk. You had to open the trunk in order to get access to them. Even as a young kid, I questioned the soundness of that manufacturer's decision. I learned quickly to look for seams or hinges to try to find the filler cap. Mustangs, Camaros and Gremlins were easy, with their gas caps being obvious and decorative at the rear of the car. At some point, some designer somewhere discovered that there was a great spot behind the rear license plate for a gas filler, and then my job suddenly got easier as almost all manufacturers followed suit.

When it was nice out, pumping gas and such were pretty easy and enjoyable but, in the winter, it was a different story. Our gas station was vulnerable to the West wind, which during winter seemed to blow directly from the Arctic. I quickly developed an appreciation for the manufacturers who put the filler behind the license plate. Back then people did not shut their cars off when being filled with gas, and I can remember huddling down at the back of the car next to a tail pipe enjoying the warmth of the exhaust as I pumped gas into their car.

One of the benefits of growing up at the garage was that I had the privilege to know literally hundreds of people. Many of these people were real characters, like the newspaper delivery man. He was an older gent, who always got \$2.10 of gas and always shorted us the 10 cents. We didn't really mind. The U.S. had recently switched from silver coins to the nickel/copper coins of today, and he was literally a treasure trove of silver coins, which of course I kept. I still have most of them today.

Another character was Mad Dog, who one day challenged me to start up his car. I was about 10 or 11 at the time. He gave me his key, and I went to his car to start it. I could only get the key to turn the ignition about $\frac{1}{4}$ turn and that was it. I looked all around for a starter button, on the dash or on the floor. Not finding it, I somewhat sheepishly walked back inside admitting my defeat. It was an early 1960's Buick with the starter switch under the accelerator pedal!

Gas Prices back then were a lot more constant than today. Customers would usually ask for a dollar amount of gasoline instead of a "fill up." We had to input not only dollar amounts into our cash register but also the amount of gallons dispensed. You quickly learned that \$5.00 of regular was 13 gallons of gas, and that \$2.00 worth was 5.2 gallons. Gas hovered around 38 or 39 cents/gallon for as long as I was there until the gas crisis of 1973.

Credit cards were a lot less common then. When a customer wanted to use one, I would have to run in to the office and run the card through the machine that pressed the particulars on to a two-page slip and then run back out with the slip and their card on a neat little red tray. After they signed the slip, I gave them the top copy along with their card. The bottom copy was a thin cardboard slip. Every week my father would gather the slips, add them up, and send them to Texaco in order to get his money.

We had a wrecker and would tow in broken down cars and wrecks, no fancy wheel lift or even dollies. We either towed, dragged or pushed the vehicles in. Many times, owners would just give us their cars instead of paying for a costly repair. Most of these vehicles would end up in our junk yard across the road down behind some trees. On occasion, we would take one of these cars and get it running for my sister and me to drive around in the field behind the gas station. I learned to drive on a 1955 Chevy when I was 9 years old. I had to sit on a pillow to be able to look through the steering wheel to peer out of the windshield! Other "field" cars were a '58 Edsel with the gear select push buttons in the middle of the steering wheel and the speedometer that spun around a stationary needle, two 1960 Chevy wagons, a 1962 Studebaker Lark and a 1964 Impala. Generally, we would destroy them within a year or so and then go on to the next car.

The late '60s and early '70s were great times to be at a gas station. There were very few foreign cars except for Volkswagens and the occasional Mercedes. Toyota and Nissan were just beginning to make some headway into the market. Luckily for me, there were all sorts of interesting domestic cars. I can remember being impressed with SS Chevelles and their Cowl Induction, Mach 1s, Plymouth Cudas and the like.

An older friend of mine had a gorgeous blue '68 Camaro SS/RS with a 396. I remember the guy with the 440 Super Bee showing us how he could "get rubber" in all four gears. Another guy showed us how he could smoke the tires of his '69 Mach 1 in our parking lot after I jokingly doubted his claim. I had a customer take me for a truly scary ride in his 1970 Torino Cobra with a 429. We were doing well over 100 when a vehicle pulled out in front of us way down the road. Today it would have been no big deal, but in that Torino with drum brakes, it was an experience. I clearly remember pressing the imaginary brake pedal on my side of the car before we actually had to pull out and go around the other car.

The gas station was also a great hangout. My dad let some local teens use the back bay of our garage to try to make a drag car out of an early '60s Oldsmobile with a 215 V8. They failed. There was another group that hung around at night. I can recall pitching quarters with them to see who was going to pay for a round of banana splits that someone would then go after. And during the day, there could be found a rousing game of three-handed cutthroat Pinochle going on in the office.

Soon it was 1973. Horsepower disappeared, and for a while, so did gasoline. The Arab Oil Embargo began. We could only get as much gas from our distributor as what we sold during the same time period the year before, if we were lucky. Gas prices pretty much doubled, and my father cut the station's hours from 6:00am - 9:00pm to 9:00am-6:00pm, which pretty much cut me out of a job. We began to sell gas only to the local businesses such as the loggers and delivery people. On the other hand, I became the most popular kid in school, at least to my teachers who were looking to buy some gasoline. Every day it seemed, some teacher would stop me in the hall and ask if they could come over to the station and get filled up. Eventually the oil embargo ended, but unfortunately, gas prices would never be the same or stay as constant as before. Around that time, my father decided that it was a good time for him to retire. With me still being in high school, he decided to sell the station to his long-time mechanic. The station stayed pretty much the same for the next 20 years until the tanks were due for replacement. They stopped selling gas and just concentrated on repairs and maintenance. Later it changed hands, was remodeled and is almost unrecognizable today, being used mostly for storage.

Today, full-service gas stations are a real rarity. People now pump their own gas at a convenient store and pay at the pump, never interacting with another person. I look back at my childhood with fondness. I am so glad that I got to know so many people and make all those memories while enjoying the many different automobiles that pulled in for service.

Galway Preservation Society Membership

Our program year runs from September to June. If we have not heard from you, we need some information. If you are a current member, and have no changes, all that is necessary is your household dues of \$10.

If you are new, and wish to join, we need your:

Name _____

Address _____

City,State,Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Preference for receiving your newsletter [] mail, or [] e-mail.