

Whatever Happened to ... Green's Gulf Station

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Some have referred to Palmyra's Main Street as "Gasoline Alley." According to Jim DeBrine and others, there were several gas stations lining the street on either end of town during the 1930's through the '60's. Even today there are still several such operations at those locations. One could say "once a gas station, always a gas station" - except sometimes when it becomes something else.

The most visible cluster of petroleum peddlers was and still is at the east end of town. There was an Atlantic Station run by Ralph Stubbings and Don Beach, and the Cities Service Station that is now Newcombe's. For about 35 years, Reggie Neale's service station was in business on the site now occupied by Williamson's gas station. Bucknam's Pontiac used to have a couple of gas pumps, and Reeves Parker ran a small garage where Hansel's Liquor Store is presently located. Of course, the old standby, Curley's Tidol started out on what became the site of the new Post Office. Many of the gas stations belonged to Ike Cook. And, at the corner of Throop and Vienna Streets stood Art's Garage with proprietor Art Arthurton.

If one failed to "fill 'er up" coming into town from the east, there were also stations at the west end as well. U. W. Sherburne was not to be outdone by Bucknam's, and he too had a set of gas pumps in front of his car dealership. Carl Zeigler and George Contant ran the original Tidol station on the site that was later chosen by Howard VanBortel for his stylish Rolls Royce and Corvette dealership. Across the road on the site of the present Mobil outlet was where Bill Williamson had his station. One Palmyran remembers a gas war between those two particular businesses when gas was advertised at "8 gallons for \$1.00," or perhaps that was seen at Reggie Neale's. Wouldn't that be a sight for sore eyes instead of the present \$1.49 per gallon minimum price!

And then finally, there was a station just over the Macedon town line at Yellow Mills. It started out as a truck stop around 1937 when Route 31 was first built. At that time, Helen Scribner kept a restaurant there as well. A young tractor-trailer driver named Larry Green drove for Liberty Forwarding at the time, and the little station was a scheduled stop that was known to him as Check Station # E-11. According to Green there was a single bay with a pit and the little restaurant was in the south end of the building. He rented the station and worked there nights and weekends during World War II fixing used cars for Vic

DePauw who would then resell them. At the same time, Green also held down a day job at Gleason Works.

81-year old Green, who grew up next to Walworth Station, said he can't remember when he wasn't working on some truck, car or tractor. He recalls that as a teenager he would travel around to area farms in his Model A Ford repairing trucks and tractors before he had his driver's license. Some farmers that he worked for were Cornelius Geldorf on Yellow Mills Rd., Pete VanWaes and Frank Smith on Quaker Rd., Bert Smith, Don Walton and the Sillman Farm. Green, an admitted workaholic, helped at threshing time and worked cutting wood as well while he was still in school. He also claims that he drove a milk truck on his junior license and said that later he drove truck for Lane Construction of Clyde, which was one of the contractors that worked on building Route 31.

With all of that experience and more, he eventually moved to Art Arthurton's garage where he worked from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. for 29 years. Then he leased the station from Ike Cook where Ed Olette had been, and set up shop selling Gulf products and repairing cars or whatever came in. One story has it that he serviced and repaired tour buses from Utah every summer.

During his eight and one-half years as his own boss in the Gulf station, he had several employees. They included his son Jerry, Bob Toft, Dave Beach, Fred Trowbridge, Dick Lilly, Roy VanHout, Dale Remington and William Sellers who Green said could probably be called his most trusted employee.

Although Green attended mechanics school often, he was self-taught in many respects. He told of the time when his boss asked him if he would work on one of the first (semi) automatic transmission cars made - a 1937 Buick owned by Orrie Lowe. In doing so, he became the first mechanic in town to repair that type of transmission, which he said really wasn't much more difficult than a "regular" one to repair. He also did repairs for Agway, which would later prove to have been a wise move.

It wasn't all work and no play for Green. He owned a stock car that he raced at tracks around the area. Although he didn't drive, he attended every race as the mechanic/owner, and was accompanied by many friends and relatives. His car was a standout because Millie, now his wife of 61 years, and her friends painted the car with red, yellow, pink, black and gray polka dots. It went by the name Polka Dot 3D. When asked how they fared at the finish line, he said they did okay, but mostly they had fun.

In May of 1973, he was forced to close the station. The *Courier-Journal* carried the following quote regarding the closing. "...The idea to do so was not Green's. He was forced to close because Gulf and a local man who owns the station were unable to come to terms on the station's leasing price.

Green is known throughout the area as a top-flight mechanic. As he thumbed through a file box containing numerous cards of his charge customers he said, point-blank, 'these people have told me that they're very upset by the closing.' Green will now work for Agway in Palmyra. However, the seven people who worked at his garage are now out of jobs."

When he closed his Gulf station and went to work at Agway where he spent the next 8½ years, another chapter of Palmyra history was closed. Now, as you drive by the Ontario National Bank, if you look closely, perhaps you can see the ghost of Green's Gulf station with its proud orange and blue sign in front and customer's automobiles sitting outside waiting their turns for repair in the capable hands of Larry Green.

Thanks to Larry and Millie Green, Lynne Green, Jim DeBrine, John Rush and Jack Allen for their input.