

Bud

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store, and Peterson rigged up a pump and copper tubing that saved the boys the work of carrying the cans of kerosene upstairs.

In 1941, their father opened a 5&10 on Washington Street, across from what is Dellas 5&10. The 5&10 had about 15 to 20 employees, whereas the hardware only had one. He said his mother ran the 5&10 but had a nervous breakdown and she took over the hardware instead, working with one employee.

Swain's Hardware actually started as a spin-off from his grandfather's tin roofing business started in 1896. There was one room in the tin shop where the men made buckets and tubs from galvanized metal in their spare time. The store got busier and his grandmother and another woman ran it until 1926, when his father took over. His father had hurt his back and couldn't carry a load up the ladder any longer, so he had to stop the tin roof work. His sister, Emma Swain, lived in Belvedere, N.J., but came to work each summer at the hardware, never marrying.

"She worked there until she

was 96, when she died," Swain said. "Everybody knew her as Aunt Emma."

Swain said the original structure was enlarged in the late teens or early 1920s.

Swain, who grew to 6-foot tall, said he was 5-foot and 110 pounds when he started Cape May High School. That made it tough to play sports. He shot up late in life, growing six inches his sophomore year in college alone. There he got involved in intramural sports.

He went to Gettysburg College, where he majored in business administration with a minor in math, which he loved. He graduated in 1952 and was immediately drafted. They could choose their branch of service, so he went with the Coast Guard. He was on the list for Officer Candidate School.

"But I was tired of studying," he said.

Swain said as a seaman he served as an assistant company commander for two years. He said the job normally goes to a petty officer, but the Coast Guard was short of men at the time. His last two years he was in Search and Rescue at Cape May Moorings. There he and three other seamen

manned two teletypes and five radio frequencies.

"Whenever there was a bad storm they doubled the watch," he said.

In 1956 he was discharged from the Coast Guard and he took over running the hardware with one employee. In 1964 he took over the business and he made the entire building a store.

"Every 10 years I doubled the size of the store," he said.

In 1984 he put on the last addition - the front part of the store. He ended up going from one employee to 25.

He said his father advised him not to add onto the store. He told him to save the money for his retirement. But Swain said it took him 30 years to reach the \$1 million in sales mark. After enlarging the store it took five years to reach the second million.

His father was also dead set against Bud opening the store on Sunday.

"I said 'People are knocking on my door asking for things,'" he said.

The hardware eventually changed hands again, but stayed in the family.

"My daughter came in in the mid-90s and she put in the computers. In 2000 she took

over, she bought me out. She's doing a beautiful job over there," Swain said.

Swain said he didn't look at the hardware as a retail store. He saw it as a service to the community and that he had to stay open year around in the event people needed heaters, flashlights, batteries, etc.

"We had to be there in an emergency," he said.

He said that tradition continues as evidenced during the February snowstorms.

"The store lost electricity for three days, but Terri opened the store. They operated with flashlights. And they had no computers. They hand wrote all the sales slips," he said.

He said that kind of service to the community has given the family a good name. His father served the community as a scoutmaster, and later joined the Kiwanis. Bud Swain said the scouts would go to Camp Edge near Alloway for two weeks in the summer. There, the Cape May contingent of just six scouts competed in events with troops as large as 50.

"We won (overall) because we all took either first or second in every event," he said.

His father became state

governor of Kiwanis in 1945, and in 1963 became the President of Kiwanis International.

"To reach that position, being from a small town, was unbelievable," Swain said.

Bud Swain eschewed political life, but served as trustee and deacon at Cape Island Baptist Church. He was later elected to the school board, but didn't want to run for political office. When Terri thought about running for city council in 2008 he told her it was a bad idea. When she decided to run anyway, he supported her, but said she would make enemies.

"Half the people will hate you," he said. "She's been in two years and she told me 'You were right'."

Swain said as a school board member his own pastor opposed him for reelection because he stood up against a 10 percent pay raise for teachers. He said 10 percent over three years was more reasonable. In the end, he believes it was the Swain name that carried him through.

"People know we're fair and honest," he said.

Swain said Swain's Hardware is not the oldest

business in Cape May - that is the Merion Inn - but they are the oldest family business in Cape May.

Swain had two, 20-year marriages. He adopted his oldest son, Rick, and then they had Nick, Terri and Scott. He later adopted Melissa, who was his niece's daughter. He married his present wife Pat just last year.

Swain now counts 17 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

"And I don't feel I'm getting old," he said.

He shouldn't. Living a long life runs in his family. His mother lived to 99 and his father lived to be 100 when he was still doing the books for the store.

"I kidded him and told him Swains had a policy that when you reach 100 you have to retire," Swain said.

His father laughed, but about a month later he told his son he would take him up on the retirement, saying his eyes were failing.

Dud

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thought it might be a fenial for a fence post.

"Then she said, 'Wayne, I think it's a hand grenade'," he said.

Hoffman told his wife to put it down and they called 911. Hoffman said the Cape May Police arrived first and an officer identified the device as a World War II era hand grenade. The West Cape May Volunteer Fire Company

responded and blocked off Fourth Avenue. A Cape May Fire Department ambulance also arrived on scene if needed. Police evacuated neighboring residents while waiting for the bomb disposal unit.

Hoffman said he was told the New Jersey State Police Bomb Squad was dispatched from Trenton, and when they arrived they x-rayed the grenade and determined it was not live.

Hoffman said the investigation and removal lasted about four hours. He said he could not stay at home so he and Susan went to the beach. He said other than the hand grenade they only found a number of beer bottles, but he was planning to go over the area with a metal detector.

He said while they were waiting for the scene to be cleared a fireman spotted a bald eagle circling overhead.

Hoffman said the Department of Homeland Security later called Susan and interviewed her about finding the grenade.

"I guess we won't be able to fly now," Hoffman said.

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