

Celebrating 35 years

Bob Zgnilec, 74, may not think of himself as an entrepreneur but he is. His track record dates back to 1975.

You see, the characteristics of an entrepreneur are identified in high energy people, self-confident, disciplined, problem solvers, people who take risks and have learned from the ‘school of hard knocks.’ They accept responsibility for their actions and achieve success on their own terms.

Yes, Bob’s an entrepreneur.

I’ve known Bob for a longtime. In the early 80s as a young newspaper man I’d visit his store to sell Bob ads. He was direct, but polite.

“What is it your paper offers the others don’t?” I recall him asking.

I stumbled through my prepared sales pitch with the grace of a bull in a china shop.

“I tell you what,” Bob told me sternly, “I’ll give you and your paper some of my business. I’m open from 6pm to 9pm, if you stop in next week, I’ll have an ad for you.”

Bob did business on his own terms.

I liked Bob and a friendship grew. He has since assisted me in many projects, mainly playing a key role in helping me secure sponsorship for our Woods-N-Water News Outdoor Weekend. Stihl Chainsaws and Bryan Equipment became our first big sponsors, thanks to Bob and his efforts. It’s just the kind of guy he is, helping others.

Recently Bob celebrated the 35th anniversary of the business he started, Lumberjack Shack.

“We are still servicing chain saws I sold 30 or 35 years ago. Our customers are very loyal and I’m thankful for that,” Bob told me proudly.

Today his son, Dave, owns the business, but Bob

is still there, sharpening saw chains, greeting customers or sweeping up the back room.

Lumberjack Shack is one of the oldest Stihl dealers in Michigan.

Bob and his family moved from the Utica area in 1974. He and his wife Carol recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They have three children, Barb, Sandy and Dave, with 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

“I have always had a love for the outdoors and enjoy a good days’ work,” Bob tells me.

During the oil embargo in the 70s Bob began heating his home with wood as many people did back then.

“I guess you could say the oil embargo got me into the business to begin with,” he continued.

“I spent hours and hours cutting wood, I knew which chainsaws and other wood cutting products were good and which ones weren’t. So it was a love of product, a love of cutting wood and honestly, I loved to help people,” Bob told me.

In the fall of 1975 Bob started his business from his basement at home. A year later he opened shop on the corner of Webster Road and Van Dyke, just south of Imlay City. He converted a small home into what is now, Lumberjack Shack.

“I thought the name was very appropriate,” he told me.

Working his day job and then at his store by night, Bob built an impressive list of customers. He repaired and sold chainsaws, log-splitters, woodburning stoves and all the accessories.

Lumberjack Shack was



Dave with his father Bob shortly after he took the business over in 1989.

Photo provided



Photo by Randy Jorgensen

Bob Zgnilec, 74, is still sharpening chains entering his 35th year. Bob started Lumberjack Shack in 1975.

the very first of its kind in the area.

The small business continued to grow as the need and desire to burn wood grew. Bob’s motto was simple, “Cut-it, Split-it and Burn-it.”

Now remember, Bob was using his entrepreneur instincts to help fill a need in the market no one else was. People were heating their homes with wood, which required the type of products he was selling.

In the late 70s and early 80s Bob began sponsoring what he called, “Saw Dust Days.”

“The ‘Saw Dust Days’ were very popular with our customers,” Bob explained.

“Burning wood to heat your home can be dangerous, if not done correctly. So can cutting wood with a chainsaw,” Bob went on to say.

“My customers are my friends, I didn’t want any of them to get hurt from something I sold them. So it was important to me to make sure they understood certain safety procedures and give them the knowledge to make sure it was done correctly,” he

stressed.

“The ‘Saw Dust Days’ were a good way for me to thank my customers and a way for me to make sure they used the products safely. I felt it was my responsibility to them,” Bob stated.

Bob’s philosophy rubbed off on his son, Dave. It’s just as important today as it was when his father ran the business. Dave took the business over in 1989.

Dave, as it turned out, was a natural, he is, as they say, mechanically inclined. Working at the store with his father, as he often did, he rebuilt his first carburetor at 13 years old.

“I was impressed,” Bob told me, “I attended all these classes and Dave simply grabs some tools and does the job.”

Under Dave’s leadership, the Lumberjack Shack grew even larger. The store more than tripled in size. His focus is still the Stihl chainsaw brand of products, but he offers much more.

Today, Lumberjack Shack offers Arctic Cat ATV’s and snowmobiles, a full repair and service department for all products he sells. He has been a award winning Exmark lawn equipment dealer since 1993 and also sells Hustler lawn and garden equipment. They also offer a full line of tree climbing equipment and supplies.

It’s a success story. A story of hard work. It’s a story that has been in the making for 35 years now. A story of a man committed to his customers, his family and his community.

Yes, I’d say Bob is an entrepreneur, wouldn’t you?

Crawfords take on the Crim challenge

By Maria Brown
Tri-City Times Assistant Editor

TRI-CITY AREA — The Crawford family made their first ever entry into the Crim Festival of Races a memorable one. Four generations participated in the 10 mile walk in Flint on August 28 including 82 year-old Shirley Crawford of Attica, her daughter Cathy Dodge, son Carl Crawford, grandson David Dodge and great-grandson Cameron Dodge. Also along for the family outing were Carl’s wife, Connie and her brother and sister-in-law, Randy and Jeaneen Spiller.

To make the day even more special, Shirley walked away with the second place winners cup in her age division. She clocked in at two hours, forty minutes.

“My grandson, David, wanted me to do it,” Shirley said of entering the Crim. David, who’s run the race

before, was confident his grandmother would make a good showing considering she walks four days a week at the Attica Twp. park.

Shirley was in the midst of getting ready for the race when her husband, Lee, passed away. Although she never walked a full ten miles as part of her training, that didn’t seem to matter come race day. In Flint, she walked a 16 minute mile.

Connie said she was impressed with her mother-in-law’s performance during and after the race.

“I had to hustle to keep up with her,” Connie said.

“The next day I had blisters and she was wearing high heels.”

Shirley’s already looking forward to the 2011 Crim.

“As long as I feel as well as I do now, I’ll be there next year,” she said.

“It would be nice to beat my time.”



Photo by Connie Crawford

Four generations of Crawfords completed the 10 Mile Crim walk last month. They are (l-r) David Dodge, Shirley Crawford, Cathy Dodge, Cameron Dodge and Carl Crawford.

Book signing for local author

IMLAY CITY — Local author Dana Lehman, of Allenton, will be doing a reading and book signing at the Learning Depot on October 2 in conjunction with the release of her third book, ‘I Can Do It.’

At 11 a.m., a local librarian will be reading Lehman’s books and at 1 p.m. Seven Ponds Nature Center staff will give a presentation about the animals that appear in Lehman’s books.

For more information about this event, contact Lehman at 395-4535.

Word pictures can help bring this small family farm to life

As is often the case, there I sat in front of the computer, waiting for some wave of inspiration to hit. While I waited, I checked my e-mails, and found a note from the cousin, or whatever you call him, who hosted the cousin reunion back in August. Let’s see...his paternal grandmother was the oldest of twelve, my mom was her youngest sister. That means his dad is my cousin; making this guy my second cousin. Did I know this cousin existed before August? Yes, sort of. Did I know him? No. Not at all.

What I had found out over

the last year was that he and his wife had bought and restored the original home- stead where his grandpar- ents had farmed.

When they had bought the seven acres in 1986 they had bought it with a prayer that it would be a blessing to their family of seven children and also to others.

Perspectives...



Willene Tanis

He and his wife have cleaned up the place, using their gifts of design and landscaping, to create a wonderful sanctuary-like spot. Over the years, many groups have used it for campfires and reunions. For nearly ten years, sixth grade students (20 to 40 each year) have camped in their backyard. The Holland Rescue mission uses it as a retreat, complete with campfires, games, and fishing.

In telling about their home near what he calls Michigan’s Golden Coast, he talked about the roses which were around the foundation of their house when he and his wife bought

it. They were, in his words, diseased and bedraggled, the leaves stunted and insect-eaten. One spring, he writes, “I saw a few scraggly pink blooms that weren’t much to look at. I almost tore out the plants by the roots. They were a professional embarrassment to me, a beginning landscaper and flower grower.”

To make a long story short, no amount of discouraging would make the roses go away, and he finally moved them to a sunnier, moister spot and they thrived, standing as yearly reminders of times past. In a paragraph

poignant to me, he writes, “I suspect that my dear sweet grandmother transplanted them from somewhere else to brighten up the yard in those days of struggle, sweat and toil when the work on the farm consumed all of their time and energy. Maybe, she carried them with her from Iowa as a loving reminder of her family there. I can picture her stooped over, carefully planting them under the eaves of the house where they would get the most water.”

Since the reason this cousin, Deane Wassink, sent me these images of his domain is that I told him I wanted to write a bit about it in the column, I’m taking the liberty to use his words. In his description of “the coast”

in December, he writes, “Most of us avoid it at that time of year. I have often worked in snowstorms on the shore right next to the lake. There is nothing like it. The waves crash, and the wind roars and the lake effect snow blows parallel to the ground. However, as soon as you get past the lip of the dune in the woods, where the white pine and hemlocks form an arbor over your head, the heavy snow muffles the sound so that you feel like you are in your own private world, all alone. At this time, you are required to pause, lie down in the snow, and let the giant flakes land on your face.”

Thanks, cuz, for helping me out with some word pictures worth passing on.

Taxable results from sale of land question

Alex,
I bought a waterfront lot in another state about 30 years ago for \$30,000. I currently have a buyer offering \$280,000. I am wondering what taxes I would have to pay as a result of this sale. Should I sell now or wait? How long do I have to reinvest the money towards another property to not pay any taxes?

— M.R., Imlay City

M.R., That sale would be considered a long term capital gain which would be filed on Schedule D of your tax return. You would be obligated to pay the tax on the actual gain or profit from the sale. Your profit is determined by taking your sales price and deducting any costs associated with the sale such as commissions,

Ask Alex...

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closing fees, etc. and then taking that amount and subtracting your basis. Your basis is usually determined by the price you paid to buy it; however you may be able to add to that basis the taxes or other costs you paid to maintain that property over the years. You should consult with your tax professional before you sell. You probably will have between \$200,000 and \$250,000 in taxable gain

depending on your costs to sell and your holding costs on that property over the last 30 years. Currently long term capital gain taxes are capped at 15%. Next year that same tax rate is going up to 20%. Since tax rates are going up next year and probably even more in future years I would probably recommend selling and closing the deal by December 31, 2010. Waiting one day longer, until January 1, 2011 or after, will cost you an extra 5% in taxes. Sell this year and you would only have to pay up to \$37,500 in taxes while next year it would cost you up to \$50,000.

Reinvesting the money in another property to defer the taxes can only be done by doing a 1031 exchange. You would need to hire a company that specializes in 1031

exchanges to assist you. Personally, I would not do a 1031 exchange as the fees to do so would be a few thousand dollars plus you would have to reinvest the entire profit into more real estate. In addition, you are not really avoiding the taxes due on that gain. You are simply deferring it over to when you sell that new property. At that time taxes will surely be higher than 15%. In these economic times, I would pay the 15% tax and use your \$200,000 remaining for whatever you want.

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