

Rigg Motors

Continued from Page 1.

boy, he used to sit on the long row of seats in Riggs Motors showroom to wait for his dad. "(Riggs) would sit down and talk to me. He always had the time of day. He was a very, very kind man."

A coronet player, Ron knew he could count on Riggs if he was stuck for accompaniment. Riggs never had to practice — Ron gave him the music and off they'd go. In his home, Riggs had two grand pianos. Every so often he invited Harry and some of the others to his home to listen to him play.

Ron got his first real job at Riggs in the summer of '42, when he was 15.

"Of course everybody worked six days a week those days, the hours were 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.," Ron recalls.

He washed the Bell trucks which were stored at Riggs, kept the garage clean and made regular runs for parts. Ron went to Garage Supply, which is now the post office and federal building. He ventured to Keyes Supply, housed in a narrow building which has been leveled and is now a parking lot on the corner of Market and Pinnacle Streets. And, he made the trip to Belleville Auto Electric, run by Chris and Tom Lewis on East Dundas about where Subway is today.

"The guys who do this nowadays, they have a pick-up truck. I had to go on my bicycle. I could carry quite a bit on it."

Once Ron was sent on a particularly difficult mission.

"The foreman of the shop came to me and said they had a problem they needed a special tool for."

Ron was sent to find a left-handed monkey wrench.

He went from supply shop to supply shop asking for the unique tool. Needless to say, he returned frustrated and empty-handed.

"There were characters around in those days and even more so in the car business."

One of these characters was nicknamed "The Count." His name was Michael and he was the night salesman. His problem involved sleeping on the job — and one hot, sweaty summer night he awoke to find lamp black powder covering his face.

"They were always playing

jokes on each other."

Ron remembers a wild chase in the garage which ended with Albert Snare chasing a guy right into the pit.

"That was the days before having hoists."

The staff included salesmen, a bookkeeper and car and truck mechanics. Then, changing a tire was more complicated.

"In those days when a tire got a hole in it they used to vulcanize it."

In this process tires were put in a mold, heated, and filed and rasped until ready for strips of rubber. These strips were applied in layers, and then the tire was superheated until the rubber melted and bonded with the tire.

"Business was conducted differently in those days. People in those days had time to stand around and tell a story. Business was done by a handshake."

In 1955, Leo Riggs gave Harry Moorman 25 per cent of the shares of the business in recognition of good service. Twelve-and-a-half per cent of shares were given to bookkeeper Jack Mather. Former Belleville Mayor Maclean Haig, who held the licence for the radio station, bought Riggs' share of the business. Within a year, Haig bought out Moorman's and Mathier's shares. Shortly thereafter, Haig Motors became Murray Motors, as Belleville radio station pioneer Frank Murray took the reins.

By this time Harry and Ron Moorman were running Moorman Motors, a Volkswagen dealership, across the road. Eventually the garage was sold to the since-disbanded

*Intelligence,
Remember When,
Nov. 20, 1995*

**Business done
by handshake**



Belleville Parking Authority, torn down, and the buildings across the road were later torn down as well. Now, Ron Moorman runs the Belleville Culligan franchise on College Street.



Drop the pen and add a cigar and Ron Moorman looks just like his father.

Over →