

Blaind, Bob

Intelligencer

Remember when

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Boat-house lures sportsmen

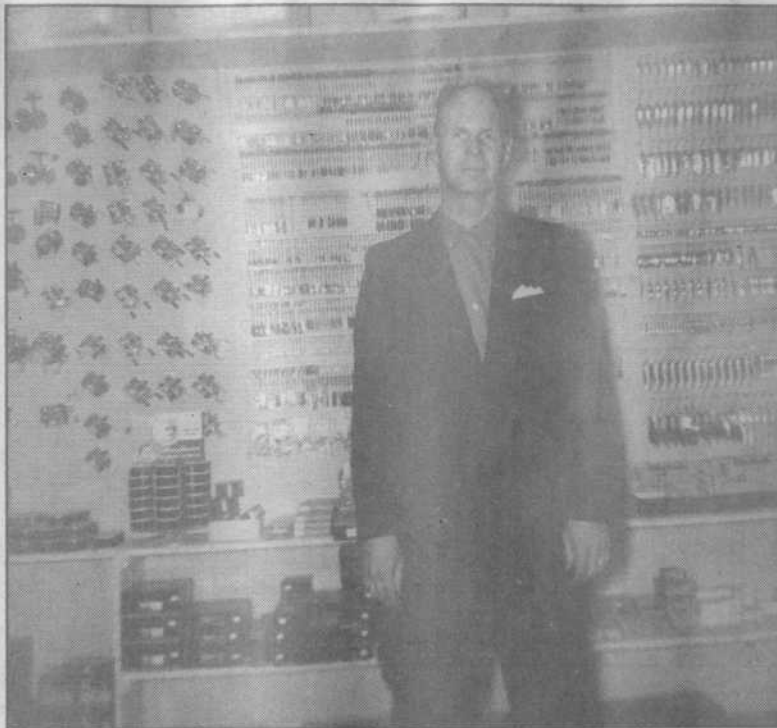
Bob Blaind's store at 46 South Front St. in Belleville was a virtual paradise for anyone interested in dropping a line, chasing a puck, catching a ball or playing any other sport.

Blaind was involved with sports in Belleville throughout his life and the store that began in a boat-house practically became a second home to fishermen.

Live bait and tackle were arguably the biggest aspect of his business but Blaind also sold hockey and ball equipment, bicycles, golf clubs, guns and hunting gear, canoes, outboard motors, trailers and other accessories. Blaind also put crests on jerseys and sharpened skates in the winter.

Belleville resident Betty Blaind is Bob's widow. She recalls how her husband got started. In 1953 he opened The Sports Centre on Bridge Street East, where Century Place is today. The business operated four years before Bob closed it and spent several years working for Bruce Miller's sporting goods store on Campbell Street, Howard Booth's radio and television business (operating a sporting goods section in it), and selling bait and tackle wholesale on his own.

About 1960 he opened a business in the basement of Jack Goyer's Marina building at 64 S. Front St. After a few years he moved into a former boat-house at 46 S. Front St. and although far from palatial — Betty recalls the ceiling leaked — it probably made the sportsman feel right at home. As well, fishermen could pull up in their boats from the harbor. The spot is now home to



Bob Blaind standing in his store on S. Front Street.

West Wind Boutique.

Blaind's children all worked part-time at the store. They included Sandie, Nancy, Kathy, Teresa and David. Other employees included Harry Hall, Bill Clapp, Judd Semark, John Smith, Ron Lucas and various seasonal help.

David Blaind recalls there was an opening in the floor of the building that his father used for dumping dead minnows or worms into the bay. David fished through it as a young boy.

However, a thief once found another use for it, swimming under the water and entering the building through the opening. Fortunately the police

nabbed him.

Break-ins would be a continual problem at the store and bars had to be placed on the windows.

When not working, Blaind's favorite pastimes were fishing, hockey and duck hunting. His knowledge of sports was such that he wrote a column for *The Intelligencer* called *Outdoor tips and tricks*, for three years.

He also sponsored numerous ball and hockey teams and coached a girls' basketball team. His love of children, says his daughter, Nancy, led him to give away bait or tackle when the youngsters appeared at the shop without much money. "He never turned down a

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