

## BACK IN TIME

# Some old gas stations

BY EVELYN BYRNE WILLIAMS WITH JANEEN SATHRE

A few years ago I was asked if I remembered the old gas service station on top of Jacksonville Hill. For some reason, I do not. Lorna Erskin, a Forest Creek friend, told me about one being there in the 1930s and that Mr. Ed Demer had a photo of it. Well, it did not take me long to contact him and he kindly let me have a copy (top photo). He remembered it quite well because his grandparents lived across the road from it.

I also found that Maud Pool, at the time the Applegate news correspondent for the Medford *Mail Tribune*, wrote in a March 12, 1930, article: “New Station Going in near Applegate. Seeing an opportunity to serve the tourist and vacationists who flock to the Applegate in the summertime, T. S. Cady is preparing to open a service station, with free picnic grounds near his home at the summit of Jacksonville hill. Construction of the station which will be operated in connection with the Union Oil Company is well underway, and Mr. Cady expects to be ready for business in a short time. The new concern, which will be named The Summit Station, will include a line of lunch goods, and the inviting picnic grounds among the pines at the rear of the building will make it a favorite with the autoists. Mr. Cady is assisted with the carpenter work by I.E. Clapp. Mr. Cady, who has lived here since coming from Idaho a year ago, says he thinks Southern Oregon a fine place, and he is interested in the future progress and development of this country.”

Now my research began for some other old gas stations in our area. In looking through John and Marguerite Black’s book, *Ruch and the Upper Applegate*

*Valley*, I found that the Ruch store had a gas pump. In 1896 Cap Ruch built a cabin/store/post office on ten acres of land between Applegate and Uniontown Roads, now Applegate and Upper Applegate Roads. About 1915 he expanded the store building and a gas pump was installed in the front.

Then competition started in 1928 when his nearby neighbors, Chester and Martin McDonough, built the Sunnyside Gas Station with a lube and oil change pit. They sold tires, tubes and other automobile supplies, and customers had convenient restrooms on the lower level. They added a stock of groceries some years later.

There were gas pumps at the Copper Store, which was built in 1934 by Mr. and Mrs. Crow. Many people wondered how this business could survive in such a remote area. But it did. Many people just took a Sunday drive up the Applegate to stop and visit with the locals there and have a soda pop or a beer and buy things for a picnic. It would probably still be there if the Applegate Dam had not been built, but now that store location is at the bottom of the lake.

I was told there were gas pumps sometime in the early 1940s at the small building by the McKee Bridge. The station didn’t last long and the building was later used by the Upper Applegate Lions Club for their meetings. The Upper Applegate Store (now McKee Bridge Store) had some gas pumps later but they were discontinued when store owner Willard Wilson stopped using them.

Also, there was a gas station built in 1947 at Applegate across the road from the Pernoll’s store (now the Applegate Store and Gas Station). Owners were Edward

Kubli and his son, Norman.

I have no idea how many more early day gas pumps sprang up here and there in our area, but I did

find an interesting photo of some in Jacksonville. There were two pumps on the sidewalk in front of the Masonic Lodge building on California Street (middle photo by Margaret LaPlante), and a 1925 photo shows a gas station at the end of California and 5th Street built by Mr. W.A. Childers and his son-in-law Mr. Leonard McKee (bottom photo).

Old gas pumps are now considered antiques and are interesting to see in collections. They bring back nostalgia of those bygone days when you could fill your tank for a few cents and get away from the farm for a day of relaxation.

Evelyn Williams with Janeen Sathre

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## Tap wrap-up

BY LAIRD FUNK

Greetings from the sugar shack! Things are pretty quiet around the shack right now, but in December and January it was a busy place. We collected about 125 gallons of bigleaf maple sap and had a good time turning it into about seven quarts of delicious syrup.

The weather was not the best for a tapping season, but we did okay anyway. Most of December had the right temperature range of freezing at night with warmer days, but because of the lack of rain there was no flow until that first rainstorm at the end of December. Then things got more normal. Whether due to weather or something else, the sugar level this year was lower than the normal 2% and never rose above 1.75%. January was fairly productive compared to December and tapping went okay.

Apparently our colleagues on Vancouver Island, B.C., had unusual weather and flows also. Many reported that reliable trees did nothing and traditionally unproductive trees did well.

I sold out my supply of spiles and such very quickly and could have sold twice as many to the eager Applegaters who read my last article (Fall 2011). I met a bunch of nice folks, including one gentleman from Murphy who had been tapping bigleaf’s since high school, a

couple decades at least, but who had never had real tapping gear.

One problem I encountered was that my source of milk jugs decided to tap his own maples, leaving me way short. But I found you can buy 48 new, sterile ones for just over \$17, so I shelled out a bit of cash and got a lifetime supply of jugs. I ended up tapping about 20 trees of various sizes, though it took a few days to find the ones with good flows. Some gave nothing but some were outstanding. I averaged one-third to one-half gallon per tree per day, but my best trees sometimes produced a whole gallon a day.

This year did show that the different microclimates in our valley greatly influence the flow. One tapper discovered that his trees never got enough sun to warm up in the afternoon till the season was almost over. Those trees with plenty of moisture in the soil flowed much better than those on higher ground. Tappers “JR” and “KR” up on the East Fork of Williams Creek tapped about ten trees and got good flows from all but one or two. Their best trees were in or near water. They reported that their return was 48 ounces of great syrup.

The evaporating went much better this year because I bought two full-size steam-table pans that provided a great deal more surface area than the turkey roaster



Two bigleaf-maple trunks tapped into one jug.

from last season. Each holding almost five gallons, they sped up the evaporation by about a third compared to last year. This saved a lot of propane because previously a portion of the flames was not hitting the oblong pan, which ultimately resulted in a slightly lighter-colored syrup due to less time spent boiling with less caramelization of the sugars. A welcome serendipitous event occurred when very cold morning temperatures froze part of the liquid in the jugs, leaving a higher percentage of sugar in fluid portion and no sugar in the resulting ice, which also helped fuel use and made collecting a bit easier.

I tried using two pans on four burners on my outdoor kitchen range, but discovered I could not get full propane flow after a couple of hours because the freezing weather did not provide enough heat to vaporize the gas in the five-gallon tank. Next year I am going to use a bigger tank

and hope to use all four burners, allowing me to increase production. There is a balancing act to matching your evaporative capacity to the collection capacity. It helps to be able to evaporate a day’s collection in one day. I would evaporate about ten gallons a day down to the amount the pan would hold, and then the next day add that day’s sap to the pan and boil on.

All in all, it turned out to be a fun and profitable hobby and gave us all something to do outside when it was too cold for other activities. I recommend that those folks with bigleaf maples tap their trees next year. I will order a supply of spiles and tubing again and share them at my cost. If you would like to try tapping, give me a call next autumn and get set up.

P.S. You can tap most *Acer* species for usable sap. My box elder gave 2% sugar with a good flow.

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