



DELIVERING LAST LOAD OF GROCERIES—Gene Roberts, left, his son, Kenneth Roberts, and Kenneth's son, Craig, load up the last groceries to be delivered from Roberts Grocery on N. Piedmont Ave. Gene

Roberts, 70, a KM grocer for 47 years, closed his store last week. The present site lies in the path of the U.S. 74 By-Pass of the city.



Photos by Tom McIntyre

A FAMILY AFFAIR—Gene Roberts' son, Kenneth, middle of photo, and his 16-year-old grandson, Craig, are following in his footsteps in the grocery business and like Mr. Roberts started to work at an early age.

The senior Roberts will report to work for his son when Ken Roberts opens a new grocery store across from the Depot next month.

Old Landmark Will Be Bowing To Changing Times

By ELIZABETH STEWART
Staff Writer

It was 1932 and the heart of the big depression that Gene Roberts joined his father in the operation of the family grocery business on North Piedmont Avenue.

That was 47 years ago when Roberts, now 70, was 23.

The familiar landmark will bow to changing times and the U.S. 74 By-pass of Kings Mountain. Roberts Grocery delivered the last load of groceries Friday.

Mr. Roberts, whose youthfully appearance and wit, belie his age, speaks philosophically about leaving the site, only a block from his residence.

"I've always believed in accepting things as they are", he laughed, recalling the good times he had experienced in the white frame store and the "good people" with whom he had been in contact.

The price of groceries does not compare, of course, with today's prices but Roberts recalled how "times were hard" and it was just as difficult to have money in your pocket to buy pinto beans at five cents a pound, eggs at ten cents a dozen, fatback meat at five cents a pound, and gasoline at 17 cents a gallon.

Many of his first customers were credit customers who paid for groceries by the week or month. Some of the early purchases included cordwood, which sold for the unbelievable price of \$5 per cord, and chickens and turkeys, your choice of live birds or dressed.

Ken Roberts, who started working in his father's store at about the same age that Gene started work in the old Cora Mill store at 14, recalls taking live chickens and turkeys from penned-in "coops" at the back of the store and dressing them while the customer waited.

Actually, Ken claims to have started working at age eight or nine, answering the phone for his father and making deliveries on his bicycle. He hopes to repay the favor in mid-July. Gene Roberts will be reporting to work for his son in a brand, new convenience store now under construction across from the KM Depot Center.

Born on First Street in Kings Mountain, Roberts, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Ross Roberts and next to the oldest of four children, has lived only a short distance from his birthplace all his life. Roberts was away from Kings Mountain while attending Mars Hill College and also worked in Charlotte for a food chain.

The stretch of North Piedmont Avenue which passes his store was a dirt road until 1936 when it was resurfaced by work crews from the

Works Progress Administration of the state. Roberts recalled how the workmen used pick and shovel to clean out the ditches and were paid \$2.50 per week, not with cash, but with food coupons. They came across the street to his store or went to other stores in the neighborhood to get their groceries. Roberts recalled that in the early days other grocers were Cora Mill Store, Lum Gantt's (which is now Pauline Store on Waco Road) B.A. Smith's (where the In and Out Store is now on Cleveland Ave.) and John and Doc Mauney's store which was located across the street from Smith's.

For six days a week Gene Roberts opened every morning at 6 a.m. and closed on Fridays and Saturdays as late as midnight, on many occasions. Kenneth recalled that when he went to work full-time 16 years ago many folks preferred to do their shopping on Saturday, which was the only day they came to town. Some customers took their families to the Saturday night movies and shopped for groceries afterwards.

Gene and Louise Hambright Roberts were married April 12, 1936. They are parents of five children, Kenneth, of Kings Mountain, David of Gastonia, Diane Roberts (Mrs. Sammy) Houston of Thomasville, Linda (Mrs. Ed) Tallon of Columbia, S.C. and Glenn Roberts of Kings Mountain. There are seven grandchildren.

The Robertses have long been active in Kings Mountain Baptist Church where Mr. Roberts is a deacon and teaches a Sunday School class.

Over the years he has seen his business grow from a small beginning with very little stock into an expanded grocery store, both in size and in trade.

If he had his life to live over, would he do anything different? Does he have any immediate plans for retirement?

No, he enjoys the grocery business, whether its cutting meat, helping a customer, or sweeping the floor. And, he likes people, swaps stories with them about the "good ole days" and never meets a stranger. His sense of humor keeps him young.

Mr. Roberts, who walks to and from work every day, expects to get in a little more walking when he moves several blocks down the street to the new location. It will be a brand new experience because for the first time in 47 years Roberts will be working for someone else. In fact, a new generation of Robertses will be working in the new store. Sixteen-year-old Craig Roberts is following in his father's and grandfather's footsteps.

Debs Barbara Patrick, Kathy Sincox Honored

Debutantes Barbara Patrick and Kathy Sincox were honored by their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Patrick and Dr. and Mrs. F.J. Sincox, at a Breakfast-Dance immediately following the debutante presentation at the Malcolm Brown Auditorium Saturday night, June 9th.

The Elks Club was the setting for the gala event, and hosting, along with the Patricks and Sincoxes, were other couples from the Western North Carolina area honoring their debutante daughters.

All debutantes and their escorts were invited to attend.

Juice, eggs, grits-cheese

casserole, bacon, sausage, steak patties, candied apples, hot biscuits and jelly were served from a buffet table centered with a silver bowl filled with American Beauty roses flanked by silver candelabra entwined with clematis. Red roses and white candles were used throughout the party rooms.

Debs and their escorts found their places at small tables holding central arrangements of candles and clematis.

After breakfast, there was dancing in the club ballroom to the music of "lyrics" until early morning.

Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus T. Falls, Sr. will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary Sun., June 24th, and invitations have been extended to friends to call from 3 until 5 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of Central United Methodist Church. Co-hosting the reception will be Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Falls, Jr. and Mr. and Mrs. Alvin McCraney. Mrs. McCraney is daughter and Cyrus Falls, Jr. is son of the honored couple.

Local Legionnaires and Auxiliary members attended the state convention of the two groups during the weekend at Sheraton Center in Charlotte.



Lib Stewart

Representing Post 155 were District 23 Commander Rick Moore, Adjutant Joe H. McDaniel, Carl Wilson and David Delevie.

Representing Post 155 Auxiliary were President Arlene Barrett, past state president Elizabeth Stewart, Brenda Beattie, Orangrel Jolly and Rachel Ledford.

Mrs. Barrett was in-

stalled as District 23 president.

Unit 155 won a number of awards, including first place among units in the state for the best history book and best written history, a plaque for a Children and Youth immunization project, a framed certificate for its news letter in publications and first prize for its poppy poster.

Installed as state leaders for 1979-80 were Mrs. Mary Warren of Weldon, state president, and Ray Smith of Benson, state commander.

The 12 employees of First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. surprised their bosses at a "Boss Appreciation Day" recently. Honored with engraved desk sets, appropriate badges and breakfast were Charles E. Hamilton, III, vice president, and Larry C. Beasley, installment loan manager.

Lynn L. Goforth was chairman of the arrangements committee heading up the special event which included

decorating of the employee lounge and presentation of the gifts.

IT'S A GIRL

Mr. and Mrs. Keith Morrow of Kings Mountain announce the arrival of their second child, a daughter, Kathryn Elizabeth, June 12th, Cleveland Memorial Hospital. The baby weighed seven pounds, 12 ounces.

Grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Charles Owens of Fulton Drive and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Morrow of Shelby Road. Great-

grandparents are Mrs. Frank Morrow of Cansler Street and Mr. and Mrs. E.B. Cooke of Shelby Road.

Other member of the Morrow family is 18-month-old Tommy Morrow.

Mrs. Morrow is the former Avis Owens.

Members of BCHS Class of 1969 will hold a 10th reunion on Saturday, June 23. If any member has not been contacted by the Reunion committee, call 629-5208 for information or write Ronald Burseson, 1005 N 6th Street, Bessemer City.