

Parker's entering fourth decade of service

DAVE BLANTON

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Bill Parker's first gas deliveryman told the young entrepreneur "you won't make it six months."

That was in 1973, when thirty-eight cents bought a gallon of gas and if you got it at Parker's new service station you got it with full service, the only option at the time.

Through many years of fourteen-hour days and six-day weeks, he and his father Charles made Parker's American a success and a kind of landmark in town, and next month the service station - now Parker's BP - will celebrate forty years in business.

During that time Parker has seen the town, its people, the cars they drive and the very relationship people have with their vehicles change a lot.

"People have less and less understanding of their cars," he said in his garage last week. "It's a hurry-up-and-go economy. People don't really think about the car until a dashboard light comes on."

If oil is low. Or if the windshield wiper fluid needs topping off. Or if a tire needs a blast of air.

As modern cars have become outfitted with sensors and computers that monitor and alert owners to all manner of calibrations and diagnostics, there's a growing dis-

connection between driver and what's being driven.

All of that is fine with Parker, 61, who says he's always been able to change with the times and learn. "Really, hardly a day goes by where I don't learn something new about this business, and about cars. It keeps me going."

Parker and his father were both working at Carolina Throwing, a part of Mauney Mills, when he said that business was slowing down and both wanted to try their hand at running a gas and service shop. Bill established the business and his dad followed him over a few months later.

"It was tough going for many years in the beginning there," Parker said. "It was just the two of us."

In those four decades, he's seen more competition in town and a widening variety of cars - and fuel - hit the market. He's also seen some odd things happen at the service station, which for years has employed about 3-5 full time employees.

"Customer got out of her car and left it in reverse," he said. "It circled the gas pumps before we could get it stopped."

And there was the time a man was pumping gas and his young son knocked the car into drive, propelling the car straight toward the



Bill Parker attends to longtime customers Wilson and Sara Griffin on a recent afternoon. Parker and his father left their jobs at a textile plant in the 1970s to start a business of their own.

Photo by DAVE BLANTON

office. Luckily, it met an unforgiving steel post at low speed before it could crash into the office panes.

Some scrapes were more dangerous ... and painful. Parker was peering under the hood of a sick automobile once, trying to troubleshoot, when a radiator hose blew and splattered his face with two hundred degree coolant. He was taken to the Emergency Room,

with scalding injuries around his eyes and face.

"Never had a pain like that before," he said.

In the last 15 or 20 years he said he's seen the amount of gas he sells fall off by about half, due to more gas stations in the area.

"In the 70s and 80s, we were selling three tankers a week. Now it's about 1 1/2 week," he said. A

tanker contains 8,000 gallons.

About twenty years ago, Parker got into the rental business. Now, he owns about 30 rental properties across town.

As he looks to the future, he says he has contemplated selling Parkers, but he's not sure when he'll make that move. As for the rental properties, Parker intends to stick with that for the long run.

Vote for the BC Drive-In!

Bessemer City-Kings Mountain Drive-In needs to go digital (no more film strips) by the end of the year to conform to new movie studio requirements.

Making that move is costly.

To try and help preserve this bit of Americana, Honda and its industry association is sponsoring a contest and offering five digital projectors to the drive-in theatres that get the most votes in Project Drive-In, an on-line competition among 90 theatres across the country.

The Bessemer City Drive In is asking their friends to go on line and cast a vote to give them a chance at winning a digital projector.

"My grandparents, Gaye and Mozelle Stinnett, made their dreams come true in 1949 when they built a drive-in movie theatre behind their home on Bessemer City Road. It is the only drive in theatre still owned and operated by the same family and handed down two generations. My father and current owner, Rick Stinnett, was born and raised here. The theatre is currently operated by my dad, Rick Stinnett, and his two daughters, me and my sister, Danielle Stinnett, and Jessica Yow. Our drive-

in is the only operation still charging by the car load instead of per person. There is nowhere else you can get two movies for \$10 a carload. We are open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights throughout the summer and enjoy providing affordable quality family entertainment for the community. This theatre is part of our family heritage and community history. It would be heartbreaking to have to close our theatre due to electronic upgrades that we cannot afford. Please help us stay open by voting for our drive-in theatre in this contest to win a digital projector."

The drive-in has room for more than 400 vehicles at each show, which features two movies.

How do you vote?

Go to ProjectDriveIn.com and locate the drive-in on the map. Click on "save this drive-in," then click "vote" when a new screen pops up. You can also use your smart phone to vote by texting "Vote 17" to 444999.

You can vote online and via text once each day.

"We really need the community's support to win one of these projectors," said Yow.

Thread Trail survey set for Sept. 7

Carolina Thread Trail will conduct user surveys of trail visitors at Kings Mountain Gateway Trail on Saturday, Sept. 7, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

The surveys are part of a larger effort to measure the economic impact of greenways and trails in the Greater 15-county Carolina Thread Trail region. The surveys will be completed at Kings Mountain and two other trails in York and Mecklenburg counties several times throughout the coming year.

Visitors willing to help with the survey will provide the Carolina Thread Trail with vital information and feedback on perceptions of the trail and the economic impact it has generated.

Walk for your health & win

On August 5 sponsors began registration for the 8th Annual Step One Challenge Cleveland County Health Department walking contest. This contest is a community-wide approach to increasing physical activity and supporting obesity prevention strategies for all residents of

the county. The Step One Challenge is a countywide event in which all Cleveland County residents, ages 12 and up, are eligible to participate at NO COST. Participants must form teams of between 3-6 individuals, with each team having a name and captain.

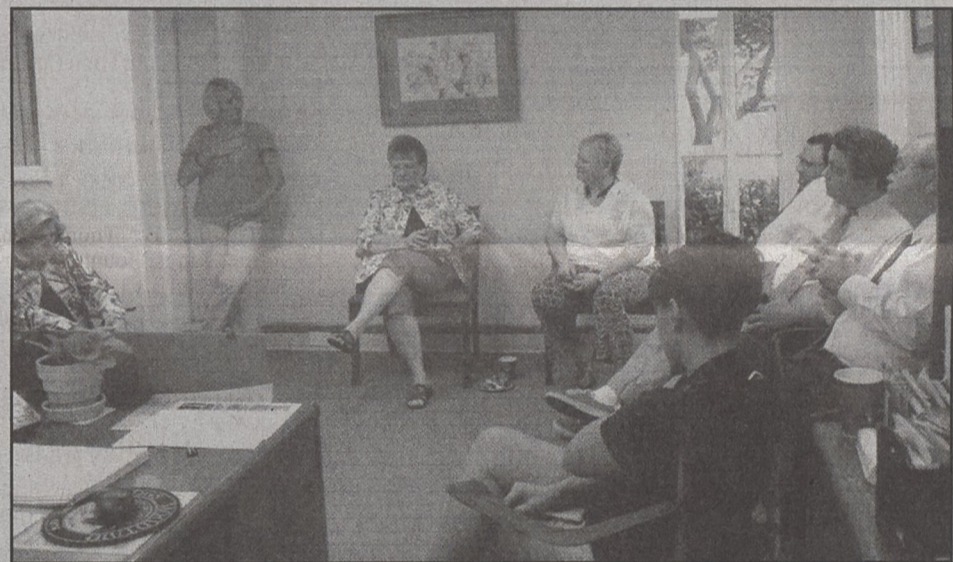
All participants will receive a free pedometer and walking log to monitor daily steps taken. Entry forms are available from the Cleveland County Health Department, the YMCA sites in the county and the public libraries. Entry forms are also posted on the Step One

Challenge web site at www.steponchallenge.org. All team registrations for this year's walking event are due by 5 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 30, at the Cleveland County Health Department.

Team captains will pick up the team packets consisting of walking logs, reporting sheets and pedometers on Friday, Sept. 6, at the County Health Department or Kings Mountain Hospital. The contest kicks off on Saturday, September 7, from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. at either location and runs through Friday, Oct. 18.

In addition to this year's competition is the "2nd Annual Step One 5K and Fun Run" event, presented by Shelby Savings Bank, will happen on Saturday, Sept. 7 a.m. at Aldersgate UMC in Shelby. Participants, ages 8 and up, can run, jog or walk the 3.1 mile route and at 10:00 a.m. the 1/4-mile fun run will occur. Registration is now open at www.steponchallenge.org for the 5K and Fun Run. The cost is \$15 for the 5K and the Fun Run is free. All participants of the 5K that register prior to the 5 a t-shirt, and all fun run participants will be given a race medal.

For more information about the Step One Challenge please visit www.steponchallenge.org.



RISE & SHINE- breakfast sponsored by Hometown Hardware was hosted by the Main Street Organization Committee Aug. 20 in Main Street Director Jan Harris's office. It was well attended by business owners, building owners, and business and civic representatives from Kings Mountain and Cleveland County. The breakfast is held quarterly to discuss ideas for promotion and growth of the downtown business district.

photo by Jan Harris



MOORES IN RALEIGH - McRae Moore, oldest son of Tim Moore and Julie Moore, attended UNC basketball camp this summer and visited Rep. Moore in Raleigh who introduced him to Governor Pat McCrory. They are pictured in the N. C. Governor's office.

Kings Mountain Weekend Weather

Thursday August 29	Friday August 30	Saturday August 31	Sunday September 1
Isolated T'Storms - 88°	Partly Cloudy - 86°	Isolated T'Storms - 85°	Isolated T'Storms - 83°
30% Chance of precipitation	20% Chance of precipitation	30% Chance of precipitation	30% Chance of precipitation
Night time Low 67°	Night time Low 66°	Night time Low 67°	Night time Low 66°

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