

Newsletter120

Keith's Corner/McGill News

September 3, 2021

Purple Engine Oil for Cars ??

Never heard of such a weird thing? Well, an oil company that was popular in the 50s was Union Oil and they had purple oil, it was called Royal Triton. Tony Fondi and Frank Quilicy, had a Union Oil service station on the SW corner across from Economy Drug. The one with the grass and the rusty scrap iron.

It was a small station and had 2 pumps, regular and ethyl. There was a small office and a lube room with a hoist that could lift the cars off the floor for servicing.

The stations were called service stations, because that is what folks got when they came in. The attendant, routinely pumped the gas, checked the oil and water, checked the air pressure in the tires and washed the windshield. Credit cards were not in use back then. It was all cash, which meant a quick trip inside to get change.

I worked there during my junior and senior year at WPHS, (1953-54) along with my buddy, Leonard Morrow. We did all the servicing and also changed tires and patched inner tubes, greased vehicles, changed oil and filter and other small repairs. A lube and/or oil change came with a free wash job, which included washing all the windows inside and outside, vacuuming the inside, etc. It was a rather hectic job at times. Tires had to be broken down the old fashioned way with tire irons. Cars had a zillion grease zerks, unlike the cars now days. It was a lot of work, but we had a lot of different experiences with people. Some good and some bad.

One evening we heard a woman screaming from across the street. Looking over, we saw a man beating her with his fists. We ran over and grabbed him and told her to get to a phone and call the cops. Instead she started whacking us on the head with her fully loaded purse. Felt like it was loaded with lead weights. It was probably full of cosmetics after getting a good look at her. We let him go and returned to work. By the time we got back across the street, he was hitting her again. We called the cops. Just before they got there, he shoved her and she fell against a window in the old bakery. The window broke and she was cut up, but not badly. We learned never to do that again.

One night a man came in for gas, driving a new white Cady convertible with Cal. plates. We filled the tank and then he asked if we could change the oil and grease the car. We put the car up on the hoist and drained the oil and greased it. We lowered the hoist and had just popped open the hood, when several cars came in for gas at the same time. Leonard and I were out servicing them, when we heard the hood slam and then the car came flying out of the lube bay and onto the street and headed north. We called the cops. They found the jerk about where McDonalds is now. He tried to cheat us out of paying, but the laugh was on him, as we did not have a chance to put any of the purple oil in his car. His engine seized up and was ruined. Quite a costly oil change.

His bill could not have been much, as gas was 18 cent/gallon, a quart of oil was about 15 cents and an oil filter around \$1. Plus, he would have gotten a free wash job and the insides vacuumed. Doesn't pay to be a jerk.

Another night a car came in with 4 young boys. One of them was Bing Crosby's youngest son. They had been in Las Vegas and were going back to Bing's ranch in Elko and were flat broke. Leonard and I felt sorry for them and filled their tank. They promised to send us the money. I am still waiting. Another lesson learned, the hard way.

One of the perks we had was working on our own cars. Leonard had a 49 Ford 2dr. and I had a 41 Chevy Club Coupe. They got washed on a daily basis. Tony used to kid us about wearing the paint off the cars with all that washing. He was a great guy and always looked after us.

One night I was working alone. It was a dark night and not much traffic on the street. I was in the lube room doing some work on my Chevy, when a guy came

into the office. I didn't see a car at the pumps, so I was a little concerned. I didn't know him and as soon as I got into the office he pulled a hunting knife out of his coat and told me to open the register. I opened it and stepped out of his way. There wasn't much in the till. He looked at it in disgust and told me, it ain't worth getting arrested. I kept quiet and he left. Never saw him again. Must have been a bum going thru. Tony, our boss, had always told us to give the robbers anything they wanted and avoid getting hurt.

That was the only time that ever happened to me. There just wasn't much crime in those days and of course there was really no way to make a run for it. Long way to the next town in any direction.

Working at the station was a good experience and I could always get a job where ever I lived. Too bad kids don't do that now. Most gas outlets now are not "service stations", the attendants stand behind a counter and take your money. Plus, gas is now 20 or more times as expensive and that is called progress???

I haven't seen any purple oil around lately. Have you????

McGill News

The Big Splash is set for this weekend. A dance will be held Friday evening. Saturday, the McGill Volunteer Firemen will be cooking hotdogs and hamburgers at the swimming pool park. There will be several tables with stuff made by local folks. The McGill Town Council will have their table with the various items. The kiddies will be in the pool, showing off their swimming skills. All in all a great fun filled day, to celebrate our favorite town's birthday.

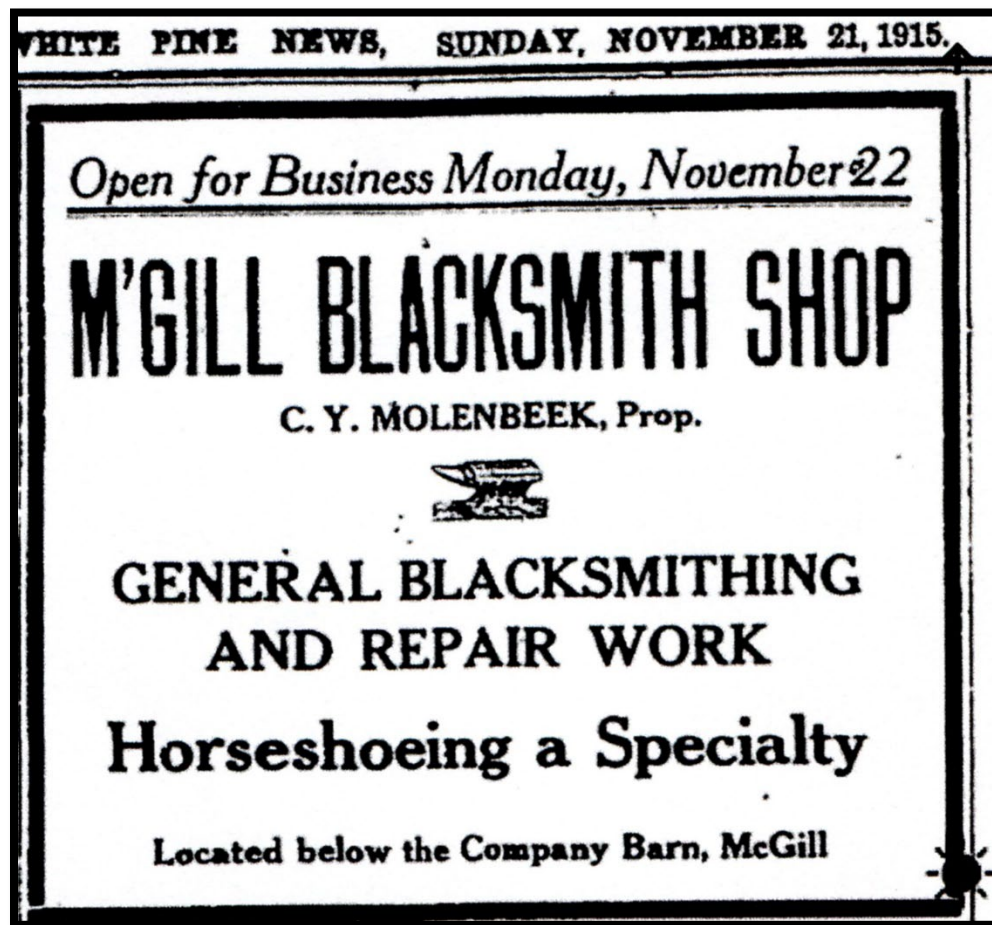
Back in the "old" days, we had a Water Carnival at the end of summer. The grassy park had not been put in, so there was no BBQ. It was all about the progress of the McGill and Ruth kids, swimming abilities.

Oldies

1910—April 17-----Foundation is laid for new middle school in McGill.

1910—April 17---Mr. Chet Graves, former editor of McGill's newspaper, Copper Ore, is now at the McGill post office.

Old Photo



Not a photo, but thought it was interesting. 1915 newspaper ad. I don't know exactly where the company barn was.