

THE ALPINE SUN SHOPPER – November 5, 2009
Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society

LOCAL KIWANIAN AND BUSINESSMAN CONTINUES TO BRING SMILES

Bob Wilson was born in Volga, Iowa on January 21, 1920. He was raised on the family farm where they grew corn and grain. He joined the Marine Corps in WWII and worked on B-24 Bombers. He met his wife, Iris Petry, while he was stationed in San Diego and they married on Oct 24, 1944. They have two daughters and four grand children. After the war Mr. Wilson worked in gas stations and drove gas tankers to Jacumba.

In 1952 Charlie Bennett put his Texaco service station up for sale and Mr. Wilson bought it. It is located on Alpine Blvd and is now Dan Smith's Alpine Blvd Gas and Diesel. In 1964 Bob renovated the station and it looks very much like it looks today. Iris took care of the banking and since there were no banks in Alpine she would have to run up and down the hill to El Cajon.

Mr. Wilson became very active in the community. In 1956 he joined the Alpine Kiwanis Club and today he is their most senior member. He served as their President in 1962 and is the only one of three people in the club who has been the recipient of one of the highest honors called the Tablet of Honors.

Mr. Wilson has many friends in Alpine. Dan Smith has known Bob since 1979. When Dan opened his first gas station he used to pump Bob for information. Bob gave him many helpful hints and ideas on how to run a profitable gas station. Dan says, "I highly respect Bob's business ethics. He was a very smart business man and a good friend."

Curlie Collier, another good friend of Bob's, told me he went into Bob's Texaco station and Bob said to him, "How long you gonna live up here? We have a Kiwanis Club that meets every Saturday morning and I want to see you down there next Saturday." So what could I do? I joined the Kiwanis Club. Bob has a great sense of humor and enjoys playing practical jokes.

One time they had to go to Imperial Valley for an Inter Club Kiwanis meeting and Bob knew Curlie had to get back early to go to work. Bob had a good friend who was a Highway patrolman. He told him to stop Curlie on his way back to Alpine and make him think he was going to give him a ticket.

The first time Fred Higginbotham met Bob Wilson was in 1956. Fred lived in Imperial Valley and was passing through Alpine trying to get back home during a snow storm. He was new to the area and stopped in at Bob's Texaco station to buy some chains. Bob was out of chains and instead of just sending him on his way Bob explained to Fred how to get back to Imperial Valley via Hwy 94. They did not see each other again until 1973 when Fred moved to Alpine. Fred stopped in to say hello and they have been close friends ever since. Fred says, "I have a tremendous amount of respect for Bob as a business man. He ran a tight ship and all his employees made you feel special and wanted to help you in any way they could."

When Jim Rorie, owner of the Fiberglass Menagerie, finished making the white fiberglass horse

for the Denver Bronco's Stadium, it was Bob Wilson who helped Jim deliver the horse to Denver. The horse is still there today and sits on top of the score board.

I met Mr. Wilson through the Alpine Historical Society several years ago. I see him quite often at the Alpine Fitness Club and told him I was going to write this article. He is an inspiration to me and many who know him. It is a blessing to live in a community like Alpine and to know so many wonderful people like Bob Wilson.

By Carlette Anderson



Bob Wilson