

Forty-four years of success

Orville Roth celebrates a lifetime in business

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SILVERTON — On Sept. 10, 1950, at the age of 16, Orville Roth donned his first white shirt and green bow tie in a Salem independent grocery store. More than half a century later, he still wears the same getup almost every day.

With a 1956 Chevrolet and \$500 in his pocket, Roth opened his first grocery store bearing his namesake in Silverton on Aug. 5, 1962. Forty-four years later, the local entrepreneur celebrates his business successes with 11 stores scattered across Stayton, Salem, Independence, Lebanon, Silverton and McMinnville. His smiling face has become synonymous with the store and he's often seen at community events such as the Harvestfest.

According to Roth, the crux of his success lies with two essential rules: providing quality products and quality service.

"Today, we're able to compete with the WalMarts and the WinCos because we have that quality of products and that quality of service," he said. "It costs a bit more to have quality products, but it's worth it."

And, Roth explained, he constantly fights to make his stores the best possible.

"There are three things I hate: being late, waiting in line and losing," he said. "So as you see the challenges of the industry today, there's a challenge in becoming something special. But we're successful because we follow the same basic plan as we did 44 years ago."

Roth's son, Michael, became the company's president in 1997 and then CEO in 2001. Roth, then, dropped his workweek from 80 or more hours a week to 40, when he became Roth's Chairman and Chief Courtesy Clerk. That is, on almost any given morning, customers can find Roth visiting with patrons and employees or sipping tea and nibbling at a doughnut. ("A doughnut a day keeps the doctor away," he heartily chuckled.)

Despite this shift in management, Roth said that customers want notice any change in what he calls the "basic services." Changes are only in technology.

"I was successful in the 20th century," he said. "The 21st century belongs to the next generation, and technology is simply a part of everyday life."

He said that the switch from simple cash registers to computers was a large change for

the business, and he also mentioned that Michael has taken sincere interest in the bakery and in ways that doughnuts are made.

And while Roth's isn't planning on implementing the gas station or car wash found in Silverton store at any other locations in the chain, he said that their experience with Silverton's branch has taught them how to cross-merchandise to make that aspect more successful.

"It's hard to be perfect," he said, "but I'm trying my best to fill the gap."