

Elmer Pflieger---Lucasville Legend

Elmer Pflieger was born May 6, 1904. He and his wife, Gladys Thompson, were married June 11, 1928.

John Pflieger, Elmer's great grandfather, a teacher in Germany for 50 years, had 10 children. Three sons and three daughters came to America. One of these sons was Philip Pflieger.

Philip, Elmer's grandfather, and his wife, Magadena, came from Bavaria, Germany, in 1854. They settled in this area in 1856. A son, John Pflieger, married twice. His second wife was Mary Shoemaker. They reared five children including our subject, Elmer.

On December 7, 1935, Elmer and his wife opened a general store in a white frame building located at the south end of Lucasville Ohio. This was during the Great Depression and most of the customers worked on public work projects for the United States government. They extended liberal credit, and added customers who were employed by the steel mill, shoe factories, and N&W railroad. The business grew as they added feeds, ice and delivery service.

In 1937 during the flood, all roads into Lucasville were covered with water except the road to Minford. But it was closed due to a cave-in at Kline's Pond (across from the Fire Station today). Elmer's Brother, a storekeeper in Minford, brought a truckload of groceries from Jackson as far as the caved-in pond. Elmer hired young men to carry the groceries around the cave-in, thus keeping the store stocked with food. He also arranged for a load of gasoline to be delivered just before the underpass north of Lucasville was closed.

In the years after the flood, the business continued to grow as he added shoes, clothing, and small hardware items including Ashland oil products, supplying gasoline, and motor oil to farmers and service stations, and heating oil to homes.

During World War II, when merchandise was very hard to obtain, Elmer made regular trips to Cincinnati with his truck to buy anything. He could find to stock his shelves. He had lived in Cincinnati for 12 years as a University of Cincinnati student and employee of Merchants Police Company, so was familiar with the wholesale district and convinced many distributors to sell him whatever they might have.

Each decade brought new challenges. During the early 50s construction began on the Atomic plant at Piketon and US Route 23 was widened from 2 to 4 lanes. The Pflieger home, next to the store and much of the store's parking area were in the way of this construction. The Pflieger's arranged to have their home moved a little south across the street from their business to a new site on December 15, 1953, breakfast was cooked in the

old location, and the evening meal was prepared in the new location. The refrigerator never defrosted.

The challenge in the 60s occurred April 8, 1965, when a tornado roared across Lucasville, destroying their store and the store across the street. Mr. Pflieger thought a tornado would never strike between the hills and so had no insurance to cover. The loss was complete. Elmer was 61 years old when he decided to rebuild. He decided to concentrate on hardware. He became known for the variety and quality of his merchandise, as well as his practical advice. Many customers came into the store with only an idea and left with all the items they would need, as well as Elmer's hand drawn sketch of how to do the job.

Elmer and Gladys had two children, Hilda and Wayne who both worked in the store. He employed two special workers, James Locke and William Morgan, who drove oil trucks to all parts of the country in all kinds of weather.

All during these years, he was an active member of the Lucasville Service Civic club. One of his duties was to maintain the swing that the civic club used during the Fourth of July picnics that they hosted at the fairgrounds. Here was the yearly routine as described by his daughter, Hilda.

“For 50-51 weeks a year the swing would stand in a far corner of the fairgrounds the chairs chained tightly against the pole. A couple of weeks before the picnic it would be brought to the middle of the fairgrounds. Daddy would tinker with the motor and get the fence sections (which surrounded the swing) repainted. On Thursday afternoon, when our store was closed or the Sunday before the picnic, daddy would take my brother and me with him to see if the swings were ready to go. I like to think he had checked it all over beforehand, but all I remember, is his putting Wayne on one side and me on the other for balance and starting up the engine for a test flight. After all, a father wouldn't put his own children on something that wasn't safe, would he?”

“On picnic day, Bill Morgan and Daddy took turns running the engine. After the fireworks nearly everyone but the square dancers went home, and we closed down the swing for another year.”

“Insurance was \$100 and some in the Civic Club argued we should get rid of this swing. But Daddy would argue that it served as a drawing attraction, and if it took in enough to pay the insurance, we should keep it. Every year we would make a little over \$100. The swing was saved for another year. “

Hilda added, “When I grew up, it occurred to me that if the tickets were ten cents, we would have had to sell a thousand tickets to make \$100. I thought I could hear my daddy laugh.”

On May 1979 Elmer passed away. He was 75 years old and still working a 10-hour day in his store. On the day of his funeral, John Meadows, the Postmaster ordered the flag at the Lucasville Post Office flown at a half mast "in honor of Elmer Pfleger's service to the people of Lucasville community."

Elmer Pfleger is a Lucasville legend.