

## Terry Olsen – Eastside/Westside Market - 1

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“Connecting with customers.” That’s what owner Terry Olsen likes best from working with the Eastside and Westside Markets in Manhattan. In 2016, this business is celebrating 40 years of providing “fine fruits, fresh veggies, and fast friendly service.” It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

Terry Olsen is the owner of Eastside and Westside Market. Her parents came from Wisconsin and she grew up in the family produce business. “My parents’ families got through the tough times of the depression by growing big gardens,” Terry said.

Her father, Leon Edmunds, took a plant pathology research position at Kansas State University in 1960. He and his wife brought their young and growing family to the city of Manhattan. “A friend let him put in a garden,” Terry said.

The garden was so productive that they could sell some of the produce. “We had a big St. Bernard named Bozo, and my dad built a cart that Bozo could pull door-to-door with us kids selling produce.” That was Terry’s introduction to produce marketing.

The business was so successful that Dr. Edmunds decided to expand. In 1967, he bought a place with a small greenhouse in the Kansas River valley. It was located near Manhattan on the road toward the rural neighborhood of Zeandale, which has a population of perhaps 30 people. Now, that’s rural.

In this rural setting, the Edmunds family started to build a greenhouse business. “My dad could grow the best bedding plants I ever saw,” Terry said. “My favorite part was retailing. My dad was a scientist and I listened to him explain about the plants to customers.”

Terry went to K-State and got married. Meanwhile, a couple of truck farmers in the Hunters Island area near Manhattan built a small roadside stand on the east side of town. They called it Eastside Market. “It was just a shack,” Terry said. While attending K-State, Terry worked for them selling produce in the summers beginning in 1974. After a couple of years, the owners decided they wanted to get out of the retail business. Terry and her sister Chris bought it.

In 1976, Terry and Chris opened Eastside Market as their own. “We were more successful than we thought,” Terry said. Their produce was great but the building was primitive. “It was a wood shed with two light bulbs and a phone,” Terry said. “We added up the prices on a paper sack.”

With high quality produce and excellent customer service, the business grew. “We had customers from the west side of town who wanted us to be closer to them,” Terry said. In 1981, she bought the old Dog & Suds and Rathskeller buildings on the west side of Manhattan and ultimately built a modern building that is now Westside Market. In 1987, she built a new modern building for Eastside Market as it is today.

“The new building meant we could become a year-round store,” Terry said. “It enabled us to do more with bedding plants, and now selling bedding plants is our biggest season. It’s a natural fit with the produce,” she said.

Terry Olsen has seen lots of changes through the years, but Eastside and Westside Markets continue to provide high quality fruits and vegetables. Terry gets products from local sources as she can and then seeks out the best produce in the region. “Our

customers know we have the best peaches on the planet,” Terry said. Her stores offer Kansas products, fruit baskets for local delivery, and gift boxes for shipment.

Most of all, Terry enjoys helping customers, just as her father did back in the day. She’s even served as President of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce. For more information, go to [www.eastsideandwestsidemarkets.com](http://www.eastsideandwestsidemarkets.com).

Connecting with customers. That’s a priority for Terry Olsen, who is celebrating 40 years of this remarkable business. We salute Terry and all those at Eastside and Westside Markets for making a difference with customer service while providing “fine fruits, fresh veggies, and fast friendly service” – even without a St. Bernard named Bozo.

And there’s more. Whatever happened to the family’s original greenhouse business? We’ll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.