

Carl Parcher – Richard Goble – South Haven LP and Service

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

"If you take care of the community, the community will take care of you." That type of philosophy is a guiding principle for two men who have worked together for more than 35 years to serve their community. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Carl Parcher and Richard Goble have worked together to serve South Haven's fuel supply and auto mechanics needs. Carl grew up just over the Kansas state line in Oklahoma. In 1981, he and a partner, Steve Kelle of Kelle Oil, purchased a propane supply business in South Haven. Two years later, they added a fuel supply business.

Richard Goble grew up in California. He was visiting family in Oklahoma and was offered the opportunity to work for Carl in the fuel and propane supply business. The two hit it off. "We have fun at our work," Carl said.

South Haven Service became the fuel supply source for the region. The two friends worked together through the ups and downs of gas prices and the economy.

Carl married Rena who recently retired as a grade school teacher at South Haven. Richard married Joyce who is from nearby Argonia. Through the years they raised their children and navigated lots of business changes.

In addition to their mobile fuel supply business, they operated a filling station in downtown South Haven. It was one of the last full service gas stations, where an attendant would pump your gas, clean your windshield, and check your tires. They finally had to discontinue the full service pumps due to tightened environmental regulations which caused them to relocate to a new site on the north side of town.

South Haven is located four miles from Interstate 35 near Oklahoma. The guys explored the idea of having a gas station next to the interstate.

"The consultant who prepared the business plan was saying, 'The money is out at the interstate. Get out of your old fashioned ways in that little town and move out to the interstate highway,'" Carl said. Instead, they decided to continue the gas station in town while building a convenience store and gas station at the interstate.

The interstate-area convenience store business grew until the state of Kansas raised the gas tax, which immediately placed them at a competitive disadvantage compared to competitors in Oklahoma. Then 9-11 hit, and travel fell by a third. Carl sold that business and was thankful that his core business had remained in South Haven.

Today, Carl continues South Haven LP, the fuel and propane supply and delivery part of the business. Richard bought the mechanic shop side of the business, known as South Haven Service. South Haven is a rural community of 363 people. Now, that's rural.

The two continue to work side by side. They have a lot of fun together.

“Back in the early days, if there were no customers at the gas station, we might go across the street to the park and play catch or throw a football around,” Carl said. “One time I went out for a long bomb and the ball hit me in the face, exploding my glasses,” he said. That would be a tough one to explain to your wife. “You did *what* while you were at work?!”

Commitment to the community underlies their business philosophy. “We love making people happy,” Carl said. “This is a great place to raise a family.”

“We’ve had students from the school come here and work for us,” Richard said. “It’s fun to watch them grow up. Some now have businesses of their own.”

“Get rich quick” is not their business plan. Instead, it is longterm commitment. “It’s a crockpot, not a microwave,” Richard said.

Jill Zimmerman, President of the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership program, is a native of the area. “They provide a great value, not just by being there on Main Street, but as great stewards of the community,” she said.

If you take care of the community, the community will take care of you. We commend Carl Parcher, Richard Goble and Steve Kelle for making a difference by applying that principle every day.

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