Clockmaker: 'I'll be working here until I die, then my kids get to clean up the mess'

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Judy Van Winkle, a rookie when the couple took over the family business, handles much of the administrative duties while installing watch batteries and stringing necklaces.

But the majority of Loop-Jacobsen's business comes from the repair of clocks by Frank Van Winkle, who estimates he's the last in his profession between Pacific County, Washington, and Tillamook.

Clocks come to the shop through word of mouth, often after someone inherits a family heirloom. He has worked on clocks dating to the 18th century, but mostly deals with pieces from the early to mid-1900s.

His backroom workshop, surrounded by the ticking of timepieces on the walls, includes a vast array of parts and miniature manufacturing machinery.

'There's family history with clocks," he said. "People want to get their clocks

The Van Winkles haven't pinned down the exact date of the store's original April opening, but plan to hold an anniversary event on April

Harold Schulz and John Jacobsen opened Schulz-Jacobsen Watchmakers & Jewelers on Exchange Street in 1919. Schulz was listed in the 1930 census as a jewelry store owner, while Jacobsen, a Norwegian immigrant, was referred to as a watchmaker.

Schulz was bought out of the business in 1932 by Harvey Loop, a former watchmaking instructor who had moved to Astoria in 1920, worked for a local jeweler and started his own store after the fire of 1922. He and Jacobsen ran the store together until Jacobsen's death in 1946.

Rip Van Winkle, Frank's father and a lieutenant with the Astoria Fire Department, came to work for Loop in 1952 as a clockmaker on his days off. The Van Winkles became associated with Loop while living in a mili-



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Frank Van Winkle went to work for his parents at Loop-Jacobsen Jewelers in 1982 and has owned the shop with his wife, Judy, since 1988.

tary housing complex at the Astoria Regional Airport, where Loop had become enamored with flying and earned a pilot's license in his

"I will die with my boots on," Loop, then 95, told The Daily Astorian in 1974. "I'd go insane without my work. I just couldn't stand it to do nothing."

Loop died two weeks shy of his 98th birthday in 1977. His daughter, Marlena, sold the business to Rip and Estel Van Winkle, who kept the Loop-Jacobsen name.

Frank Van Winkle had been working at an auto warehouse in Portland when his parents took over the store. He earned his watchmaking license in 1979, a year before the certification was no longer required. After the auto warehouse moved to Kansas, Frank Van Winkle, then 33, came to work for his parents in 1982.

"When I came to work for my dad, he was two years behind on clocks," he said.

Rip Van Winkle died in 1987, leaving Estel Van Winkle to run the store with her son. After she left on a church mission in the late 1980s, Frank and Judy Van Winkle took over the operation, located at 1360 Commercial St. since 1960.

Loop-Jacobsen is among the few Astoria businesses to hold a 100-year anniversary.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian Frank and Judy Van Winkle get some help from their nephew, Dewain Farner, a heavy equipment operator who likes to tinker with clocks on his off time.



The Daily Astorian

Harvey Loop was still repairing watches at Loop-Jacobsen Jewelers in 1974 at the age of 95. The business turns 100 years old this month.



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Judy Van Winkle, co-owner of Loop-Jacobsen Jewelers with her husband, Frank, handles the sales and ordering, along with minor repairs to wristwatches and the stringing of necklaces.

Knutsen Insurance, founded in 1918 by Martin Knutsen, is still owned by the family. Norwegian immigrant Sven Gimre in 1892 founded Gimre's Shoes, now run by his grandson, Pete Gimre. Next year will bring the 100th anniversary of Josephson's Smokehouse, a seafood shop started in 1920 by Anton Josephson. And Van Dusen Beverages bills itself as Oregon's oldest family business, established in 1849.

Like Loop, the Van Winkles plan to work in the shop as long as they're able. Their nephew, heavy equipment operator Dewain Farner, helps his uncle with clocks on his off time.

But Frank Van Winkle lacks an heir apparent or

the income to bring on an apprentice. Their three children, spread out across Oregon and Idaho, are uninterested in taking over. The couple — Frank, at 70, and Judy, at 65 — lack a retirement plan beyond Social Security.

The slow fade is a common refrain for some of the region's oldest businesses. The 106-year-old Home Baking Co. recently closed after the Tilander family wanted to retire. Lindstrom's Danish Maid Bakery, a staple for more than 90 years, closed after the co-owner and sole baker, John Lindstrom, fell ill and died.

"I'll be working here until I die, then my kids get to clean up the mess," Frank Van Winkle said.

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