

Downtown institution comes to an end with barber's retirement

Charles 'Chuck' Conklin operated his shop on Eighth St. for decades

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Charles "Chuck" Conklin ended an era in June when he closed the doors to "Chuck's Barber Shop" for the last time. Chuck owned the barbershop for over 55 years, but Conklin's legacy in Cottage Grove goes further back.

Conklin, 80, has been in Cottage Grove for the better part of 60 years, and has spent his entire life in the Lane County area. He has been a barber for over 55 years, and his hair-cutting/grooming career began after he served four years in the Navy as a clerk and a typist. After his service, Conklin moved to Creswell and did what many servicemen do — he used his G.I. Bill to go to school.

Conklin's interest in being a barber came from a close friend of his father, who also was a barber.

"My dad's friend, Ralph Boslow, owned a barbershop, and I said 'Well hell, I'll just do that,'" he said. So in 1959,



Chuck Conklin ran a classic barbershop on Eighth St. downtown until June.

he registered for school. After finishing school in, Conklin worked for Boslow and eventually bought the shop in 1962. Boslow died of cancer later that year. He also had a partner, Jim Carver, who worked with him from 1964 to 1971, but Carver eventually left the business to become a warehouseman. It wasn't until 1990 that it was renamed to "Chuck's Downtown Barber-shop" on Eighth St.

For 55 years, Conklin enjoyed his entire career as a barber, but in June of this year, had to retire to take care of his wife.

Conklin said he hasn't sold his building but has sold all of his equipment.

Chuck's was a quintessential old-school barbershop. Not many careers or small businesses last as long as Conklin's, and he always tried to maintain a conservative stance on how he ran his business. It was as classic a barbershop as any in the country, and Conklin even let people smoke inside.

"It definitely wasn't in accordance with state law, but we let people smoke in there all the time," Conklin said.

TRAIL

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an "at-grade" crossing meant to accommodate horseback riders, who had noted in the planning process that their horses would be shy about walking through a tunnel.

The second bicyclist fatality in a four-year span — that of former Cottage Grove High School counselor and South Lane School Board member Michele Portmann in 2011 — helped prompt the Bureau of Land Management, which oversees the Row River Trail, and Lane County, which manages Row River Road, to seek

a solution at the intersection. In 2007, cyclist Claude Weimer was killed at the intersection, where trail users had previously been forced to cross the road at a place of high traffic volume with motorists traveling at high speeds around a large curve.

The BLM subsequently applied for and received a \$1 million Federal Lands Access Program grant to build the undercrossing, which was approved after a round of public meetings in which other options, such as a bridge, were discussed. The 2011 fatality also prompted the formation of a Coalition for Bicycle Safety, which targeted improvements at the intersec-

tion and elsewhere on the trail, including Milepost 5.4, another intersection that brings trail users into conflict with fast-moving vehicles.

Sherwood-based Weitman Excavation has managed the construction project, which they said was subject to only a short delay when a piece of the box culvert that forms the tunnel under the road was broken in transit. McKinney said there is still electrical work and "close-out details" that need to be completed on the project, and the County hopes to hold a ribbon-cutting there to officially open the new tunnel in October.



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