

## Clark

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Why white jackets, in a job where grease and oil are ingredients as essential as flour and butter are to a baker?

Donna, 88, just laughs. "I don't know, with that kind of work," she said. "You couldn't get that kind of dirt out."

The origin of the jacket, if not its color, Donna can explain.

Jerry's connection to Clark Auto Electric actually spans well over half a century.

(Jerry, 86, whose health has diminished in recent months, lives at Memory Lane Care Homes in Baker City.)

In the summer of 1956, Jerry, then 21, started working for Harold Clark. Harold's father, Charlie Clark, started the business in 1930, living upstairs while running the shop below.

Harold Clark and his mechanics wore blue jackets, Donna said.

Uniforms, she said, were commonplace in many types of businesses in that era.

Attendants at service stations — when they actually provided many services, such as washing your window and checking your oil — wore uniforms.

Donna said her husband liked the jackets — "anything to keep their clothes clean," she said — and he maintained that tradition after the Goodwins bought Clark Auto Electric from Harold Clark on July 1, 1972.

"When he latches onto something he never lets go," Donna said of her husband.

She said they never considered doing anything else — not after buying an established business where Jerry already had 16 years of experience by 1972.

But with Jerry's health deteriorating over the past several months, Donna said there was no option but to sell Clark Auto Electric.

They hope to soon finalize the transfer of a business that was, as the Goodwins' daughter, Marie Guy, puts it, "part of the family."

When it's suggested that the repair shop, at the corner of Resort Street and Auburn Avenue, was something of a second home for the couple, Donna shakes her head and smiles. "More like a first home."

### Part of the family

Donna sits in the office, near the southwest corner of the building, where she has spent so many thousands of hours.

She watches a few desultory spring snowflakes float past on the morning of Thursday, April 14.

Marie, who is standing nearby with her husband, Kevin, gestures to the traffic rolling past on Main Street.

That, she recalls, was part of "The Gut." She remembers slinking down in her seat as her parents participated in that great Friday night ritual of small towns, her dad driving and her mom beside him, sharing a bottle of soda pop.

Donna laughs, as though she's surprised that her daughter would divulge that particular story among so many others.

"Now it all comes out," Donna said.

It's a small space, this office, maybe eight feet by five.

The desks are littered with papers — receipts, bills, invoices.

Conspicuous by its absence is a computer.

Donna, who has kept the books for Clark Auto Electric for half a century, doesn't use one.

Never has.

"You can see my computer system," she says with a grin as she sweeps a hand across the top of the desk.

Donna learned to keep the accounts from Harold Clark.

In 50 years she's never deviated from the system he taught her.

Nor did she ever contemplate, say, remodeling the office.

"It hasn't changed a bit," Donna said. "I just love that. If it isn't broke, don't fix it."

That constancy, that adherence to the ways that work and continue to work no matter the miracles that technology promises, permeates the Goodwins' story.

Marie, who owns a nursery near Gaston, south of Portland, with Kevin and their sons, Parker and Dalton, remembers that her dad's routine was as reliable as the finest Swiss watch.

He came home for lunch at 11:30 — the squeal of his brakes announcing his arrival.

After lunch he'd head back



Marie Guy, right, and her husband, Kevin, laugh while reminiscing at Clark Auto Electric on April 14, 2022. Marie is one of the three daughters of the business' longtime owners, Jerry and Donna Goodwin.

to the shop at noon, work until 5 or so, return home for dinner and then drive back to put in another five hours or so getting somebody's rig running.

The schedule might sound grueling, if not inconceivable, to anyone who hasn't devoted themselves to their business, their livelihood.

But Donna just shrugs at the idea that there was anything unusual.

"When you've got a small business you've got to work together or you don't make it," she said. "I was with him most of the time. I liked being with him."

Marie said her parents have always been a team.

"It wasn't just dad," she said, looking at her mom. "It was you and dad."

### 'He couldn't say no'

The stories are legion of Jerry Goodwin rescuing drivers stranded by a mechanical malady.

He never advertised, beyond having his number and address in the phone book.

Yet travelers who couldn't locate Baker City on a map seemed always to find their way to Clark Auto Electric.

No matter if it was midday or midnight.

"When people needed help he just couldn't say no," Donna said. "I can't say how many times he was out after dark on some highway, under a car."

"That was just dad," Marie said. "He is all about customer service."

Which meant a smile.

Always.

"He said always put on a smile for a customer," Marie said.

Given the stability of their business, it's not surprising that Clark Auto Electric had several employees who worked for the Goodwins for a goodly portion of the time they owned it.

Clayton Young's tenure was 35 years, Donna said, and there were a few others who stayed for 20 years or so.

The business generally had no more than five mechanics on staff, Donna said.

"Six, counting me," she said.

Although Donna didn't wield wrenches, she did often play a vital role in her husband's repairs.

Jerry is color blind.



Donna Goodwin looks at one of the jackets that her husband, Jerry, wore during the 50 years the couple has owned Clark Auto Electric.

For a mechanic whose jobs frequently involve splicing wires with various colors of insulation, that condition can be troublesome.

Donna said it wasn't uncommon for Jerry to call for her — sometimes when she was in the office, occasionally when she was home — to confirm which wire was, say, red.

More recently, Donna said Jerry Hansen, who has worked at Clark Auto Electric for several years, has been a great help as the Goodwins prepared to sell the business.

### A marriage of nearly 70 years

Donna, who grew up near Medical Springs, first noticed Jerry Goodwin when they were assigned to the same physics class at Baker High School.

She was a year ahead, graduating in 1952.

"He liked older women," Donna said with a smile.

Jerry's first job was with Kirkpatrick Motors, a Chevrolet dealership in Baker City.

He took the job with Clark Auto Electric two days before he turned 21.

"The rest is history," Donna said.

The couple were married that same year, 1956.

Jerry was a well-established employee by 1972, when Harold Clark sought to sell Clark Auto Electric.

Donna said that although Jerry "was the logical one" to take over the business, the couple had to ponder the decision.

"We had to sleep on that one," she said.

Once they actually owned the business, though, they

never seriously considered doing anything else.

The couple were happy to raise their three daughters — Marie, Gail, who lives in Wilsonville and has two sons, and Linda, who has passed away. The Goodwins were faithful spectators at Baker High School basketball games, although Jerry was called away once in a while to fix somebody's car.

The work, Donna said, was rewarding.

Not that Jerry ever sought any recognition.

"Jerry is a very humble person," she said. "He's not a talker."

Still and all, Donna said she has treasured the conversations she's had recently with longtime customers, some of whom, she said, were never brought

## A tribute to Jerry and Donna Goodwin

Editor's Note: This was written by Parker and Dalton Guy, two of the Goodwins' grandsons.

After 50 years of owning Clark Auto Electric, Jerry and Donna Goodwin have made the decision to close shop. Later this spring Clark Auto will change ownership and the Goodwins will leave a legacy of hard work, exceptional customer service and a building that will add to the historic nostalgia of Baker City.

On the corner of Resort Street and Auburn Avenue, Clark Auto Electric became the staple brick building back in 1930. Charlie Clark, while living upstairs, owned and operated the local shop, later selling to his son Harold in 1956. That summer, our grandfather Jerry Goodwin, at the age of 21, started his career in the automotive industry. It was in 1972 that Jerry and Donna Goodwin bought the business from Harold Clark, keeping its name and furthering its history.

With a half century's time comes too many memories to keep track of, as well as too many people to give the proper thank you to. With that, Jerry and Donna would like to thank the community of Baker City and Baker County and their vendors over the years. Their loyal customers from 1972 to present can't be thanked enough. All of you were devoted and dedicated customers. You all kept Jerry busy and Donna even busier taking care of Jerry! Our family can't thank you enough for your longtime business and support.

To the employees over the years: Thank you for all you've done. It takes a team to build a successful legacy and without the employees of Clark Auto over the years the continued success would not have been possible. Thank you to everyone for all you've done over the years!

The memories, the laughs and the relationships, those will never leave that historic building. Fifty years is a long time and it's an amazing accomplishment to have owned and operated a business for that long. Kudos to you, Grandpa and Grandma. Both of you did an amazing job keeping Charlie Clark's historic building and passion up and running for so many years. On behalf of the three daughters and their families, we would like to congratulate you on everything that you two have accomplished together. We love you guys!

The iconic Carter Carburetor Repairs neon sign might not light up ever again but the legacy and nostalgia on the corner of Resort and Auburn will always shine bright.

to tears when they learned the Goodwins are selling Clark Auto Electric.

Some left with a memento — a white jacket or an old part.

Marie said one customer planned to frame a receipt.

"It makes me feel good hearing that people think so much of him," Donna said. "It's nice."

### A lifetime's worth of knowledge and expertise

Ken Schuh of Baker City is one of the Goodwins' longtime customers.

Schuh, who dropped by Clark Auto Electric on Thursday, April 14, as Donna was reminiscing about the past half century, said he bought the paint for his first 1957 Chevrolet from Jerry.

"He had the skill," Schuh said. "We're losing so much experience. To watch him work..."

and here Schuh's voice trails off, as if he can't summon the words to describe Jerry's ability to diagnose and fix all manner of automotive ailments.

Spurred by Hansen, who is standing behind the front counter of the business, another area untainted by anything containing a hard drive, Schuh tells one of Jerry's more memorable tales over half a century of fixing cars.

Schuh didn't know exactly when it happened.

"Maybe 20 or 30 years ago, maybe longer," was the best he could offer.

The details, though, he recalls with precision, having heard the story more than once.

Jerry was working well after midnight, repairing a commercial truck.

When he finished, somewhere around 3 a.m., he handed the truck driver the bill.

The driver went outside and jumped in his truck. He returned with a pistol in his hand.

Jerry, thinking a robbery was afoot, was frightened.

But the driver quickly allayed his fear.

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### Roberta Jo Borders (Lee)

July 19, 1959 - March 25, 2022

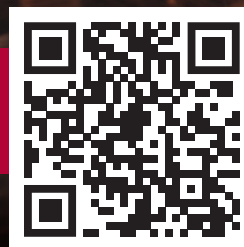
Robbie was born July 19, 1959, in Sandpoint, Idaho, to her parents Robert and Buddy Lee. She was the second born of five kids (Daphne, Robert, Charla and Rebecca). The family moved around throughout their childhood but settled down in Warren, Oregon, where she went on to graduated from Scappoose High School in 1977. While off in the world shining her light everywhere, she met and married Steve Fenter in 1985. They found their home in Columbia City, Oregon. Together they had two beautiful children, Breaune (Fenter) Rosen and Thomas Fenter, while also having the pleasure of raising her stepdaughter, Christy Fenter. Robbie then moved on to receive her associate's in science degree from Portland Community College. She went on to get remarried to Bob Borders in 1996. Robbie had continued her journey with God and took any path he led her which he eventually led her to the small town of Baker City, Oregon.

Robbie always had a love for children and her hands in substitution, children's ministry, special education, and lastly becoming an elementary school teacher at Harvest Christian Academy. She continued on in life sharing her light, her love for God, music, dancing, and thrill seeking (skydiving on 56th birthday). Robbie became a grandmother, rather known as Ma-Maw! Abel Rosen was born in 2013 and became her pride and joy! She loved reading, playing piano, and having Nerf gun wars with Abel as well as going to the beach. Robbie will always be remembered for her shining light and that beautiful smile she always had on her face. This beautiful, and free angel is now dancing in the sky and will be deeply missed by many!



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