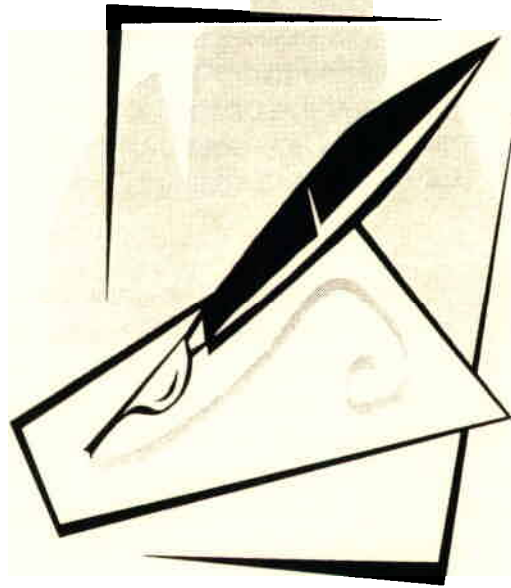


Potpourri



WITHOUT SCHOOL - BLIZZARD OF 77

Some people don't remember the winter of '77 here in Ohio when the weather was so bad that we had to have "Schools Without School." All over Ohio, schools were closed that winter because of the blizzard that was sweeping across Ohio at the beginning of that year.

I remember how it rained real hard all week, and then the temperature dropped down so fast that the rain was freezing. It was so cold that all of the streets were frozen solid. Then it started to snow real bad...so bad you couldn't see outside. My nephew and I watched the news that night to see if the schools were going to be closed the next day. They were closed that next day too! I'm telling you, the weather was bad all over the state of Ohio, not just in Columbus... I mean all over the state.

We stayed out of school a few days until they opened back up again. Because the blizzard had done so much damage to the roads, to people's homes, and to the electricity, businesses and schools were closed. Because of the power outages, a lot of schools stayed closed in Ohio. Here in Columbus, the school board got together and came up with a plan for the public schools. Because of this decision, it was possible for me to continue my education. I was in junior high school that year, and I was bused to school. Because of the heating problems, we were bused to the nearest high school. This was like clockwork every day for a couple of months. At that time of winter, kids really didn't want to go to school, but the parents were very supportive of the decision. I didn't know then, but I understand now that the decision was for the better. The school board knew that "a mind was a terrible thing to waste!"

-Guy Bridgeforth

KEEPING OLD CHINESE CUSTOMS IN OHIO

I've lived in Columbus, Ohio, for over a half century. I came from China. I still follow Chinese customs of cooking special dishes and pastries to celebrate our New Year. It's the same as Americans cooking sauerkraut and pork. (In Ohio, people eat certain foods on New Year's Day to bring good luck, prosperity, health, etc.) We put oranges and tangerines on the table for good luck, and we make a fried round pastry with sweet rice flour to represent how the family is always together. All of the customs have a good meaning. If your children live in the same town, everyone comes home to eat the New Year dinner. It's the same for Christmas.

The Columbus Chinese Christian Church organized a senior group a few years ago. Our seniors celebrated the Chinese New Year on Saturday, February 16th. Every senior was greeting each other with, "Happy New Year," and "have good health!"

The program chose two people to talk about the old history of the Chinese New Year in China. I was one of them. I talked about New Year's unusual customs in our village. I married my husband, Gim Jay in 1948. His village had a rather unfavorable custom. Every January 1st to 15th, at any time, the children intruded into the new brides' houses and threw firecrackers around the floor of the bride. The children went crazy!! They didn't care about you. They scared everybody. They waited until my husband wasn't home.

I was hiding in the bedroom most of the time, but one day my father-in-law tried to give my husband a new marriage name. (That was an old Chinese custom.) He asked me to come out to discuss the new name's meaning. I just walked out into the living room. I was there not too long, when more than fifteen children and women intruded into our house. All of them threw many big firecrackers at my feet. I was scared to death!! My father-in-law spread both his arms to protect me. I was hiding behind his back. When he turned around, I followed him and turned around too. When I saw my father's side of the family come in, I flung onto them and cried badly. They thought my mother-in-law or my husband had treated me not so nice.

Later some of the women told me that when my husband was a kid, he was one of the stronger ones throwing the firecrackers. That's why they came to my house, but it was not my fault. That's why the people took revenge on me. After the senior program at church, we were all laughing. We were all enjoying delicate pastries and tea. Everyone was so happy!

-Jan Jay

THE OLYMPIC TORCH

On January 2, 2002, my mom, my cousin Tammy and I were scheduled to return to our GED classes after the holiday break, but classes were canceled because there was no heat in the building. So we decided to drive around Columbus. We stopped off and picked up my older brother, then went out to the shopping center on Morse Road. After going from store to store, we decided to go to Ryan's Steakhouse for lunch.

After lunch, I made a wrong turn on Cleveland Avenue and had to turn around. We ended up on Cleveland and Route 161. We saw crowds standing on the street, so we pulled over to see what was going on. We found out the Olympic Torch was coming our way. We decided to stay, because my older brother had never seen the torch before. I had seen the torch from the Summer Olympics in 1996, when it had gone down West Broad Street.

As we stood there, a vendor came through selling commemorative T-shirts for \$10 a piece. The shirt had a list of all the places the torch would be going through on the back, so I bought one. A Coke truck drove by. It was passing out free bottles of Coke to commemorate the 2002 Winter Olympics. Then, another truck drove by passing out pennant shaped flags. "I saw the flame" was written on them. About fifteen minutes later, the torch runner came through. It was an awesome sight.

About half an hour later, the torch runner came back towards us to meet his ride. I called him over to see if I could get his autograph. As I handed him a paper and pen, he asked if I would like to hold the torch.

He handed me the torch. There are no words to describe the feeling I felt just holding the torch. It was truly mind blowing. I guess the only thing I can compare it to is my wedding. Each was a memorable day, almost like a dream— one that I never wanted to wake up from. Both days we took lots of pictures.

Long after he walked away, I was still excited. I just couldn't stop talking about it. I left Cleveland Avenue and Route 161 with a commemorative T-shirt, commemorative bottle of Coke, a pennant, pictures, and a great memory of holding the 2002 Olympic Torch.

-Margaret Carter

THE HISTORY OF THE FLXIBLE

Hugo H. Young, who operated a motorcycle sales agency in Mansfield, Ohio, was also an inventor. He would take an idea and develop it into a marketable product. In 1912, he had invented a flexible connection that attached the sidecar to the motorcycle. Flxible Company was incorporated in 1914 and went into full production of the sidecars on North Spring Street in Loudonville, Ohio. Sales expanded so rapidly that Flxible needed to expand, building a new and larger building in 1916.

After World War I, sidecar sales started to decline, and losses in 1923 and 1924 amounted to \$39,000. With sales being \$211,000, Flxible needed to do something soon, so in 1924, Flxible Company started experimenting on bus bodies and buses. Bus production started as they built the first 12-passenger bus on a Studebaker chassis and delivered it to E.L. Harter, who started a bus line from Ashland, Ohio, to Mt. Vernon, Ohio. As Flxible started production of buses, things were going well; however, in 1925, they began the building of funeral cars and ambulances. In 1927, the U.S. Navy became a regular customer for the buying of ambulances.

As the economy slowed down in 1930, the worst years of the Depression were hurting the bus business, but they escalated the sales of hearses and ambulances. The building of ambulances and hearses kept Flxible afloat until World War II when it joined the war effort in building plane parts and frames and rudders for Goodyear blimps. It also served as a subcontractor to build trailers for Fruehauf Corporation.

After the war, the demand for buses grew. Ambulance and hearse building was discontinued in 1964. At this time bus production started to pick up; buses were being made for special uses and people -- such as the Ohio Department of Health, Mobil X-ray Units, prison buses, and the Harlem Globe Trotters.

From 1944 to 1949, Flxible sold 251 coaches to Canada, and from 1950 to 1954, it exported 106 buses to Mexico and 40 to Brazil. In 1954 to 1970, Flxible again redesigned the coach, making it longer and higher. Not only cities like New York and Chicago wanted this new bus called the Hi-Level, but so did celebrities such as Antoine "Fats" Domino, Elvis Presley, the Blackwood Brothers Quartet and the Statesmen Quartet.

In 1970, Flxible merged with Rohr Corporation. Orders began to drop again, going up slightly in 1976. Then, in 1976 Grumman Corporation bought out Rohr Corporation and designed a new bus called the "870." The market started to rise, especially in 1980 when approximately 2,000 coaches were built.

Grumman Corporation was having some inner corporation problems and decided to sell in 1982 to General Automotive. Things went fairly well for a while, but then in the latter part of 1982 to 1995 orders averaged from 500 to 1,000 coaches, which caused the laying off of employees. General Automotive Corporation filed bankruptcy June 5, 1996. The company had been done in by front office management and not by the market because employees left with a back load of 1,500 buses yet to build.

Summary of my own personal experience and feelings:

Writing this essay was exciting for me because I was an employee from April 30, 1968 to June 5, 1996. We were still building the Hi-Level as well as other inner city buses. I worked on the floor crew, laying the flooring in the buses. After a few years, I became a metal shear operator for almost ten years. Then, changing the pace, I became an inspector of parts, and later I ran a radial drill and spot welder. As most of us were old timers, we were one big happy family. We all had about the same amount of time or more in. Things were great until General Automotive Corporation took over. G.A.C. had passed out T-shirts saying, "It's a new ball game." How true it was.

Soon there were voluntary layoffs two weeks at a time. This went on for two or three months. Then, the layoffs started to be permanent, keeping only a few of us to run parts. We had a lot of pride in our work and did the best we could even though we weren't sure of our jobs. They were telling us it would get better, and we hoped – until June 5, 1996, when the company told us it was over. We were all devastated; some had tears in their eyes. It was like we lost our family. We all had hopes of it starting back up. Two years went by. Jobs were hard to come by at our age, but we had to try. Some of us found jobs, and some didn't, but with family and friends we did survive.

Alan Mellor

Ebert, Robert R., Ph.D. (2001). Flxible: a history of the bus and the company. Yellow Springs, OH: Antique Power, Inc.

There is a Flxible bus rally in Loudonville every other year. The two pictures below are of buses that came to the 2001 Bus Rally. The restaurant in the photos is owned by Alan and Mary Mellor.



This Flxible bus is a 1967 Flxible Starliner owned by Tom and Dianne Reed of Ashland, Ohio. It is preserved as a seat bus.



This bus is a Flxible 1969 inner-city bus. Ralph and Joanne Cline own this bus, which they have converted into a very nice motor home.

THE BLIZZARD OF 1978

I am from Lima, Ohio. I came here, to Columbus, Ohio, in 1986. I worked at Ohio State University for five years. I left and went to Illinois to help my mom out and then came back to Columbus, Ohio, by train and worked as a parking lot attendant. The pay was \$2.35 an hour. I had been there for 10 hours in 1978, when the storm hit. Only the employees showed up to work. I had been there for three hours then everyone had gone home after that. I had to work from 2 a.m. until 10 p.m. I only had one-hour rest then I went back to work. I also got one week with pay. It was a parking lot you could get to off of Broad or High Street. The parking lot office was at 50 West Broad Street on floor 93, from Tower Parking before the bank at Broad and High was built.

My bosses were Dick Robinson and John Moore. They called my house at 2 a.m. and told me to get ready to work all day. We also had the hospital walks and the garage to plow the snow away. It had been cold outside. I walked from First and High to Broad Street. My address was 73 First Ave. and my rent was \$175.00 a month. I did not have an electric bill only a phone bill. The telephone was only \$35.00. The smallest bill was \$32.50. I lived in the Short North for about nine years and then I moved to the Westside. Then I moved back to the Short North at 140 Warren Street and then to 142 ½ Warren Street. I also moved on Innis Road Apt 213.

The storm was just like 1978, a bad year for me. No buses were running; you had to walk or stay home and stay warm. I had a girlfriend, and she asked me to stay home with her. My friends, Al and Paula Parson were in Columbus in 1978 and could not get home that year. I've known them for about 15 years, so I had the keys to their house and to their store. They trust me. I took care of their pets, Kelly, Cleo, and Garb, the cat. I took care of the house and "This or That" store, warehouse and also the Rec. I also take care of the mail and stayed for weeks at a time. I had fun doing that.

-Jerry Stroble

MY EXPERIENCES IN HIGH SCHOOL IN THE PHILIPPINES AND OHIO

First of all, I love to play music, and I really enjoy it. Because of that, music destroyed my studies. You know why? In my younger days, at sixteen years old, I was already performing in clubs, bars, and some outdoor parties back in the Philippines. I never thought about coming back to school anymore because I thought those days would last forever, traveling from place to place with some old and new friends, and girls.

Then it happened that one lady got a crush on me as a young stage performer, and guess what...she was a chemical engineer! She was a little bit older than me, but she was fine! I felt ashamed or that something was missing in my life. I just didn't feel comfortable when I was with her. The second lady that I met was a college graduate. At that time, I started to realize that I needed to go back to high school, but how? I was ashamed to go back to high school because my former classmates were already in the second year of college at that time, and I was too old to study in the high school again.

The good news is that when I came to this great nation, the USA, I found hope, freedom, and most of all my future. I am studying at the North Education Center in Columbus, Ohio, for my GED under Mrs. Carole Smithers, at a school that really helps everyone in need regardless of age, religion, or the color of your skin. So now, to my friends, I would say, "It's not too late!" We might be slow, but we will get there. And thanks to the United States of America and Ohio, for I found my future and my hope!

-Jimmy Siglos