

Beckman Motor Co. — An adventure in Auto Sales

One of the earliest documents in existence provides evidence that founder Charles W. Beckman sold a new 1914 Ford Model “T” to Mr.

Oscar F. Habegger.

Originally located in a small garage at 426 Brownsville Road, Mr. Beckman expanded his business by establishing several automobile dealerships throughout the borough of Mt. Oliver and the city of Pittsburgh.

The first dealership, Beckman Chevrolet, had its salesroom located at Hays and Penn Avenue. During that same period, he also operated an Oakland-Pontiac dealership at 317 Brownsville Road.

In 1936, Mr. Beckman became franchised to handle the Chrysler/Plymouth cars. That dealership was located at 327 Brownsville Road and was followed by a Dodge/Plymouth dealership at Hays and Ormsby Avenue.

During the late 1930’s, Mr. Beckman’s two teenaged sons, Charles and Albert, began working in the automobile business under their father’s capable guidance. Both young men learned the automobile business from the grease pit right up to the business management desk.

“I have many fond memories of ‘chasing parts’ in a brand-new 1937 Plymouth pick-up truck, which was quite similar to Point Spring’s 1936 Dodge Express — the one that has a single fender lamp,” says Albert Beckman, Sr., now president of Beckman Motor Co. Inc.

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“The year was 1938, and I had just turned 16,” he wistfully recalls. “What could be more exciting to a young fellow than a brand new truck? I outfitted that toy with painted-on, white-side wall tires; curb-scratchers; two front fender lamps; and a firewall-mounted eight-tube radio, includ-



Above: The present day storefront of Beckman Motor Co. Below: The show room of Beckman Motors Co. in the 1930’s.



ing a cowl antenna with a tied-on foxtail. Did I mention the nifty chrome exhaust pipe extension? For some reason, this is where the memories of those parts runs to the East Liberty/Oakland area begin to kick in.”

Visualizing himself leaving Mt. Oliver

and going down 18th Street to Carson Street, Albert’s memories of long-ago Pittsburgh landmarks bring him “across the rickety, old Birmingham Street Bridge, then right onto Forbes,” he reminisces. “I would continue up the street, past the old Forbes baseball field and the Carnegie Museum.

And when I got up as far as the entrance walk to Carnegie Tech, I made a left onto Northwood.”

His destination could have been the R.E. Loughney De Soto building, or the McKinley Gregg Auto Company (Dodge), both of which were on Centre Avenue; or the Chrysler Pittsburgh building on Baum Boulevard. “Whichever one — or more — it was for certain that I was in for a long wait,” he says.

Albert has fond memories of doing business back then with Point Spring Co. “When my last stop called for parts pick-up at Point Spring, it was always a pleasure,” he says, noting that he always thought the company had a long future ahead of it.

“Your longevity in business does not come as a surprise to me,” says Albert in response to hearing that Point Spring is celebrating its 80th year. “I knew it would happen all the way back in 1938.”

Charles and Albert were influenced by their father’s many lifetime interests. Each of the boys had their first airplane ride in 1928. Albert recalls that the flight was in an open cockpit Waco bi-plane that their dad flew from the old Bettis Airport. In the mid-30s, Mr. Beckman flew a tri-motored Ford on sightseeing flights from what was then the brand-new Allegheny County Airport.



Mechanics at Beckman Motor Co. fine tune the latest vehicles.

World War II caused the only interruption in this ongoing family business. Charles, who had graduated from Carnegie Tech as an aeronautical engineer, became a commissioned officer in the Army Air Force and was stationed with the Air Force Transport in Alaska. Albert enlisted in the service and was assigned duty as a pre-flight instructor at Keesler Field, Biloxi Mississippi.

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— Albert Beckman, Sr.

When both boys returned from serving their country, they actively re-entered the automobile business. Charles and Albert signed a franchise agreement with Nash Kelvinator, and the dealership opened in early 1946 under the name Chalbert Motor Co.

The sales and service building was located on Penn Avenue in Mt. Oliver, recalls longtime family friend and employee Charles Stewart. “Charles managed the Nash dealership while Albert managed his father’s Chrysler/Plymouth dealership directly across the street,” says Stewart, noting that Chalbert

was disbanded in the early 1950’s. “They took over the Chrysler dealership full-time in the early 50’s.”

Stewart was hired on April 1, 1968, almost 38 years ago. “I was a neighbor of the Beckmans, and I went to school with Albert’s daughters,” he says. “I went into the military, and when I came home, I bought a new car. Shortly after that, Albert asked me to come on board and helped out a little on warranty administration. I thought that would be a short stint, but I’m still here. We still live in the same Baldwin neighborhood, and we’re still great friends.” Charles lives in Mt. Oliver.

Currently approaching its 100th year, the third generation of Beckman family members are actively engaged in the business on a daily basis. Three of Albert’s children; Susan, Albert, Jr. and Darlane (Dee) share major responsibilities.

Recalling Point Spring’s prompt, courteous service back in the day, Albert notes that Point Spring continues to uphold their down-home way of doing business. “[There were always] friendly people working at the counter and always an offer to call ‘home’ to see if additional items were needed,” he remembers.

“These are folks with the right attitude,” says Albert. “Congratulations to the great team that has kept Point Spring moving forward for the past 80 years.”

NEW CAR ORDER
 DEALER'S NAME *Chalbert Motor Co.* DATE *7-3-41*

PLEASE ENTER MY ORDER FOR ONE

MAKE <i>Plym</i>	MODEL <i>P-12</i>	TYPE <i>408-</i>
MOTOR NO.	SERIAL NO.	TO BE DELIVERED

CASH DELIVERED PRICE	907.00
EXTRA EQUIPMENT <i>Air frame</i>	5.00
<i>deduct</i>	
<i>12.50</i>	<i>plaster</i>
TAX	
TOTAL DELIVERED PRICE	907.00

DEPOSIT ON ORDER		
USED CAR ALLOWANCE \$	57.00	
LESS: BAL. DUE ON MY CAR \$	12.50	
CASH ON DELIVERY	P.T.	
RECORD OF CAR TRADED IN		
MAKE	YEAR	TOTAL CREDIT
		57.00
MOTOR NO.	TYPE	FINANCE DUE
SERIAL NO.	MODEL	862.50
		AMOUNT OF CONTRACT

TO BE PAID IN PAYMENTS OF \$... EACH

I certify that I am 21 years of age or over, that the car I am trading in is my property and free from all encumbrances whatsoever, except balance due as noted above. This order is not valid unless signed and accepted by an officer of this Company and purchaser's credit has been O.K.'d by Finance Company as to any deferred balance.

BUYER'S SIGNATURE *George Egan Jr.* ADDRESS *1000 1/2 Penn Ave* PHONE *4-1111*

ACCEPTED *[Signature]* SALESMAN

(DEALER'S SIGNATURE)

N-1085 MERCHANTS INDUSTRIES, INC., BELLEFONTAINE, OHIO

A New Car Order from 1941. The total delivered price is \$907.00