

Rull Bros, Inc., Celebrates 70 Years of Service

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BUNKER HILL - As more and more economic transactions are occurring online or by mail, and retail stores of all sizes are closing, Rull Bros. is a perfect reminder of why and how a family-owned business is important to the American landscape.

“In many ways, my brother, Steve, and I still run Rull Bros like my dad and mom did 70 years ago, respecting and understanding our customers, being there day or night when problems occur and thanking the customer for their business on a daily basis,” Stan Rull says. Stan serves as Company President running Rull Bros’ operations, while Steve serves behind the scenes handling the financial side of the business including price and supply management.

Chester and Dorothy Rull, founders of Rull Bros Propane (originally called Bunker Hill Propane), purchased Jacoby Hardware from Al Jacoby in 1949 for Chester’s tractor and one-row corn picker, and they immediately changed the name to Rull Hardware. Chester and Dorothy quickly gained a reputation for treating customers and employees as family. That reputation still exists today. Steve and Stan and their sisters, Carla and Kris, all grew up around the store in Bunker Hill where they each spent time working in the store and propane company.

Today, Rull Bros has grown from a small hardware store that sold propane to a propane retail distributor with seven employees and two locations – Bunker Hill in Macoupin County and Hardin in Calhoun County. The company delivers propane to customers primarily in Calhoun, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin and Madison counties in Southwestern Illinois.

More and more households are choosing the convenience, efficiency and reliability of propane energy, and Rull Bros has seen propane usage change over the years. Recreational use – especially outdoor kitchens, fire pits, portable heaters and recreational vehicles – is much more common these days. Residential heating continues to be Rull Bros' primary customer base, but they also service agricultural customers, restaurants, churches, municipalities, forklifts and temporary heating solutions. With continued efficiencies in furnaces, heaters and engines, the average residential customer uses about one half the propane consumption today compared to that same residence forty or fifty years ago.

Understanding why propane is such a popular energy choice these days begins with understanding the gas itself. Just one gallon of liquid propane expands to 270 gallons of propane vapor which is how propane is burned as a fuel. The compact nature of propane makes it completely portable. It can be transported anywhere needed. Additionally, propane is extremely environmentally friendly—burning clean with no environmental issues as compared to most other fuels.

As an example of the portability of propane gas, Rull Bros is moving its Calhoun bulk storage to another location on higher ground due to the Illinois River flooding this past month and a half. “When a company exists for 70 years, natural disasters or other types of adversity are likely to occur a time or two,” Stan Rull explains. “Mom and Dad purchased Jacoby Hardware about six months after the 1948 tornado with some of the inventory still in salvage condition. In 1993, our Hardin location survived one of the largest historical floods, and now again in 2019, we are dealing with another flood just a foot or so below 1993 levels. Our experience from 1993 has proven invaluable in working through similar conditions now. We are moving our bulk storage from a flood plain site to higher ground in Calhoun County. We also have temporary storage available to ensure our propane supply this fall, similar to 1993. Through both the current and 1993 floods, a day did not go by without our attention to customer needs during this difficult period.”

Such customer-focused service relationships are the key to the success Rull Bros has had for the past 70 years. Dorothy and Chester always donated their equipment, service and gas to community-based events such as church socials, fire department fish fries, picnics, and other local organizations. That tradition continues today. Besides long-time customers, this anniversary celebrates some long-time employees. In fact, Stan credits

Rull Bros' excellent employees when discussing the company's longevity. "We consider our employees part of our larger family. Their loyalty, work ethic and customer service are unsurpassed." Many in the community know Rull Bros through its employees, and Stan doesn't take that for granted. "We thank them and the others before them for their efforts," Stan says. "Currently, Dave Mize and Joe Schulte, our service managers at Bunker Hill and Hardin, respectively, have been with Rull Bros for over 35 years. Larry Kulp, our deliveryman in Hardin, and Roxanne Foster, our office manager in Bunker Hill, have been with the company for 25 years or more. Andrea Eilermann, our office manager in Hardin, has been with us for 10 years. Bill Klopmeier, deliveryman in Bunker Hill, just celebrated his 5-year anniversary while Gary Franklin, Bunker Hill deliveryman, is our newest employee joining us last fall."

Chester and Dorothy retired in 1984 after 35 years turning over the day-to-day reins to Stan and the back office to Steve. So, this 70th anniversary year is also the brothers' 35th anniversary.

All of the Rull Bros officers and employees enjoy serving their customers and their communities and will continue staying connected to the families, businesses and organizations that have been loyal customers for the past 70 years. To celebrate this 70th anniversary, Rull Bros has contests, giveaways and promotions planned throughout the next year. The celebrations kicked off with the launch of the Rull Bros Facebook page last week. The first 70 customers to like and share the page received a commemorative stainless-steel tumbler. Watch for more promotions on Facebook, rullbros.com, and at local festivals and events. As always, Rull Bros welcomes new and old customers to stop in one of the offices to catch up or visit with the deliverymen at propane tank fills. It's the relationships that make Rull Bros more than just a propane company.

For more information on Rull Bros and its 70th Anniversary, contact Stan Rull at 618-585-4484.



