

THE BELLE PLAINE

ANNOUN

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George Preston Pumps Gas For 60 Years

George Preston, Belle Plaine businessman and promoter, has been selling gasoline on Thirteenth street for 60 years, as of March 1.

When Preston started selling Red Crown gas, the price was 6.6 cents per gallon, with a penny federal tax and three cents state tax for a total of 10.6 cents per gallon. Candy bars at the station were going for a penny apiece.

The 74-year-old Preston started at the station with his four brothers when he was 14. Their father, a railroad man, bought it as a business venture for them for \$100. At that time, the building was located north of Belle Plaine on the hill where the water tower now sits. It cost the Prestons \$25 to move it to its present location, a move made when the highway route was changed.

Preston's 66 was once a bus stop for Belle Plaine, too, with the Big Four buses stopping for service here between Chicago and Omaha. Three of the 12-passenger coaches went through every week.

The serviceman is known in Belle Plaine for his antique collections. He is a member and past-president of the Fly

Wheel Antique Club and runs a free-of-charge museum at the station. He predicts the antique show at Franklin park for the Fourth of July will be bigger than ever.

The station he runs is the longest operating business along the Lincoln highway, a name used to describe the first cross-continental highway from New York to California. (The highway, named in honor of Abraham Lincoln, was traveled by Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower as part of the First Army Transcontinental Motor Convoy "for purposes of proving the practicability of motorized truck transportation and demonstrating the need for national highways," according to The Palimpsest.)

Preston expressed his gratitude to the people of Belle Plaine for all they've done for him over the past 60 years. The septuagenarian is still in business, though he admits to taking it a little easy. "I don't stay open in the evenings no more and I don't open in the mornings too early," he said. Nonetheless, he is available should anyone want to go through the museum or stop and talk about Belle Plaine's past.