

Shorty Hamidy

“Don’t let him quit that store, it’s part of his life.”

Shorty Hamidy, an honest hard working man, has labored all of his life. His success is the result of his growing up with good guidance from his parents. An eighth grade education, and further involvement in business as a worker, has helped him discover success from “good hard work!”

“My folks came to Oak Creek in 1909. My dad was a carpenter and also worked at the Juniper Coal Company, which is not in existence now. In 1911, the rest of the family, two brothers, three sisters and myself moved to Oak Creek. I was born in Wilsenburg, Colorado, in 1903, and I have been here in Colorado since.

“Growing up in Oak Creek in the early days was great! I’d like to go through it again, I liked it better in Oak Creek then, than I do now. But, I was younger then too. My dad also ran a grocery store, and I worked there during the strike at the coal company. We all had to work to pay off the debts.

“I used to do a lot of skiing. I used to jump in the contests in Steamboat, when I was in my teens. Quite a few of the old timers were professionals. Howelsen was the one who the jump hill was named after. All of the kids used to follow him around. He was the king as far as we were concerned. We used to have a lot of fun on

By Kellie Shockley

that hill!

We made a lot of our skis instead of buying them. I’ve got a pair hanging up on the wall, that are similar to the ones we used then. Sometimes we would come over the hill on our feet, and sometimes we would land somewhere else! We had to take our skis off and put them over our shoulders and back up the hill. We didn’t ride; there was nothing to ride. After about three or four trips up and down the hill, we had just about had it!

“I did a lot of cane pole fishing too, when I was growing up. We used cane poles or a piece of string on a stick. I caught more fish then, and there wasn’t as much pressure as there is now. That makes a difference. We were able to pick our spots. Now there is “No Trespassing” signs all over. I still go up in the high country (in the forest) as much as I can.”

It wasn’t just all fun back in the early days. Everybody had to go to school, even if it was for just a few years. “I started in the 6th grade, it must have been about 60 years ago. The school was near the old Juniper Mine. It was a one room school house. Then I went to school in Oak Creek for a long time. I had to quit in the eight grade to

go to work. I worked 15 years at the lumber yard, which taught me more about the world, than school ever had.

"I used to work at the mine, and I was a hoist engineer. I worked under ground, but that's all I really ever did down there. I believe that I got paid \$2.98 a day. There was a strike in 1927; I was helping an electrician up at the mine then."

After the strike was over, Hamidy traveled around the country doing some work in Pennsylvania and California. Moving back to Oak Creek in the spring of '28, he went to work for the Ball Lumber Company. In 1937, when the owners passed away, he took over the lumber yard until 1944, when he opened his own store. 1937 was a big year for Hamidy. He took on the responsibility of running the lumber yard and got married.

"My wife was a school teacher. Before, she worked at the Denver Post, under Major Bonfils. She was his private secretary before she came up here to teach school. I met her when she came here to teach school. She stayed out on a ranch with Ed Rich. He was in the state legislation in Denver for a while. She stayed there and resumed her teaching.

One time, we were over on the skating pond. We began skating together and before we knew it we were going together. We went to shows and dances and things like that. We finally developed something special, and it has been that way ever since.

"My wife is a homebody, I've never seen a woman enjoy her home as much as she does. Usually school teachers don't like to cook very much but she loves to cook. Sometimes she overdoes it a little bit.

"My wife and I had a home in Denver, it was the home that Lowell Thomas used to own. We sold it about five years ago. Some of my antiques were owned by Mr. Thomas. My wife's health hasn't been very good for years, and it isn't very good now. So when she'd stay in the house in Denver I would go up there every two weeks to see her and during the summer she came up here. Finally we found a doctor that could help her to stay up here during the winters."

"I played in the orchestra known as 'The Moonlight Serenaders.' We played all over the county. Eric Hudson, (he's with the police department in Steamboat) was also in it. Eric, Harvey, and I are the only ones left of the 'Serenaders'. We used to have a barrel of fun, playing for the dances. We played the 'The Red Room'. One of our first big places was, when they built the American Legion Hut in Steamboat. We played the opening dance of the hall. We also played at the hut, when they burnt up the mortgage. It was a six piece orchestra. I played saxophone and drums. Margret C., used to play



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the piano for us. Hitchcums also used to be one of our piano players. He was a piano player. We usually got paid around 10 dollars a night, but we enjoyed it. We enjoyed playing for dances and dancing. Of course, we had our special dance. It was called the 'Moonlight Waltz'. It was kinda crazy to the older people, seeing us kids do it. Like it is now, with some of the dances that the kids do. Lawrence Welk is our type of music. That's the kind of music we used to play, and dance to. There were a lot of rough elements here, but we all had a good time. If we wanted to do something we'd go out and do it. When we would have dances or hayrides, we'd stay out all night and get home with the sun the next morning."

Shorty talked about the old days. "I'd still like to do it again. I'm 77 years old and I don't think I'll ever see that again. We had a good time in a different way. We didn't have automobiles to run around in. We would put them up on jacks in the fall, and we wouldn't see them until spring.

"There were 13 saloons in Oak Creek at one time. There were quite a few mines here. Each

mine employed quite a few men, two hundred to four hundred men at one time. There was quite a bit of money here then. But, production isn't as high as it is now with all the mechanical instruments used. The Victory American Mine had four to six boxcars full of coal a day. That was a big run.

"I was in the Keyston Coal Company where Hayden is now. The people who owned the mine shut it down, so we went in and pooled some money and got it back on it's feet. It operated for three years. But then we lost the money that we had put into it. We kept men on about three or four years. Now in the modern mechanized mines, they produce 50 times as much coal in a day as we would produce. With only 40 to 50 men, whereas we would need three or 400 men. The mining companies are buying up all the ranches around here to keep them closed for future development of their mine.

"When we used to go hunting, we didn't have to go out and bump into someone behind a tree. We could go out and have some of the hill to ourselves. I started collecting animal heads when I would go hunting. I'm still doing it; it is kind of a hobby. I have a lot of people who want to buy some of them, but they aren't for sale. I bought the bear head. The elk head was killed on Soda Creek in Steamboat by Marion Rosig. It was the 13th biggest elk in the United States. He asked me if he could put the head in my store, and I said sure! It has been there ever since. After Marion died, he owed me a bill, so the head remained in my store as a payoff on the bill. I have buffalo heads and a few antelope heads, an albino deer head, and an eagle, and all kinds of stuffed animals.

"I don't go deer hunting anymore. It used to be quite a thrill to prepare for deer and elk season. But now I just can't get out like I used to. We used to go antelope hunting in Wyoming. One year we went down, and I shot maybe 125 rounds at the antelope before the law of averages finally caught up with one.

"I've fished all my life. I love to fish. The biggest fish I have caught was a four pounder. That's when I was with the boy scouts. Allen Basin (reservoir) has been my favorite place for the last few years. But this year I haven't caught but maybe a dozen fish. From September to October the fishing gets better.

Most of the hunters that come into the store want to buy ammunition. We have also had quite a few license sales.

"I think if I had a hobby, I would sell the store. But as long as I am physically able to run the store, I will. Like the doctor told my wife, don't let him quit that store, that is a part of his life. My wife comes first, and the store comes second, that's just the way it is. It just keeps me busy. I've enjoyed good health most of my life, thank the good Lord for that. But, this store has a lot to do with it.

"My business had been pretty much normal until the last four or five years. Ever since it's just gone skyhigh. I used to have refrigerators, and quit handling them. When I opened the store, it was during the war years. Back then, I didn't have to worry about selling anything. The big thing was getting merchandise to sell. When I first came in here, I was hustling for business. If anyone wanted a refrigerator, I'd go to see them. I don't do that anymore.

The animal heads in Hamidy's store.





"13th largest elk in the U.S."

"I have quite a few people charging things, and I've been quite fortunate with people around here. But when Stagecoach started, I helped a lot of those fellows get tools, and so many of them left. I got caught holding the sack. I had to just cut down on my credit business. I still have a lot on my books, five to seven thousand dollars."

Because of Hamidy's way of thinking, he really has a deep feeling for the world in general. "I've got people who don't pay their bill because they have had a little sickness or something. I say, Well, just say, I'm sorry Shorty, I can't give you anything this month. I tell them to let me know that they haven't forgotten to pay their bill. I'll go along with it. I don't push anybody. Then, I see the guys down at the bar, spending my money on whisky, and I don't like it. They ought to be paying their bill.

"I was able to come in here and start my own store and make a success of it. There was never a time when I didn't make a nice living. I went through the worst years down at the lumber yard during the early 30's.

"I believe that another depression is near, because things can't keep going like they are now. I had some people do some work around my house, and the carpentry was 19 dollars an hour. Older people can't afford these high prices especially when they are on a retired or fixed income. They are the people that really hurt in times like these. But I don't really see how we are going to miss having another depression. I

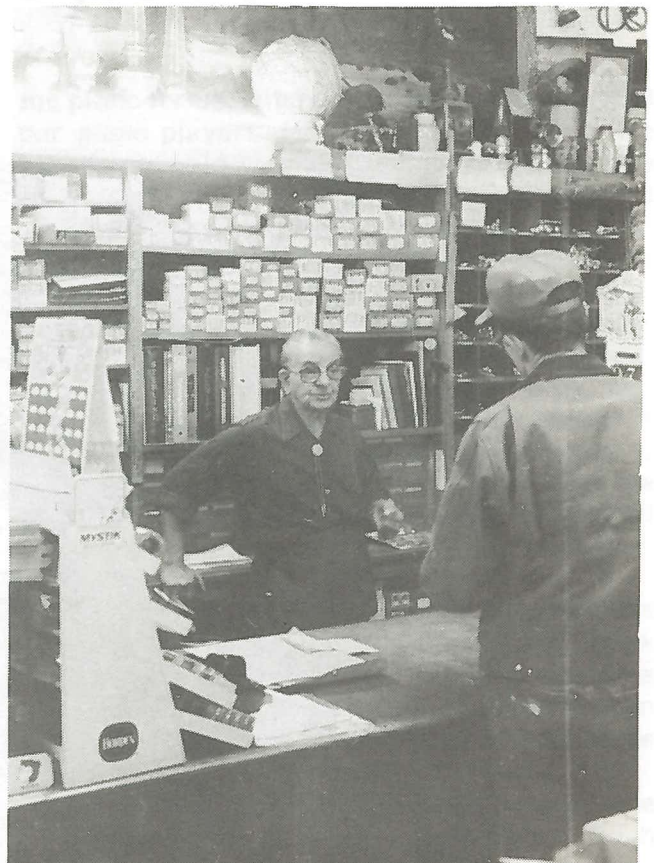
don't know if I will see it, but I going to be here for a long time, no doubt. I'm shooting for 100! If I am still able at that time, I will still be working in the store."

Mr. Hamidy mentioned that he never had an anniversary in his store. He felt that his prices were fair and reasonable. He usually keeps his prices lower than most of the other hardware stores. "I've never had any sales because of my low prices. I usually don't have the retail price on the items in my store. I have a reasonable mark up. I've always had enough business to live well, but I've never wanted to get rich, but I think that the retail price is good for advertising. I've seen a lot of people get into trouble in business, but I've never seen anyone get into trouble for making more money.

"One time the superintendent of schools came down to the store and wanted me to reduce the prices for the school. I told him my price was right, and I didn't see any sense in that. He wanted a deal, to give the school a discount. I told him, I would give the school a discount, if he would reduce his wages. That way we could both save money for the school. Well, that didn't go over very well.

"I almost got into a fight another day. A fellow came into the store who wanted some money for his watch. He started cussing me and started to come over the counter after me. About that time, Bill Scott walked in, and the guy took off running.

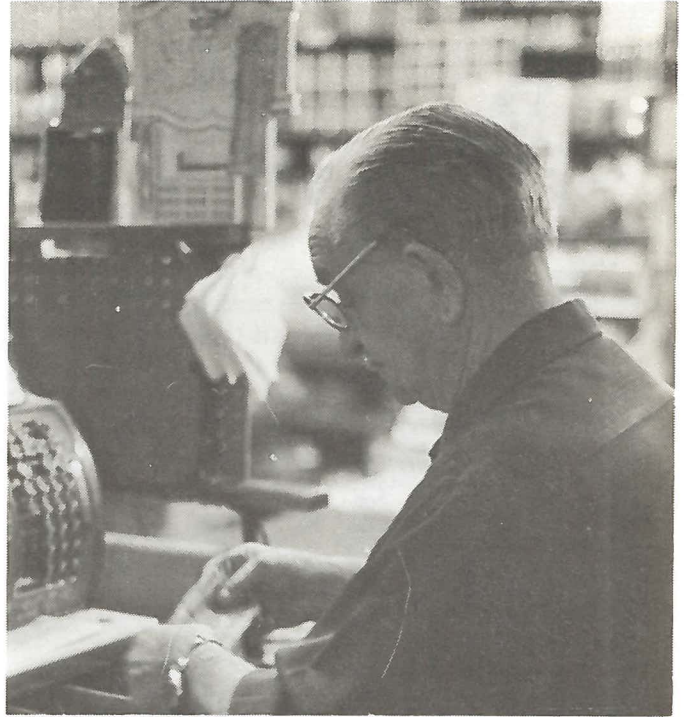
Shorty at work.



That is as close as we got to having a fight in this store.

"Another day a man came into sell me some rifles. I looked at them closely and recognized them as being my stolen guns. I checked out the serial numbers, and they matched up. I called the police, and we went to find the boys that sold them to the man. We found them in school, but because they didn't have any police records, I decided not to press charges. I made them work off their debt. A few years ago, one of the boys came in to see me. He said that what I had done had taught him a good lesson, one that he would remember till he died."

As I talked to Hamidy, I realized that this man had experienced a lot since childhood, from sleeping in tents when they first moved to Oak Creek, to running a lumber yard and a store. Nevertheless, he has come through the hard times with a smile on his face and as good understanding of people around him. For this reason, he has survived with a great deal of success.



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