

James Elmo Tuttle—Class of 1965



As I sit in my home office watching the snow lightly fall outside my window, I am drawn back to Waitsburg in the late 1950s and '60s. How enchanting downtown was at Thanksgiving and Christmas. The lights of Main Street, reflecting off the wet street and in the fresh snow, light streaming from windows of the businesses. How safe we felt at that time and how warm and nurturing the community seemed. As a product of this great little city, I feel compelled to express my appreciation for the environment in which I grew up. If I have been successful, honest and committed to a high ethical standard, I must attribute the acquisition of those qualities to Waitsburg and the people who lived there and to my parents who raised me. Waitsburg has changed much from those days and like most small towns in the U. S.,

sadly, the downtown area appears to be different from it's former self.

There were so many teachers and business owners who served as mentors and models of behavior. First, were Herman and Kenneth Golhman of Golhman's Grocery, I can still hear Herman's laugh and see Kenneth slicing meat at the back of the store. Harold and Ben Bloor, of Bloors Market cut up all of the cattle we butchered. E.B. Lee gave me my first haircut and countless haircuts after that. Further, Howard and Agnes Packer, of Packer's Dry Goods, were also memorable, as my mother would only buy clothing at Packers. At the Waitsburg Hardware store, Miles Brunton and Howard (Red) Davis were important role models. To this day, I can remember the smell of the store and I visit there each time I come home. Ernest and Dorothy Kison of Kison's Jewelry, served as another source of good advice. I don't think there were many, if any, adults that we didn't know and respect. These people were small town business owners who were successful, thoughtful and nurturing people. I believe we were truly blessed to have grown up in Waitsburg. Further, we were successful because we did grow up in Waitsburg. Count yourselves lucky to have been a product of such a wonderful village. One huge advantage in growing up in a rural environment is that you always have work. I had to work all year long as we had many livestock that needed attention. Milking was done, eggs were gathered and hay hauled and chopped. In the summer, I worked in wheat harvest for Lowell and Jim Burris, Bill Zuger (for a short time) and my Dad. I hauled pea hay and worked in pea harvest for Hollis Hawks. I don't think there is a

better way to instill a positive work ethic and teach financial responsibility than through the jobs we had as kids.

My biological father (Elmo Tuttle) had a blacksmith shop in Dixie before moving his shop to Waitsburg. I know it was after 1930, because my sister Joyce was born in Dawson Creek, BC in 1930 and Elmo was a ranch manager there at that time. I also know that they lived in Waitsburg before 1942 since Joyce had Mrs. Jenson for 6th grade, just as those in my class did. My parents were well established and my father owned the blacksmith shop in town when I was born in 1947. At the time of his death in 1954, my father was heavily involved in Waitsburg activities including the city council and school board, as well as the Commercial Club.

In August of 1957 my mother married Ralph Danielson, a local rancher who had never been married before. I cannot think of a more wonderful gift that my mother could have given me. From that day forward he was my Dad. He was kind, strict, successful, funny, honest, ethical and a great parent. He was and still is my hero. If I am honest and ethical, it is because of the values he instilled in me. I believe also that at the time I grew up in Waitsburg, every business owner was honest and ethical. My honesty and success in life resulted from the environment my Dad and the people who surrounded me provided during these formative years.

I began school in Waitsburg by attending a kindergarten run by Mrs. Moore, whose classes were held in the basement of the high school. I attended both grade and high school in Waitsburg with the exception of ½ of third grade and all of 5th grade, which I spent in Spokane with my sister and brother-in-law and their children. My favorite teacher in grade school was Mrs. Aleta Combs. In my opinion, she was the best first grade teacher in the state and quite possibly in the entire nation. She got all of us who had her as a teacher off to a great start. My favorite high school teacher was George Fisher, the Ag teacher. He was knowledgeable, entertaining and really cared about educating his students. I learned much from him about electrical wiring and especially about working with metal, such as how to use a forge and to temper steel. I must say though, the most useful class, was Mrs. Fisher's typing class. I owe her a special thanks, since that skill was paramount in my chosen profession(s). Even today, I am still an excellent touch typist.

Before graduation from high school in 1965 I hadn't really decided what I wanted to study in college. My brother-in-law, Lloyd Beckley, also a Waitsburg High School graduate, my dad and I toured Spokane Community College. As we walked by a glassed in "computer class room." Lloyd pointed to the computer behind the glass and stated "now that is the future". Then I applied and was accepted into the "Data Processing" major at SCC. After graduation in March 1967, I enrolled at Whitworth College. Before I could complete my studies there, I was drafted. I was fortunate to be able to enlist in the Navy where I could continue working in my field and extend my education. However, that action postponed my Whitworth graduation until 1969.

While in the Navy, I was a substitute 5th grade math teacher in San Jose, California, and then in early 1969 the Navy decided to send me to San Diego to teach programming and operations at a United States Navy Training Center (USNTC). While there, the Univac Education Institute contacted the computer school at USNTC seeking an instructor who was or could be licensed by the state to teach at their facility. I was asked if I would be willing to work two teaching positions and I was. I spent 3 years at

USNTC and two years at Univac Education Institute. However, after my discharge from the Navy in 1971, there were very few if any teaching positions to be had in San Diego and I decided to come back to Walla Walla County and look for work there. I had married while in San Diego and had not yet met my new parents-in-law who lived in Boulder, Colorado. Three days after getting to Boulder, I was teaching computer science at Midwest Business Colleges in Boulder where I stayed for one year. I worked a number of programmer and programmer/analyst jobs until 1976 when I went to work for Burlington Northern Railroad as a clerk in the Denver yard offices. I was interviewed by Information Services managers who wanted me to go to headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota, as a programmer/analyst. I asked to be left alone for two years to learn the railroad from the ground up and they agreed. However, two years later they came calling and I was transferred to headquarters in St. Paul. I had the good fortune to work on a new project with other programmers, all of whom had come up through the ranks and knew the railroad very well. We built and installed a yard office management system and then began installing it in major BN railyards across the system. As a clerk in Denver, I worked as a "crew caller", and assembled crews for local and road trips. This was a manual operation, which was made to order for computerization. I began designing an automated system to call crews and in 1982 and prepared a business plan which would support an automated crew management project. Our system was the first fully automated crew management system implemented and was so successful that it paid for itself in three months instead of one year as stated in my business plan. That automated plan, after many upgrades, has become a railroad industry standard.

I left BN in 1987 and began teaching at Wang Laboratories, a midrange computer manufacturer. I was with Wang Labs for a year before being recruited by IBM in 1988 to manage IBM customer's program conversions from Wang Labs, Univac and IBM mainframes to IBM's new midrange product called the AS400. In 1992 the conversion centers were dissolved by IBM and I joined an IBM subsidiary, which eventually became IBM Global Services. This service managed teams of technicians who analyzed customer's Information Services departments for outsourcing. From that point until my retirement in 2005, my teams signed 17 billion dollars of outsourcing business for IBM. In 2006, IBM asked me to return for a special project. I continued working on this project until 2008 when I finally retired permanently.

My early environment in Waitsburg, and my association with people I believed were honest and successful, led to my success in life after Waitsburg. The most important influence of all was my Dad, as he epitomized everything good about Waitsburg and he was everything I ever wanted to be.



