

Luther J. Kuder
History dictated August 22, 1978

I am Luther J. Kuder, born in Greenville at the start of the 20th century. Lived here until 1908, left here coming back in 1915. While here I went to 6th grade in school, leaving here went to Sugar Grove Seminary where I remained for four years and then attended one year at Otterbein College and in the Fall of 1915 returned to Greenville and entered Thiel College as a sophomore. I remained there until the fall of 1917, when I enlisted in the U. S. Army and found myself a few months later in France in the Balloon Corps. - Observation Balloon. I remained in France for approximately 19 months and returned to Greenville in May of 1919. At that time I gained employment in the U. S. Post Office for the magnificent sum of \$85.00 per month.

Remained there until 1921 when I entered the insurance business with Stanley A. Gillespie Agency and remained there until 1933. In 1933, on April 10 to be exact, I went into business for myself representing the Travelers Insurance Company, and a few years later several other companies and have been thus far in business for myself for 45 years. During that time I became involved in the Chamber of Commerce, coaching athletics at Thiel, playing professional basketball and a lot of tennis and things like that.

Margaret Kuder was and is a Greenville girl. Her maiden name was Peg Hawes, born and raised here. We were married 44 years ago September 27, 1934. We have a son Jon Kuder, actually Luther J. Kuder, Jr. Born on April 22, 1937. He's in business with me now and runs the business. We have gone along as well as we could with time dealing rather gently with us.

Years passed along and in 1942 Camp Reynolds came into being or was it 1941, in any event, I found myself Insurance Advisor to the Army during the construction and I remained with the Army when they moved in their first troops. I saw it activated and I saw it de-activated.

Fortunately I was here and saw Camp Reynolds built and I saw the first troops come in. As a matter of fact we had a large segment of Rommel's Afrika Corps here and it was my pleasure sometimes to visit those people in the stockade. We kept them in the stockade and they were a very decent bunch of people.

It was interesting to see them go out in the morning on a work detail. They marched out in formation in the morning singing and come back the same way, always in formation and always singing and always happy to be here. They did not want to be sent back under Russian dominance, and unfortunately I think that happened to a lot of them, they went back into the part of Germany that was dominated by Russia.

I saw mud at the time this place was originally named Camp Shenango. They had to change the name as they brought troops in too early, the streets were just filled with mud. They weren't completed or anything else. It got such a bad reputation, they had to change the name to Camp Reynolds. The name Reynolds came from a Civil War General that was killed at Gettysburg and that is where it got its name. We had a modern hospital here that cost about three million dollars in itself. It was a fine installation.

It was interesting to see Greenville. We opened over 750 homes to soldiers and their wives who came here. This was a port of embarkation and when they went overseas. It was interesting to see one of the funny incidents. This was Train #5 on the Erie, those of you who are old enough to remember passenger trains, the young ones don't know what a passenger train is but we had passenger trains in those days.

Every morning at 9 o'clock Train #5 would discharge a group of soldiers, generally with a bunch of MP's with them and they were soldiers who would have left here about a day or two before enroute to POE at New York or another

location. They would have gone AWOL, over the hill, and one of the funny things they did, a lot of them would get their teeth fixed with new denture, etc., which they had to have before they could go overseas. Enroute to the POE, point of embarkation, they would throw these dentures out the window which meant that when they were checked over before they shipped overseas, they were without their teeth and they would have to ship them back in a day or two you would see them returning on Train #5 to get their teeth fixed up again. Sure enough they would get them fixed up and they would back two or three times because they had thrown their teeth away while on the train.

I watched thousands of them leave here. One of the distressing sights I recall was that I would pick the wives up at the Riverside Hotel and places like that when I was coming down here and as their husbands or sweethearts would be marching down A street to the railroad, those poor souls would be running along with their husbands, dragging along knowing that several thousand of them would never come back. It is estimated that about one quarter of a million troops went through here. I don't know what the casualty rate was, but it was pretty high.

They left as I recall, December 9, 1944 or thereabouts. At that time, active with the Chamber of Commerce we were wondering whether or not for sometime to build a building, we thought that we might be able to entice someone to come here and be able to produce jobs. We were looking for the growth of Greenville proper.

All at once in our own backyard, as Dr. Russell Conwell once said, "Acres of diamond sometimes are in your own backyard." We woke up to the fact that here was an Army camp that cost the Army several millions of dollars with everything in it. A sewer system, water system, highways, railroads, everything was right in our own backyard and all it needed was someone to develop it.

Si Moss, Jess Dart and myself along later with the help of Norman P. Mortensen, took over and decided the opportunity was ours, if we could only develop what was here. We proceeded to try and purchase it from the General Services Administration and with the help of the late Congressman Carroll D. Kearns, we were able to consummate a purchase roughly of \$56,900, I believe to be the exact figure.

Acquiring this land was an interesting thing. Mr. Mortensen and Mr. Dart did a yeoman's job there. They had the patience of Job. Of course, everybody's land had been bought by the Government and then the Government turned it back to them. It was up to them whether they wanted to sell it or not. To see what Mr. Mortensen and Mr. Dart went through in getting the land we have now, was really a masterful job.

One afternoon I think Mr. Mortensen turned into a babysitter while Mr. Dart had the father and mother out in the kitchen trying to get them to sign a contract. What they did, they did well and we succeeded and finally acquired all the land that we needed. We still have quite a lot of land available for industrial sights.

At that time we approached Westinghouse with the idea that we had some warehouse space and they took several thousands of square feet from us and paid us rent in advance to enable us, those of us who had put our money into it to start, to get our money back. Actually Westinghouse was the maker of Reynolds. Without Westinghouse it never would have come into being.

Once we got started, they later took additional space which enabled us to procure more land with which to build more buildings, etc. It has been a pyramiding thing from that day on. Down through the years we have had difficulties, troubles, of course, nothing is ever accomplished without work and troubles. We have been able to surmount them and today we have 23 industries,

employing between 1,200 and 1,500 people in the area and approximately 2,000/3,000 people living in homes that have been built here.

We have walked the highways and the by-ways, we have walked the peaks and the valleys, but Reynolds stands here, I think, as a memorial primarily to people as Si Moss and Jess Dart and the others that had the vision to bring this into being.

Back about 1950 and before that, Mr. Dart and Mr. Mortensen, were trying to run this and it was too much. We realized that we needed an Engineer. Through Gannett Fleming Corrdry & Carpenter, Inc., the company who layed out Reynolds in its beginning, I called Don Carpenter and asked if he had an Engineer that he could send out to us on a part-time basis. He said he did and in 1950, about June I believe, Robert B. Parker, Jr. was sent here. We kept him for a year or two and about that time we closed a long term lease with Westinghouse which enabled us to approach him with the idea of becoming a permanent employee. We did and he came with us permanently a year or so later and remained with us until his death in 1977.

The water and sewer was an interesting story. The Government owned it and we realized that if we were going to develop the land, etc. we had to have water and sewer. We got together with Mr. Dart, Mr. Moss, Mr. Mortensen and our Attorney Archie C. Voohries and went to Cincinnati, Ohio to buy those facilities. They cost the government three or four million dollars and on the way down we decided we could afford to offer not more than \$35,000. Fortunately when we got there we met a person who was very considerate and knew Greenville and as we sat down, he said to save your time and mine, if you are here to buy the sewer and water companies for your information there is one price and one price alone. There is no use of your dickering. The price is \$13,550 - we, to say the word, were non-plused and that was far less than we had anticipated on

paying, but we let on that we were quite subdued with the offer to see if could get them to consider a little bit less. But, he said as I said in the beginning there is one price and that is it. What do you want to do with it, we reluctantly said, "we'll buy it."

We purchased it, and with Mr. Parker coming in who was an Engineer of sewer and water in his own right, we took over and developed those companies. Of course, in developing those it has cost us a lot of money. I said in the beginning we have to have the sewer and the water. We had an installation that was put in by the Army that was to last five years and it is now operating better than 30 years later. You can realize the terrific expense we have had in maintaining these lines and putting in new equipment, etc. With the advent of housing and all the people living here, it has really been a problem and cost a great deal of money.

With rate increases recently we have been able to get, we hope that we can see the end of the tunnel with the water company and finally get it where we can at least break even. We have subsidized both the water and sewer companies for approximately one million dollars to date.

I believe the Army left a cadre to operate the facilities because there were some things here they wanted and as I recall the water and disposal plants ran until we took over and then put our own people into the operation. As I look back at it, I think the Lord smiled gently as we went along and then finally Bob Parker came into being and from that time on we were on sounder basis.

The construction of homes started after we took over the water and sewer. Si Moss and Dick Neff were the two that were responsible for the first houses built up above 10th street on what was known as A Street. They put in several houses and that was the start of the home building in Reynolds. From that time

on, we decided to develop lots and the demand kept increasing and to this day people are still building new homes in the area but it was later by far when we took over the sewer and water.

We tried everything to get industry here. The backbone of Reynolds as I said before was the advent of Westinghouse and if it was not for them Reynolds would not exist. They rented enough space from us and give us enough income that we could complete and serve the area and with the additional money that we had, enabled us to buy additional land. It was then in our search for new industries that we just kept trying and trying, got this one and that one and to this date we are still working at it constantly.

To show one of the problems, back in those days, Jess Dart, Si Moss and I went to New York and got a list of 5,500 manufactures east of the Mississippi River. We prepared and sent what we thought was a fine folder which showed the advantages of Reynolds: The sewer, water, high power, gas, railroads, highways, everything and probably the greatest water supply in northwest Pennsylvania. We sent those 5,500 folders out and to our utter amazement, I think we got two or three inquiries, none of which developed into industry.

When we took over the area there was a little independent telephone company operating completely separate from us with antiquated equipment. They had a few subscribers, nothing that they could do about it because they didn't have enough income to do much. With the advent of Mr. Parker he became interested in the telephone company and we decided that it might be well, in order to keep him here, for him to acquire controlling interest in the telephone company. This was done back about 1950, through there sometime. He acquired that and of course started and re-vitalized the company.

The company now has the most modern equipment of any telephone company in this part of the country. It is a successful operation now being managed and

operated by his widow, Hazel L. Parker.

The office which is our headquarters now, was designed and built by Mr. Parker several years ago. We had a make-shift office when he first came here. Through his ingenuity and planning we finally built a modern office along the First National Bank of Mercer County who built a drive-in at that time which enabled us, actually got us enough money to build something like this. One of our big problems has always been money. We are leasing properties, buying properties, selling properties but are never able to accumulate any money. The minute we accumulate any money somebody comes along and wants a new building, we get started with a new building. We don't stand still, you don't stand still today in anything, you either go up or down and were trying constantly to move forward.

We have a nucleus of small plants, which I prefer to see. A big plant coming in here would ruin everything we have. We don't have the facilities, the sewer, water, schools, hospitals and everything else. I would much rather prefer, as far as I am concerned personally, a nucleus of small plants 10 to 50 or 100 to 200 people. I think now in industry the trend is now away from the big plants. Westinghouse Electric Company whom I know and with whom I have been very close, have told me that never again will they build a plant that will employ more than 1,500 people. It seems that they are too big and too unwieldy to handle. We still have the facilities for everything, we have housing, modern school system, everything. We probably have the best water supply in Northwestern Pennsylvania and northeastern United States.

The big problem, industrially speaking, is the taxes in Pennsylvania. We are close to Ohio and we have contacted everybody down through the years that has had any interest in coming here. For example, Ford Motor Company, General Motors and those others have told us they would come close as they could get, as

long as they didn't cross the state line into Pennsylvania. The taxes in Pennsylvania have been a deterrent for any industrial expansion.

We are part of the Chamber of Commerce. We report to the Chamber of Commerce and we are governed now by five Trustees. Clyde S. Uber, Quentin M. Gosser, Thomas W. Hodge, Norman P. Mortensen and myself. Should something ever happen and the Chamber of Commerce go out of business, of these holdings which are now worth approximately three million dollars or more, one-half would go to Greenville Hospital and one-half to Thiel College.

We are a non-profit operation. The Trustees as mentioned above, the five of us, serve without compensation of any kind whatsoever and have never been paid in any way nor do we intend ever to be paid any compensation. We are working for the benefit of this area, particularly the community in which we live and hope and try to serve so well.

Why this site was picked, to start with it is overnight to the Atlantic seaboard. Now with the advent of the highways 79 and 80, the Youngstown Airport 25 miles away, we feel that we have everything to offer. Then Greenville itself with its recreational program, splendid school system, churches, college, a year round recreational facility, we just say, Greenville you are certainly a splendid place to live and we invite you to come and look at us.

In closing I want to pay tribute to the people that have helped Reynolds be what it is today. The people who have worked here down through the years. We have had probably the most loyal staff of people that anyone could have.

Mr. Parker, as far as I am concerned, Reynolds is a living memorial to one of the greatest persons who ever lived. He will long be remembered for the contribution he made to the development of this area.

When the going got tough, the tough got going, they were here to meet any emergency that happened. A tribute not only to those of us who have been responsible for the development of Reynolds, but to themselves as well.