

The NEWS Photo, Joe Young

Ray Gross, on duty at his old-time service station near Daleville.

Drive Into Ray's Marathon And Fill Up On Nostalgia

By JOE YOUNG
Staff Reporter

DALEVILLE, Ind. — It looks like a filling station right out of the 1930s because that's exactly what it is.

Ray Gross, 46, is the operator of this one-man Marathon service station built in 1937 on Ind. 67 outside Daleville.

With the exception of the prices, the station is basically the same as it was then.

With its well and outdoor plumbing, it has survived the Great Depression, World War II gas rationing, gas shortages and the Blizzard of '77.

It is believed to be one of the oldest continuously-operated Marathon stations in America.

It is one of several stations Marathon — at one time Linco — built in the 1930s. It may be the only one surviving.

Gross, who has operated the station the last 15 years, says it used to be open seven days a week.

Now he is open Monday through Saturday, 5:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. He sells gas and oil with a few other items — milk, bread, soft drinks, cigarettes and chewing tobacco.

CB Buddies

The walls of the small wooden building are lined with snapshots of CB radio enthusiasts, many of them

truckers. Gross has a CB set and helps pass the "slow time" talking on his radio.

Most of his Marathon business is by credit card. Many of the other items are bought by local residents and truckers.

Some of the truckers he chats with stop by for chewing tobacco and cigarettes.

Youngsters, and even a few oldsters, are amazed at the "one-holer" outhouse and the pump which brings fresh, cool water into the small wooden-frame building.

Occasionally, Gross will help someone by fixing a flat tire, but his oldtime filler-upper is no competition for the nearby modern service stations.

In fact, Gross does not know how much longer his one-man operation will continue.

Marathon has installed modern pumps, but about everything else at the station is about the same as it always has been.

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Gross given award for 'faithful service'

By **DEBORAH LUCAS**

H-B staff writer

For the past 20 years, Loyd Raymond "Mick" Gross has dispensed information, kind words and gasoline from his service station in Daleville.

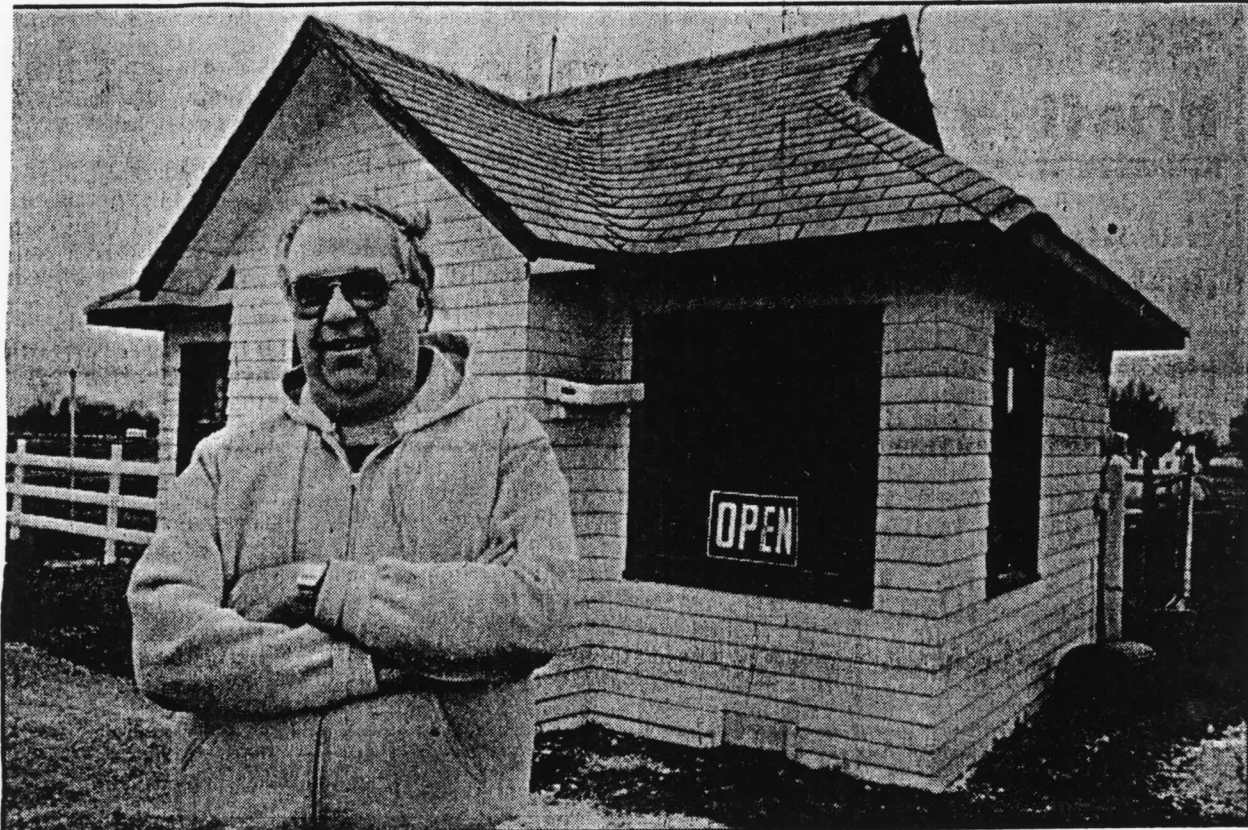
Gross recently was presented with a plaque acknowledging his "20 years of faithful service to the community" during a surprise ceremony at his station at Ind. 67 and Walnut Street.

Gross, 49, said he has simply carried on a tradition that began when the station was opened 50 years ago.

"I really appreciate it," Gross said. "I really didn't know anything was going on. It was really a very nice thing for them to do."

The station, which Gross said is known locally as the "Daleville Information Station," has been a gathering place for local residents since it was opened in November 1937 to coincide with the opening of Ind. 67. A "liar's bench," part of the station's original equipment, still stands inside the tiny structure.

The building's owner, Martin Davis, said the station



Lloyd Gross, who operates a small service station in Daleville, stands near the business recently. Gross was honored for his "faithful service" to the community.

Front line

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was the only stop for gasoline between Anderson and Muncie at the time of its opening. Davis' brother-in-law, Alva Betteron, managed the station until Gross assumed the position in 1967.

Gross said the loyalty of local customers and travelers who stop in every year on vacation trips has helped keep the station open despite its small size and the number of larger stations along the highway.

Former Daleville residents often stop in to visit with Gross on trips home, he said.

Although the original gas pumps were replaced about seven years ago, the station's water still comes from the Pitcher No. 2

hand pump inside, Gross said.

Another piece of original equipment — the "government regulation" outhouse — also remains in operation.

"Not very many people use it now," Gross said. "And nobody uses it in the winter time. It's one of only two still standing in Daleville."

Another historical item, a can of tire patches, remains in the station's display case and has drawn comments from the curious for 50 years. Gross said the can, which still holds all its patches and a tube of glue, is not for sale.

"We also used to have a pot-bellied stove, but it cracked, and we had to get gas put in about seven years ago," Gross said. "I

really hated to get rid of that stove. I could heat the station all winter for \$40 — that's two tons of coal — now it costs that much a month."

Gross said he has considered leaving the station over the years.

"I keep thinking I'm going to quit, but I like it here," he said. "I thought about quitting a couple of years ago but the kids said, 'You can't do that, it wouldn't be the same if you left.'"

"But we just about weren't here," Gross added. "The station was hit by a car last summer and shoved two inches off the foundation. But we pushed it back. I guess they gave me the award for keeping the station open and making it for at least 50 years."