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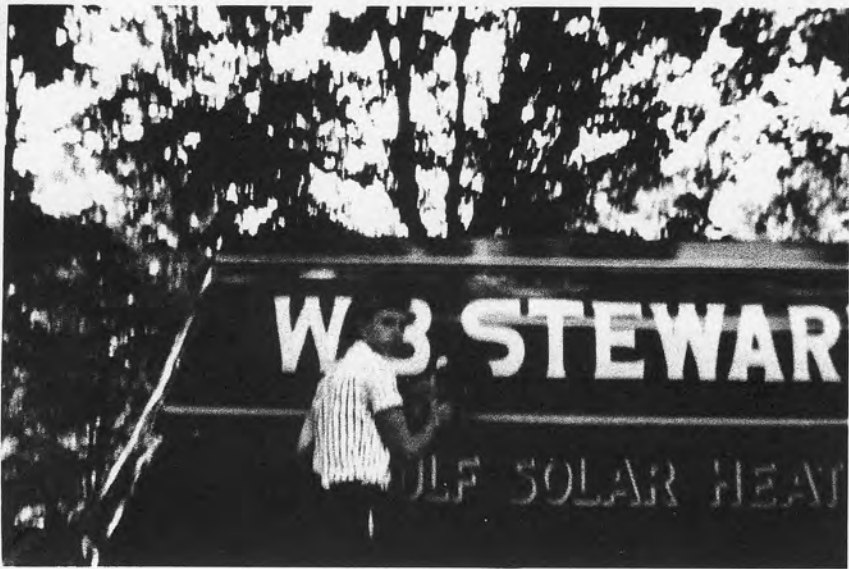
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## **THE HISTORY AND MEMORIES**

*Written by Donald W. Steward on December 18<sup>th</sup> 2007*

PROVIDING  
**HEATING & COOLING COMFORT**  
SINCE 1954



20 9m  
From Dad  
12/25/07



History of W. B. Steward and Son  
December 18, 2007

I can remember when I was about 9 years old that my Dad, WB, did the service and installation work for a company named Barry Brothers in Westville. They sold coal, fuel oil and appliances and had a showroom and oil and coal storage on Broadway. My Dad used to stop there several times a day to see if any more service calls had come in. Dad at this time also had a property maintenance business which included paper hanging, painting, roofing, additions, kitchens etc. I started helping my Dad when I was 10 years old. We did 4 to 5 summer services, tune-ups, a day at the cost of \$12.95. We did an occasional conversion from coal to oil adding oil burner, combustion chamber, controls and of course the oil tank and sometimes a fan to the old octopus heaters.

Around March of 1954 my Dad went to Philadelphia by train and came home with an ugly green 1947 1000 gallon Ford oil truck which he paid \$250.00 for. The truck had the number 250 written on it as its identification number in the rental place where my Dad went. Dad offered the guy \$250.00 to buy the truck and the guy told Dad that he must be crazy or something. As my Dad walked away the guy says wait a minute let's talk and the sale was made and he drove the truck home to Linden Avenue and he than told my Mom that they were now going into the heating oil business.

At this point WB signed up with Gulf Oil Corporation as a Gulf Solar Heat dealer. The main reason that he signed with Gulf was that he was aware that they were building the new plant in West Deptford. In the meantime he had to drive that old green truck all the way to Collingswood where Gulf had a plant. As a side note this truck was very long and when making right hand turns for some reason it had to be done in two moves by backing up and taking another bite at the turn. This truck had no tool boxes and the hose reel was operated by a hand crank. WB built tool compartments on each side of the truck. The truck also had no heater in the cab. After building the compartments the truck was painted with the Gulf colors. At the time Gulf painted all vehicles at their cost.

As there were no customers at this time WB went on the street and started to accumulate oil and service customers. Many friends changed to my Dads oil company. His fireman friends and political friends also became customers. Some of these people are still customers today. For one Izze Esposito who is the husband of Ann Linderoth on Oak Avenue. Ann's father Oscar was on council with my dad and Mrs. Linderoth was a friend of my Moms.

WB built the business gradually. My Mom took service calls and oil calls and did the book work in the early years. She also did the monthly statements on a typewriter and made up, hopefully, daily deposits. Mom never had a driver's license so she could not make the deposits so WB had to work that into his schedule also. When a no heat call came in she would have to call Dad at a customer's house or leave a message at Gulf for him to call the office. He would than have to stop delivering oil and take the service call.

WB was very involved in the Fire Department as a fireman and also served on Borough Council at the start of this business.

When it snowed we had strap on chains that were made from chains from a car. Truck chains were very expensive at the time so WB added links so they would fit the truck. We had maybe eight straps that we would put on when needed. I think I still have these chain straps around someplace in the garage. We also carried sand to spread under the tires on ice and snow. At some point we installed a heater in the cab. This heater was removed from an old car and provided a limited amount of heat. I can recall a snowstorm when we were going over Almonesson Road to the Livzey farm to deliver oil. We had our strap chains on and we were following a county plow truck. It got to the point that the county truck could go no farther. As the oil had to be delivered we trudged on. I was digging the snow out, putting sand down and freezing my hands and feet off. We eventually got to the Livzey farm and filled their tank. Mrs. Livzey was Doctor Underwood's daughter. This was a delivery that I shall never forget. That heater came in handy as we stopped several times to warm up my hands and feet.

At some point in time Dad bought an electric hose reel for this truck. It seemed like he was in heaven when we got this reel. This old truck had three compartments and pumped off at about 20 gallons per minute.

I can remember a time when I was about 15 years old when my mom and dad went to New York City for a weekend. I was taking care of the phone and I received a no heat call from the Hayward family who lived at the corner of Elm and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets where Danny Nate lives today. I took a tool box tray on my bicycle to the home to check the boiler out. It was an odd Iron Fireman burner that had a bad transformer. I had to go back to the shop and rig up a new transformer in order to get heat on for the Hayward's. It was also at this time that I started to solicit the town for new oil customers for which I got a commission of ½ cent per gallon delivered each year. My first customer was John Tice who lived at the corner of Linden and 4<sup>th</sup> Street where Ed Hennessey lives now. I continued to solicit for new accounts with people I knew and real estate transactions. To this day we still have my old high school English teacher Mr. Richard Caton.

Our second oil truck was a 1953 used truck which held 1500 gallons. This truck had a two speed rear axle, but the reel located on the right side made it so that deliveries could only be made on one side of a street. The one problem that we had with this truck was that we seemed to always break axles in the snow. Ace Motors used to come out on the street with a tow truck to lift the truck and replace the axle right where it broke. I can remember this happening on West Jersey Avenue in a snow storm. The one side delivery made it necessary to route differently to accommodate this drawback. At some point someone ran Dad off the road across the street from the old telephone building on Glassboro Road which made it necessary to replace the chassis. We put a 1965 Ford Chassis under the tank. This truck at the present time is stored at Harry Steward's farm in Swedesboro. It ran when I parked it there.

In the summer of 1962 my Dad brought an oil truck home from the paint shop. He came inside and asked me to come outside to look at the truck. To my surprise he had the truck lettered W. B. STEWARD & SON. What a happy and proud day that was for me. A total surprise. After I graduated in June of 62 I had a 6 month commitment to the National Guard for 6 months of active Army duty at Fort Dix. Upon completion of this duty in December, I became a full time worker for our company which was now a full fledged partnership. We also bought our first new oil truck around this time, a 2000 gallon GMC tilt cab with a steel tank. With the increased size of this new truck it was necessary to build a new garage to house it in. The existing oil truck garage was built by myself and an employee during evenings and weekends. Dad did the design and supervision of the construction. The wood roof joists came from an old barn that was torn down on Salem Avenue in Woodbury. Dutch Mauk was dismantling the old barn and asked if we could use some of the wood, which we did.

I became the full time truck driver and also assisted with installation of new heating equipment and servicing when I wasn't delivering oil. It was at this time that I was also going to many industry related schools and we started in the air conditioning business along with heating. Dad and I continued to work as a team for many years. In 1969 we hired our first full time employee to work with us. He delivered the oil and I did most of the service and installation work. Dad was now kept busy with the office work and selling equipment. Keep in mind that all bookwork was done manually. My Mom still helped out on occasions when needed. All the oil tickets were written out in long hand and degree days had to be calculated manually. I can remember selling oil for 12 cents per gallon. The oil companies only raised prices maybe three or four times a year and we always had a written contract each year. In these times prices were only raised by tenth of cents and dealers were always concerned with passing these increases along. The price sheets that we used on the truck were calculated by hand and a sheet was typed up to show cost per gallon by my Dad. About once every two weeks we would take the nozzles and pump strainers, from the tune-ups, out of the cleaning solvent and disassemble the nozzles soak them, wash them off and reassemble them to be used on other tune-ups. We never threw away pump strainers as these were also cleaned and reused.

Most of the mechanical work on the vehicles was performed by myself. In the early days before diesel engines there were spark plugs to replace, wires, points and condensers and a host of other things like installing new batteries and changing the oil and lubrication of chassis parts. We changed our own tires on the oil truck when they needed to be replaced as well as tubes before tubeless tires.

We moved the office to 451 Beech Avenue in early 1970. Mom and Dad lived upstairs and we had two service trucks, one that we kept in the garage where Don's office is now and we kept the oil truck and other service truck at 450 Linden where I had moved to. We had a part time girl working in the office taking calls and doing some of the bookwork.

Our business continued to grow and we eventually hired a new oil truck driver and now had two service techs and one oil driver plus my Dad.

The early 70's proved to be a trying time for our industry. Quotas were set by the state and the oil companies curtailed the amount of oil that we could buy. Prices of fuel were rising steadily at this time.

Tragedy struck in November of 1973 when my Dad was taken to the hospital. His life ended on November 7, 1973. At this time I was thrown into the leadership of our company. With the help of our competitors, Dave Adams, Tom Euler, Bob Harriett Sr., Donald McAllister, Jack Herbert and others I was able to get through this most trying time of my life. With the help of John L White and Daniel Ball III my Mom and I incorporated the business under New Jersey law with Mom and I as the stockholders. Mom's job consisted of cleaning the office on Saturdays.

With oil being high priced and scarce, Don Adams and I acquired some storage of about 20,000 gallons in Bridgeport NJ through Dave's connections. Dave being Don's father and one of my Dad's best industry friends. After working all day we would work well into the night and early mornings hauling loads of oil to Bridgeport in order that we had product to fall back on. We did this in the freezing cold and enjoyed each others company while unloading both of our trucks. It was also at this time that truckers were on strike and they were dropping things off of bridges onto trucks that were strike breakers. This we worried about also but were lucky enough to avoid any of these obstacles.

I can remember an incident at Gulf during the strike when they would not let our driver into the facility. I drove the truck over to Gulf, crossed the picket line and filled the truck. When leaving the strikers were not going to let me leave until I asked what would happen if their family ran out of heat in the night. With this explanation they let me leave. From then on we had no trouble during the strike.

When we were on oil company quotas Gulf cut us off while loading and said no more oil. I said, "fine," and got out of truck and locked the doors with the truck under the rack with trucks backed up. After being threatened of having my truck towed and other things after many phone calls by Gulf I was suddenly allowed to fill our truck and go on my way. Such was the time of the early 70's.

Our company continued to grow. We purchased the oil accounts of D. J. Adams during this period. With this purchase we hired additional service techs, but continued to service the oil accounts with the one oil truck. Our installation and service department continued to grow into the 80's with a modest increase in the amount of oil customers.

In October of 1983 another tragedy struck with the death of my Mom. This was almost exactly 10 years after my Dad had passed on. This was another hard adjustment that I had to contend with. After recovering from the death of my Mom it was necessary to change

the structure of the company. It was at this time that I became the sole stockholder of the company.

One of the advantages of having the business where it is was that the children were able to see me at any time that they wanted. I can vividly remember the afternoon when Don Jr. and his friend Jimmy came into my office very excited to tell me that they had caught a fox in their trap down at the boro garage. It was necessary to immediately leave the office to go down to the garage and dispatch the fox.

In late 1985 we came into the modern age with the installation of our computer system. Up to this time all billing, oil tickets and checks were done manually. The degree days were figured for each ticket at the end of the day so that the tickets could be recorded the next day. The oil tickets were done by myself up until the time I turned that job over to Don Jr. The computer system certainly made things easier for all of us in the office as well as our customers.

In June of 1992 Don Jr. became a full time employee after his graduation from Wesley College. With Don coming into the business it was necessary for him to continue to learn all facets of our industry. With this in mind Don was assisting in installations of all of the types of equipment that we sell as well and the servicing of same. Don was also responsible for acquiring new heating oil accounts which helped our business grow substantially. At some point in time, exactly when I don't remember, Don took over the printing and scheduling of the oil tickets. This relieved me of my major task with the business other than the normal general everyday responsibilities.

In 2001 I became the president of Fuel Merchants Association of New Jersey. This was a proud moment for me and one of the best jobs that I have had in my volunteer life. I served in this position until 2003. Don's abilities certainly made it possible to devote the needed time to this responsibility. Also at this time I was appointed as a director to the NORA board. This was a seven year term to the newly created National organization created by our Congress.

In August of 2003 we purchased the heating oil accounts of Campbell Comfort of West Deptford Township. This purchase made it necessary for us to put an additional fuel oil truck on the road as we acquired 578 accounts with this purchase. We now had a total of 1539 accounts.

At this time we also purchased a new GMC oil truck. This enabled us to have the delivery equipment to provide the services to all of our accounts.

Over the past several years we have seen many changes in the prices of heating oil. Today we are at \$3.449 on the street. Diesel fuel is constantly changing due to specifications for different types of equipment. New oil fired equipment is being developed with efficiencies of up to 98%. We are sure to see new uses for heating oil as NORA continues to fund research in this area.

I am fortunate to have my son and his sincere interest in the business started by his grandfather. Do to his expertise acquired since coming into the business full time it enabled me to retire in October of 2006. I currently confer with Don Jr. when necessary. Fortunately for both of us this is not that often. I am confident that Don will continue with our company well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This is a brief summary of our company. I am certain that there are many aspects that I have left out or forgotten. Running this family organization has been a source of great pleasure for me and has provided our family with a quality lifestyle. For all of this I am sincerely grateful.

By *Ronald W. Stewart Sr.*  
12/25/07



Donald W. Steward & his dad, Wilbert Bradshaw Steward Jr.





Pearl C. Steward and her son Donald W. Steward

Wilbert Bradshaw Steward Jr. - 18 months old  
Born May 21, 1909 - Went to Heaven on November 7, 1973



*Portrait by*  
*Gibson*  
S.E. Cor.  
Germantown Ave & Oxford St  
2604 Germantown Ave.,  
Phila.



W.B. Steward formed his heating oil company in 1954 when he bought a used truck and began knocking on doors, an approach that has seen the company grow to over 1,300 accounts as it celebrated 50 years in business.



1st Oil Truck

1947 FORD

Photo  
March 1959

2nd Oil Truck

1952 FORD ~ Heil

A black and white photograph of a vintage car, possibly a touring car or a small truck, parked outdoors. The car is dark-colored and has a prominent sign on its side. The sign reads "W.B. STEWARD" in large, bold, white letters. Below this, in smaller letters, it says "OFFICIAL RACE CAR". The car is parked on a grassy area. In the background, there are several bare trees and a two-story brick building with a gabled roof. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, and the overall tone is historical and documentary.

**W.B. STEWARD**

OFFICIAL RACE CAR.

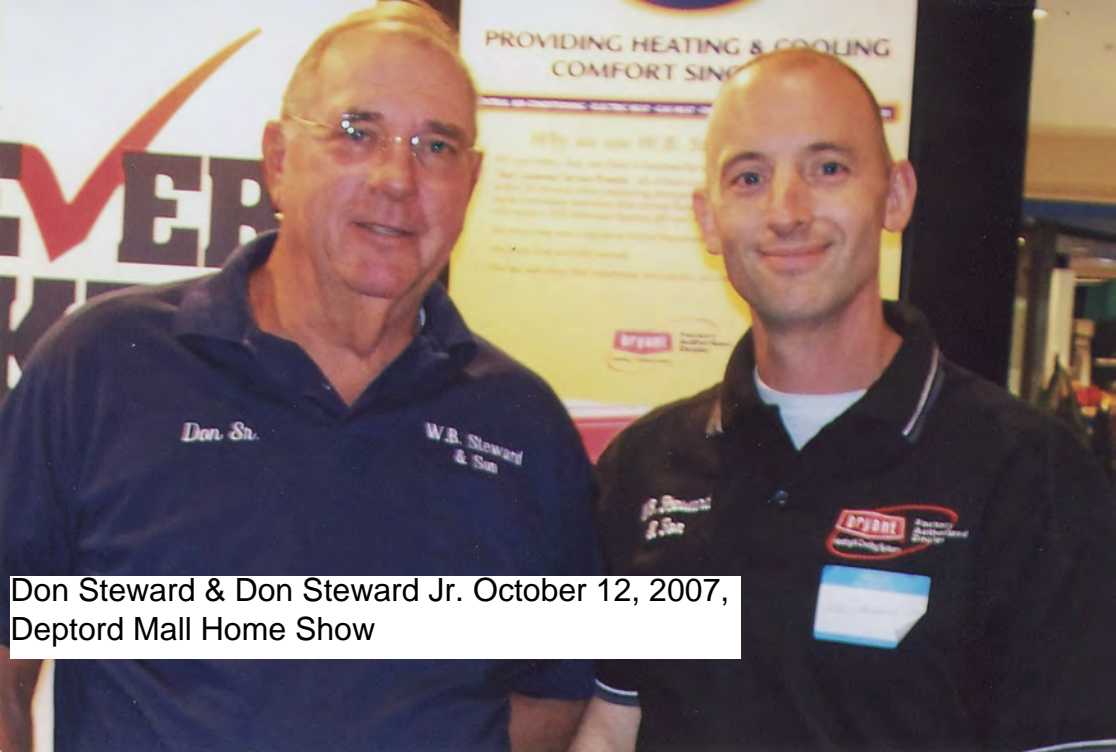
March 1961

Wilbert Bradshaw Steward Jr.



MAR


61



Don Steward & Don Steward Jr. October 12, 2007, Deptord Mall Home Show





A large, stylized American flag with stars and stripes, serving as a background for the text.

Donald W. Steward Sr., 65, a lifetime resident of Woodbury Heights.

Don was a member of the Woodbury Heights Fire Dept. for 50 years. He was made an honorary member at age 14, he served as Chief for 14 years; treasurer of the Fireman's Relief Assoc. for 4 years and is a life member of the NJ State Fireman's Assoc. Don was a member of the National Guard. He served on the Woodbury Heights Bicentennial Committee in 1976 & was selected by the US Jaycees as an Outstanding Young Man of America. Don was chairman of the Woodbury Heights Shade Tree Committee from 1977 to 1985. He served a one year elected term on Council in 1979 where he served as finance chairman. In 1982, Don was instrumental in starting the Neighborhood Dispute Committee with Municipal Judge David Keyko and served as its first chairman. He served 12 years as the Mayor of Woodbury Heights, 1987 - 1998. His last election was won in a write-in campaign which was the first successful write-in campaign ever in the county for Mayor. He is a past president and member of the Gloucester County Mayor's Assoc. & NJ Conference of Mayors. In 1998, Don was appointed to serve on the Robin's Nest board of directors and was appointed to an Ambassadorship to the Underwood Memorial Hospital. In 1999, he was appointed to the Advisory council and in 2000, he was appointed to serve as a director to the Foundation Board. He served on the board of the Red Cross. Don served on the Administrative Board, the finance committee and has chaired the stewardship committee for 5 years of the Kemble Memorial United Methodist Church. He was Commissioner of Elections in Gloucester County, appointed by Gov. Corzine. Don was an active member of the Rotary Club of Woodbury, he served on the Board of Directors and was chairman of the International Committee and the Foundation Chairman. In 1998, he served as chairman of a selection committee for the Gloucester County District of the Boy Scouts to find a Gloucester District Chairman and served on the Boy Scouts finance committee. He served on the advisory board of the Gloucester County Institute of Technology for 24 years. He was a member of Swedesboro-Paulsboro Masonic Lodge #157 F&AM. In June 2000, he was appointed to Project Get Straight Committee by Gloucester County Prosecuting Attorney, Andrew Yurick.

Don was President of W.B. Steward & Son Heating-Air Conditioning & Fuel Oil business, retiring in Oct. 2006. He was involved in the Fuel Merchants Assoc of NJ and served as VP of the Southern Region and trustee at large of the Oil Heat Assoc of South Jersey.

Don was predeceased by his parents Wilbert Bradshaw & Pearl C. Steward & brother Robert Owen Steward. He is survived by his wife Virginia Harre Steward; daughter Shelly S. (Jim) Mandel of Atco; son Donald W. (Leah) Steward Jr of West Deptford; 3 step daughters Virginia T. (Robert) Harriett of Medford, Judith T. (Dr. Randall) Link of Levittown, PA & Cheryl T. (Christopher) Roethke of Woodbury Hts.; sister Elizabeth (Volker) Ringleb of Post Aransas, TX; 6 grandchildren & 4 step

In Loving Memory of  
**Donald W. Steward Sr.**

September 18, 1944  
December 23, 2009

Fisherman's Prayer

I pray that I may live to fish.....  
Until my dying day.  
And when it comes  
to my last cast,  
I then most humbly pray:  
When in the Lord's great  
landing net  
And peacefully asleep  
That in His mercy  
I be judged  
Big enough to Keep.

Javis & Wagner Funeral and Cremation Services  
Woodbury, NJ

