

WASHINGTON STYLE

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Robert J. Pavuchak/The Pittsburgh Press

Al, left, and Bill Katz "get along famously" with one another. Their employees feel like part of a family.

Katz-eye view of Canonsburg

75-year-old hardware store as much a fixture as its wares

By Sandy Trozzo

The Pittsburgh Press

SPARKS FLEW as Bill Katz worked feverishly to grind a new set of keys. "If these keys don't work, buy a new house," he quipped to a waiting customer.

After finishing the keys, he walks around the hardware store his father began in 1911.

"Hey, Katzie, how you doin'?" a woman calls out.

A third customer grabs a reporter and proclaims, "This is the best store in the world."

It's another busy day at Katz Bros. Hardware Co., a fixture in Canonsburg for 75 years.

Jacob and Fanny Katz opened their first hardware store at the corner of East Pike and Ashland streets. After being wiped out by flooding from Chartiers Creek, a new store was started at 177½ Pike St. The one-half in the address was appropriate, given the size of the store, Bill Katz said.

But it was still packed with merchandise. "My dad's motto was, 'We have it — if you can find it,'" he said.

Jacob Katz died in 1936, just days before the store moved to its present site at 178 E. Pike St. A new motto was formulated, "Watch us grow."

And grow it did, taking over a confectionery store, a haberdashery and a meat market to make up the store's current 175-foot street frontage.

The store is still packed with goods, just about anything imaginable from A to Z — axes to zucchini seeds.

"I come over here for every little thing

"Anything but a fur-lined toilet seat and an honorable discharge I can sell you."

— Bill Katz

that I need," said Tony Marra of Houston. "This is corny, I know, but if you can't find it here, you can't find it anywhere."

"Anything but a fur-lined toilet seat and an honorable discharge I can sell you," Bill Katz said.

The family maintains old-fashioned service. Nails are still sold by weight instead of number.

"A lot of people only want a half-pound, so we weigh it out for them," Bill Katz said.

Galvanized steel laundry tubs are available, as are brushes to clean the coil springs on older beds.

"We sell those all the time," said Agnes Dobrowolski, an employee since 1949.

"We still have customers that my dad sold to. Many are in their 80s now and they still come here," Bill Katz said.

One such customer is John Dezack, 75, of Canonsburg. While waiting to pay for a box of nails, he reflected on a lifetime of dealing with the Katz brothers.

"I buy almost everything I need here. I've been coming here my whole life."

Singer Bobby Vinton, a Canonsburg native, used Katz Bros. merchandise to launch his career.

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ers, above, belies the wealth of hardware items to be found inside. At right, customer Edward Germadnik surveys shelves of motor oil on one aisle of the amply stocked store.

