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Biography - Adams

Local History

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Hard times, garage sale led to business for Adams

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Of the Herald-Republic

Richard Adams suffered a severe spinal injury in a car accident in his youth. It led to a life of surgeries, long periods of painful recuperation and many ups and downs in his struggle to support his family and be a productive citizen.

There have been times in his working life when he did well and times, due to his injuries, when he could do virtually nothing. But today, because of a garage sale to make some extra money, Adams and his wife have a business that has burgeoned quickly in what he said has been a "totally unexpected" way.

Adams and his wife own and operate Adams Country Pickins, in the old gray-and-white three-story Victorian house at 602 N. First St., Yakima. The house, built about

successful, Country Pickins includes many new items.

Adams said the inventory is 10-fold what it was at the Lincoln Avenue shop.

"It takes you three times through just to miss half of what we've got," Adams quipped. "We handle collectibles and, as my wife says, we handle memories — we sell memories."

Many customers don't come intending to buy anything, but are either attracted by the home itself or often are travelers asking directions. Nearly all, however, end up buying something, if just a greeting card.

Adams said he and his wife could have lived with the somewhat cramped and lacking in parking space Lincoln Avenue location but when the old, Victorian-style house became available for lease from Gasperetti Inc., "I jumped on it."

"The main factor is — regardless of what they say downtown in the Central Business District — this is the main entrance and the main exit for the community," he said.

"We have made it our goal that, if we are the first impression of Yakima, we're going to keep it nice, we're going to keep it clean."

After Adams spent about 1½ years in and out of U.S. Air Force hospitals because of his spine injury, he worked for a short time as a bill collector and repositor, which he said he didn't like but to "be the best training in the world" for a business career. He then became a furniture salesman for a department store chain's Yakima store. His injury plagued him and, about 1963 or 1964, he re-injured his back. More surgery and a two-year recovery followed, then he went to work for Ace Furniture Co. in Yakima.

In all, he was in the furniture business about 12 years. Then, he spent a short time selling recreational vehicles, but still another garage sale sent him into a five-year slump in his working life. He thought he'd never be a productive worker again.

"You talk about down, we were down," he said, adding that the family had gone from making good money to where his wife raised and sold vegetables and his son raised and sold sweater pigs and lambs.

"We had a garage sale one day to make some extra money. We found out how much fun it was and we started collecting goods from then on and we set up a little shop out there (in West Valley)," he said. "But, that's because it was a necessity. It wasn't because we always wanted to be in that business."

The next step was the fast-food restaurant business.

"I was bound and determined to be a productive citizen, make a living for my family, and I was willing to back everything I had. . . . Adams said.

Backed financially and with moral support by friends who believed in him, Adams and his wife, unsuccessfully looking for a small gift shop, found the positive operation, what they called Richkie's Drive-In on Summitview Avenue. Adams has no regrets about the three years at the drive-in because they made many memories, not long hours seven days a week took their toll on his health and



Photo by Tom Hoff

Name: Richard "Richkie" or "Dick" Adams. Adams said he is called Richard usually by business associates or people he has met "along the way," Richkie to those who remember him from when he and his wife operated the former Richkie's Drive-In in Yakima and Dick to people who have known him a long time.

Occupation: Owns and operates, with wife, Adams Country Pickins, antiques, gifts, beads and folkart, 602 N. First St., Yakima; also has the recently opened Adams Bearable Neighbors, 604 N. First St., and the soon-to-be-opened Adams Donna's Nook, which will share the 604 location.

Born: Faribault, Minn., Jan. 1, 1943, the first baby born in the state of Minnesota in 1943, but has lived in Yakima all but the first six months of his life.

Education: Graduated Davis High School in 1963 then "School of Hard Knocks," U.S. Air Force and numerous business training courses.

Family: Wife, Randa; son, Michael; daughters, Carol and Suzie.

Recreation: Had to give up hunting and fishing because of severe spinal injury, suffered as a young man, but now enjoys working around his house, going out with his wife for a snack and talk, being with his children and, also relaxation to him, helping other people with their businesses because others helped him when he needed it.

Community organizations: Member of Yakima Police Department's Crime Prevention Task Force, On Guard and Block Watch programs and Yakima chapter of Footprinters International because of a sense of civic responsibility and to provide needed community support to law enforcement agencies.

Philosophy: The same as Yakima area artist Floyd Brantlett, a close, long-time friend, who believes in the source-unknown statement, "I believe my life will be measured ultimately by what I have done for my fellow man and by this standard I fear no judgment."

the couple sold the restaurant. Shortly after, they opened Country Pickins on Lincoln Avenue.

"I think we've paid the dues," Adams commented. Adams' advice to collectors is to know and have faith in his dealer; if a dealer doesn't have credibility and honesty, he'll not be long in the business.

"You have to radiate honesty and warmth," he said.

Profile

the turn of the century, has been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

They also recently opened Adams Bearable Neighbors, devoted to stuffed bears, including the traditional Teddy bears and a wide variety of specialty stuffed bears, many handcrafted and in costume, in the small house next door. It is operated by his daughter-in-law, Diana (Mrs. Michael) Adams.

A third shop, Adams' Nook, featuring Northwest products such as gourmet foods, jams, jellies, giftbooks and antiques, is planned for an opening the first of the month in the same house at the hear shop. It will be run by Adams sister, Donna Adams Knight, who is coming here from Dallas.

As to the success of these ventures, he said "I think it's our approach to the business — total up-front honesty with the people," Adams said. "We don't make a killing off of each piece, we make everything affordable. Our customers keep coming back," including some from when the Adamses had a small business in West Valley years ago.

"We're not living high, we're not rich, we're making a living," he said.

The collectible/antique business isn't a get-rich-quick one, Adams said, and "You can't do it if it's not fun — and it's fun."

He also said, "This is my therapy."

The Adamses started dabbling in collectibles and other items about 1970, operating a small business in West Valley. Country Pickins was opened in a small building at 1302 W. Lincoln Ave., Yakima, about March 1986 and a year ago moved to its present location. Today, seven of the 11 rooms in the old house are devoted to antiques, cut glass, furniture, clocks, china, steatite, lenses and lace, samplers, greeting cards, candles, toys, signs, memorabilia of many kinds, along with new items.

They handled some reproductions of antiques at their Lincoln Avenue shop but now deal only in genuine antiques, Adams said. But because of a business dealing strictness in antiques and collectibles might be hard put to be

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