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Michael E. Daniels
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Kurth
(Continued from Page 1-A)

named him president of the Birmingham chamber of commerce.

KURTH'S WHOLE career started by chance. Young Paul was at the right place at the right time doing the right thing—nothing.

It was a Saturday, and a friend of mine and I were going to bring some potatoes into town for a farmer, but the plan fell through," recalls the tall, husky merchant.

"I WAS downtown killing time and looking in a store window," he went on.

The store owner, the late Mr. Elmer C. Huston, stuck his head under the door and asked the window-shopper what he was doing.

"Nothing," said Kurth.

"Come on in, and I'll put you to work," said Mr. Huston.

"Then," recalled Kurth, "he handed me a dust rag."

Even at ten, work was nothing new to the young toiler.

"I think I was about six when my father handed me a hoe and sent me out to the cucumber patch," said Kurth.

EVERYBODY helped with the work on the Kurth's 18-acre farm. There was plenty to do, with 13 children growing up on the land, just south of where Christ Church Cranbrook now stands.

Kurth's father, Otto, was a truck farmer in those days. He regularly hauled his products into Birmingham. His sons and daughters (Paul was third from the last) helped him wait on the customers.

Paul Kurth never handed a vegetable to a marketing housewife. When he was eight years old, his father sold the farm and moved his big family into town.

Of the 15 Kurths, nine still live in the Birmingham area. You need only go a few blocks along downtown Boulevard today to find Kurth's three brothers. Ernest heads up the E. W. Kurth real estate firm. Ed is a Wilton drug company pharmacist, and Eric is part owner of General Auto Service.

EVEN Woodward avenue has changed in the 40 years Kurth has been at Huston's. Ten-year-old Paul walked along a dirt road to work.

He reported each morning at 6:30 a. m. when the store opened its doors to farmers and builders looking for supplies for their day's work. At 8:30 a. m. the young laboring man left for the 9 a. m. school bell. At 4 p. m. he was back from the old Hill school, ready to work until the store closed at 6 p. m.

"Everybody worked longer hours in those days," says Kurth. "Saturdays I worked from 6:30 a. m. to 6 p. m."

When he was about 12, Kurth recalls, he graduated from "head butting" to waiting on customers. After he graduated from Baldwin high school, he continued to work at Huston's while he attended Detroit Business Institute.

SOON AFTER Kurth started at the store on a full-time basis, Elmer Huston made an unusual arrangement with him.

For a year of pay raise, he told his young employee he would put a specific amount in a special fund for him. If Kurth should ever leave Huston's, he could take the fund with him.

By 1940, there was enough in the fund to make a down payment on the store's inventory, and Mr. Huston sold out to his employee.

Just last year Kurth purchased the building itself from Mrs. Elmer Huston, who still lives in the Birmingham area and remembers the store owner when he was a boy.

"PAUL KURTH was always very studious, and loyal, and a hard worker," says Mrs. Huston. "Only trouble is, he works too hard now and doesn't take enough vacations!"

At the Kurth household at 734 Riverchase, Marion Kurth's activities now center around Harvey, 16, a Birmingham high school student, and Janet, 10, who attends Adams school.

Even now she helps out occasionally at the store, where she worked as a bookkeeper for several years after her marriage 25 years ago. She's still her husband's partner in the firm, even though her children now take precedence over business activities.

AS FOR his own children working, Kurth says son Harvey helps out only occasionally.

"Nowadays I wouldn't hire any boy who was under 16," says Kurth. "For one thing, the hardware business is too complex nowadays. And for another thing, there are the child labor laws."

What does he think of them?

"Well," he said, "When I was in school I was in a debate, and took the side favoring the laws. What the judges didn't know was, I then was one of the law's worst offenders!"

Plan
(Continued from Page 1-A)

drives which pretty well stretch along the east side of Hunter from Lincoln to Oakland.

The state also will not share in removal costs if the fifth traffic lane must be constructed.

BIRMINGHAM commissioners also expressed their concern over the effect of the state's ruling as it affects the city's zoning requirements.

The zone code allows access drives to count toward those parking spaces new businesses must construct along with their buildings.

Said Commissioner William E. Roberts, "This seems to pretty well preclude our counting such access spaces toward off-street parking requirements."

CITY MANAGER L. R. Gare was asked to study this likelihood and if necessary, to recommend an ordinance amendment.

City Attorney James Howlett was asked to study previous contracts to see if the state is legally committed to help pay for access drive removal if that became necessary.

Commissioners disagreed at first over the need to discuss the situation further with businessmen before 14 Mile.

Mayor Carl F. Ingraham said he believed the primary problem has not changed at all—there still is a hazard involving fast through traffic and slow local traffic.

ROBERTS BELIEVES several factors have changed, and he feels it would be advisable to bring businessmen up-to-date through a special meeting.

Commissioner William Burghum took a third position. He said he didn't see any reason for a public meeting until there were some facts to discuss. He advised that the state be pushed for its early solution to the below-Lincoln problem.

All commissioners agreed the city plans to keep its April deadline, and will work towards an equitable solution meanwhile.

"Else in April, we might be asking them to give up parking because they have no access drives, which the state now says we cannot have," Roberts summarized.

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