

Red Leary, His Gas Station and His Appliance Store **by Mel Montemerlo** **Oct. 1, 2016**

Red Leary was born on January 38, 1898. In school and afterwards, he was an extraordinary athlete. Red was a member of the first graduating class (1918) of the Loomis Institute in Windsor. In the time before professional football, he was a member of elite football teams in Windsor Locks and the surrounding area. He became a member of the Windsor Locks Hall of Fame. The writeup on the Hall of Fame website says that he was a notable multi-sport athlete, best known for his outstanding football prowess.

He married Wilhemina Driscoll. They had three children, Sheila, Mary Ellen and William. All three were quite accomplished. William became a lawyer. Mary Ellen graduated "Cum Laude" from Boston College's School of Nursing. Sheila graduated from Emmanuel College and became an elementary school teacher in Windsor Locks. Sheila was also an excellent equestrienne.

Elmer G. Leary was one of Windsor Locks' premier entrepreneurs in the first half of the 1900s. Elmer went by the nickname of "Red". He started in business as a partner of Thomas F. Dempsey in the ownership of a unique gasoline and service station on Main St. In the photograph, notice that the gas pumps were right on the curb of Main Street. A note on the back of this photo said that it was the last gas station in the state of Connecticut to have its pumps right on the street.



Red Leary's Mobil Station
First National Supermarket

The Dempsey and Leary gas station was started in 1923. Red and Tom owned that station jointly from 1923 to 1937, when Red bought Tom's share and became the sole owner. Their business was at 92 Main St, between Church and Spring Streets. According to the Aug. 17, 1962 Springfield Union, their business included not only automotive servicing, but also radio sales and servicing.

In 1941, Red sold his service station, and opened a much larger store in a new, brick building on the corner of Grove and Main Streets. While he formerly sold and serviced radios, his new store added electrical appliances, televisions and home furnishings. This store was in operation from 1941 to 1962, when he leased it to Dominick Auto Parts. Red sold his inventory and retired in 1962.



Red Leary's store, Corner of Grove and Main St. 1941-1962

Red was active in the community during and after his career. He was active in the Boy Scouts, the Lions Club, and the American Legion. A search of local newspapers showed dozens of articles about his leadership in these organizations. The most interesting was his work with the Lions Club in buying a 1953 Packard ambulance for the town of Windsor Locks. During his years in business and in retirement, the newspapers had a number of articles about his work the community organizations listed above.

Red Leary died at the age of 77, on May 1, 1975. He will be remembered as a star athlete, an army veteran, a successful local businessman, a community activist and an exemplary family man.

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