



Ray Lytle's Son Elwood (Age 18)
Drove this old Rio Truck
Delivering Merchandise ~~For~~
the Lytle and Hancock Stores.

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Dr. Jack D. ...
552 W. ...
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2 cols

120

As appeared in ...

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Ray Lytle

OWNER

MOREHEAD REGAL STORE

IN BUSINESS 118

MOREHEAD 40 YEARS

1 col

60

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Serve Yourself

LUX
TOILET SOAP

LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso
LUX Rinso

WEARS PLAINS COFFEE

(NOTICE SELF SERVICE SIGN)
REGAL STORE OWNED BY
RAY LITTLE (R). 1938.

1938

IN CRACKER BUREL
COMMENTS WOODIE
SAID THE ONLY REASON
THAT SYSTEM WAS
INSTALLED WAS RAY
WAS TOO LAZY TO
WAIT ON YOU.
(RALPH ELLIS (L))

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ARMED FORCES
RECRUITING
CENTER

YOU BACK!

THE ARMY

2cals

SITE OF MOREHEAD'S
OLD REGAL STORE
NOW IS AN
ARMED FORCES RECRUITING
CENTER ON S. WILSON AVE

wilson ave.)

115

104-7473

Morehead Memories (People and Places)

Regal Store (Phone 25)

By Jack D. Ellis

(Editor's Note: This is one in a series of articles about local history entitled Morehead Memories: People and Places. The articles deal with those business and professional people that helped Morehead grow and prosper.)

The memory of Fairbanks Avenue is fast fading from Moreheadians' memories. (It is now South Wilson Avenue).

Yet in the 1930s and 40s it was a busy street connecting the business districts of Railroad Street (now First Street) and Main Street. But in 1936 the Regal Store was located on Fairbanks Avenue, and it was that same year that Ray Lytle moved his family from Bracken County and, along with silent partner E.B. Hancock, bought the Regal Store.

Opening Day Sale

24 lb. bag of Snow Goose flour, .87;

5 lb. bag of pinto beans, .38;

100 lb. bag of potatoes, .95.

Although these prices seem small in today's economy, it must be remembered also that:

- Lexington tobacco market paid an average of 19.20 per hundred tobacco. (Hardly paid the shipping).

- School teachers were paid an average of \$67 per month. (The principal made \$100 per month).

- For .05 you could see a new movie at the "Cozy Theater" starring Buster Crabbe (1932 Olympic Champion) in "Hold on Yale."

Regal - A rural Rowan County Store, Too

The Regal Store sold groceries, meats, feeds and seeds at competitive prices. The Regal Store was a popular place for people from rural Rowan County to shop — especially on Saturdays, and court days:

It also served as the station where you met your ride back to the country after shopping in town. Although in 1936, there were some automobiles in Morehead, many people from rural Rowan County came to town on horseback and in wagons.

It was a common sight in 1936 to see wagons and teams of mules lined up in front of the Regal Store. They were being loaded with food for cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens and people. But there was no pet food. What did the pets eat in those days? Why they ate people food. It is quite different today when many people eat pet food.

Advertising Helped Business Grow

The Regal Store grew as Mr. Lytle pursued an aggressive marketing policy of advertising sales and specials in the Morehead Independent (one of Morehead's newspapers at that time). Also, it was about that time, that Ray bought Mr. Hancock's

share of the business, and hired a young man by the name of Ralph Ellis as his assistant, along with Philley Howard, Philley and Ralph, loyal employees for almost 20 years.

As business increased, Ray's wife, Novenda, began to help in

the store. She was kept busy from early morning until late at night in the dual responsibility of rearing a family of four children plus working in the store. But she accomplished this dual role quite successfully.

The Flood Brought Loss and Gain

The great flood of July 4, 1939 did much damage to the Regal Store. It was a devastating financial blow to Ray Lytle's business. But they were able to salvage the canned goods, and some other merchandise, and continued operating the business.

Since the Regal Store had just expanded their meat department, Ray was planning to buy a new meat block. "Low and behold," the devastating flood that did so much damage, brought him a new meat block. Yes, a meat block was part of the debris that washed up behind his store. Try as he would, he could not find the owner, so he cleaned the meat block up and put it to good use in his new meat department. The old saying "one man's loss is another man's gain" was certainly true in this instance.

New Marketing Strategy: Self-Service

It was shortly after the flood that the Regal Store began using a new marketing technique. It was called "self-service." Up to that time you went to the store and told the store keeper what you wanted, or gave him a list, and he filled your order. With this new self-service, the merchandise was placed pre-priced, pre-packaged, and pre-wrapped on shelving accessible to the customer, who

made the selection and paid on the way out.

This was a whole new concept in sales. Many people thought that much of the merchandise would "walk out" in baggy over-all pockets without paying. But this was not the case, and it did provide faster more efficient service to the customer. But many people then as now, were resistant to change, and for a while Mr. Lytle would fill the orders in the "old fashioned way."

Self Service Carried Too Far

Self-service did work, and was here to stay and the Regal Store was credited with being the first store in Morehead to introduce this service. However, one local "character" in Morehead took self-service one step too far. It was on a Saturday night about closing time when one of the local drunks felt he needed some money for more whiskey. He slipped in behind the counter at the store and started serving himself a hearty helping of cash from the register.

When Ray tried to stop him, the man pulled a knife. Mrs. Lytle screamed "Stop Him!" About that time Charles Ellis, who happened to be in the store, picked up a 12 ounce bottle of Ale 8 and broke it over the man's head, knocking him to the floor. Stunned and quickly subdued, the man's only comment was, as he tasted the Ale 8 pouring down over his lips, "I wish you had broken a beer bottle on my head instead of that stuff, it would have sure tasted better." Ray did not even have the man arrested, but sent him home, because he was just one who

had taken self-service a little too far. The men remained life-time friends.

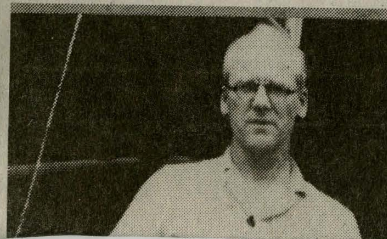
Name Changed and Store Moved

In 1948, the Regal Store moved to a new location on West Main Street. The name was changed to Lytle's Self-Service Grocery and Ray continued to operate the store until his death in 1976. The business was operated by his family until 1982 when it was sold. It is now known as Mullin's Food Market.

Ray Lytle was an active church, civic, and community leader in Morehead. His success in business seemed to be because of his early anticipation of what the public wanted. He also believed in advertising his store and products. Also, he believed hard work, prayer, and perseverance were key to being successful. Ray Lytle was one who helped to make Morehead move forward, and the Regal Store remains a Morehead memory.



Ray Lytle's son Elwood, age 18, drove this old Rio truck delivering merchandise to the Lytle and Hancock stores.

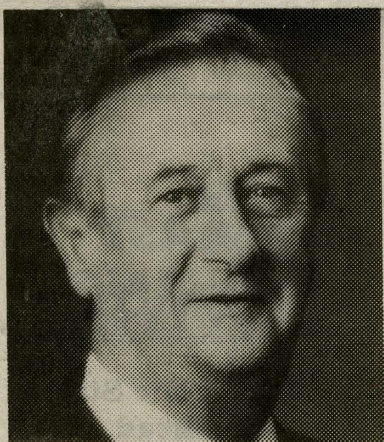




This was the site of Morehead's old Regal Store. It is now an Armed Forces recruiting center on South Wilson Avenue.



The Regal Store as it appeared in 1936. From left are Ralph Ellis, Ray Lytle and Philley Howard. Notice the "Serve Yourself" sign near the counter.



About the author

Dr. Jack D. Ellis is a retired Morehead State University Library director and a retired minister.

THE MOREHEAD, KY