

Gladys S. Waggoner Ice and Fuel Co. & Riding the Ice Truck

SM: My mother had a business—coal yard and ice house and wood yard. It eventually sold appliances. Her business was Gladys S. Waggoner Coal, Ice, and Wood.

CG: Where was that located?

SM: That was at Ayr Hill Avenue, between Dominion Road and Mill Street. Mill Street didn't go through. Dominion was not Dominion, it was Railroad Avenue. When you got to where the station is, it went down a little hill. That was where Mother's business was, right there.

AS: What's there now? The storage place... back there?

SM: We weren't that far over. There was a creek that ran through Dominion Road and Mill Street. We were right at the edge of the creek on this side.

VH: Did you spend much time in your mom's store?

SM: Oh yeah. I was there all the time. I lived down there. I lived in the creek. Mother was very good at letting me come down and type—which I couldn't really do—and do the adding machine. Eventually I learned how to do some of the things that she had to do.

E.W. Parker was the original owner of the business. Mother went to work for him then bought the business from him after. I think she worked for him for about eight years. She bought the business around 1932 or '33.

VH: That must have been quite an undertaking in the midst of the Depression.

SM: It was a very brave thing to do. Number one, women didn't work then. A woman didn't go into business at all. That was just unheard of. She had to do something. She and my father broke up when I was nine months old, so she had to do something. That's what she did. She worked long enough and saved her money to buy Mr. Parker out. He was ready to retire. She was a good businesswoman, I'll tell you.

I used to ride the—believe it or not—the ice truck. I think I knew everybody in Fairfax County at that time. The men who worked for my mother were like my uncles. They called me 'Small Change' because I was wee. They were really wonderful. People that you could trust. They had more patience than Job to put up with a kid like that.

CG: What was the ice truck?

SM: It was like a pick-up truck. I honestly don't remember a whole lot about it other than it had ice in the back of the truck. Ray had an ice pick and he would cut off what they wanted. He had ice tongs and he would carry it in. At that time, they had refrigerators that

had tin on the inside of the part that held the ice. He'd take it in and put it in the refrigerator or wherever it is that they wanted it to go.

AS: Would this be to businesses and homes?

SM: Businesses and homes, yeah.

CG: Who was Ray?

SM: He was one of the guys that worked for my mother for many, many, many years. Ray Breedon was his name.

VH: Were there also trucks for the coal and the wood?

SM: She had a couple. They weren't dump trucks. I don't even know if they made dump trucks in those days. They were big trucks. They had a chute that you would put in the back of the truck and usually just send it right on down into the coal bin of the person's basement if they had one. Otherwise, they'd just use that chute to bring it down into something that they could carry in.

CG: Do you recall how much ice cost back then?

SM: You could buy 25 cents worth if you wanted to. It might be a block around five pounds, something like that. I really can't remember. Of course it was during the Depression, so anything was hard to come up with—money. So 25 cents back then would probably be five dollars now. We used to ride all the way around Fairfax County on 25 cents worth of gas. You can't do that now—you can't ride around *Vienna* on 25 cents worth!

CG: You can't even *get* 25 cents worth!