



BUSINESSMAN, PEDORTHIST

MEET **DONALD "BUCK" BURKHARTZMEYER**, FHS CLASS OF 1942, LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER AND COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR.

Donald "Buck" Burkhardtmeier

Anyone who knows Donald "Buck" Burkhardtmeier wouldn't be surprised to hear that his favorite saying is, "A smile never costs you anything." Buck and Burkhardtmeier's Shoe Store are recognized as mainstays of the downtown Faribault business community. Faribault residents and shoppers have always felt welcomed and well-served by the Burkhardtmeier family. Buck's smile extends itself to the Faribault Care Facilities where his frequent visits brighten the lives of many residents.

A few weeks after Buck graduated from FHS, "Uncle Sam" called, meaning a draft number arrived in the mail. Buck was sworn in at Fort Snelling in the summer of 1942. Listening to the advice of his two older brothers, Buck maneuvered to the back of the line. Those in the front of the line were sent off to join the Marine Corps; the remaining men had a choice, and Buck quickly chose the US Navy. He was sent to Farragut, Idaho, where he spent the next four years serving his country. Buck landed in the Ship Service department where he worked closely with the orthopedic doctors taking care of the feet and boots of his fellow soldiers. He remembers there was no shortage of sore feet and worn-out boots as the new recruits found themselves marching more miles than ever before.

When the war ended, Buck returned home and went to work at his family's newly-established shoe repair shop. Along with his parents and two brothers, they founded Burkhardtmeier's Shoes in 1949. Buck has spent his career fitting shoes and helping people solve their foot problems. Along the way, he became a Board Certified Pedorthist. (*Pedorthics* is the science

and practice of evaluating, fabricating, and delivering footwear to prevent or improve painful or disabling conditions of the foot and ankle.) Buck worked for 68 years in the shoe store. He still works part-time fitting and building up corrective shoes for customers.

Burkhardtmeier's Shoes looks like any other shoe store at first glance. But, instead of buying a pair of shoes and heading out the door, this place is more of a full-service establishment. "We're like a dinosaur," says Buck's son Brian. Buck adds, "Nowadays, we do the extra things that most places would not. For example, someone who brings in a pair of shoes to be repaired leaves with repaired shoes along with new shoestrings and shoes that have been polished. You're not going to get that service in a lot of stores."

Buck has received numerous professional awards and recognition for his contributions to the Faribault community. As part of the FHS class of 1942, Buck co-chaired the scholarship committee, helping to raise and award over \$12,000 to FHS graduates throughout the years. He has been a member of numerous service clubs including United Way, Junior Chamber of Commerce, and Faribault Exchange Club where he was chairman of the Book of Golden Deeds.

The Burkhardtmeier family has proudly maintained the family business for three generations. Their legacy involves making connections with the community, a welcoming smile, and customer service. A recent Faribault documentary honoring the Burkhardtmeiers concludes: "When you walk into the store, you gain more than a comfortable pair of shoes; you gain a neighbor."