

**BOYD KELLER**  
**K&K True Value Hardware**  
*Caring for Customers and Community*

When Boyd Keller couldn't find the supplies he needed as an electrical contractor, he didn't complain. He decided to fix it.

Raised on a farm during the Depression, Boyd understood what it meant to work hard. He knew that just wanting something wasn't enough – sometimes you had to find your own way of getting it. In 1940 Boyd and his partner, Art Kurtz, co-founded K&K Electric Company. What began as an electrical contracting business soon included an appliance sales and service store located at 1540 State Street in Bettendorf. Boyd Keller was the kind of guy who could make friends with anyone and he had a passion for retail and a genuine interest in satisfying customers' needs. Though Art soon left for California to pursue other interests, Boyd kept the K&K name. The shop became a mom-and-pop operation with Boyd performing the service work while his wife, Adeline, took care of the office.

By 1947, K&K's inventory had expanded to include all kinds of hardware and paint. Space was getting crowded, so the store moved to its second location just down the street. Sales skyrocketed. Boyd gradually added three new partners, and in 1950 K&K joined forces with Cotter & Company, a hardware co-op known today as True Value. Boyd's store was one of the first to team with the cooperative. They were store #44. Joining the co-op increased K&K's buying power, boosting sales and enhancing the selection of merchandise.

Just as K&K's business continued to grow, Boyd's family did as well. He and Adeline had two children, Darlene and Don, currently the sole owners of K&K True Value which had always been a part of their lives. When Darlene was a young girl her dad simply walked down the stairs from their second floor apartment to open the store below. At home and among his employees, Boyd modeled a strong work ethic within a fun, supportive atmosphere. In his mind, there was little room for laziness though pranks were not an uncommon form of entertainment. He told stories of water pipes mysteriously squirting men when the toilet was flushed and how a salesman's briefcase might be found chained to a pole requiring a small fee for the key. At the same time his statement, "If you have time to lean, you have time to clean," can still be heard in the aisles of K&K.

Inspiring a positive attitude in the sales staff at K&K brought a lighter side of life to the store that extends to the helpful service K&K customers have come to expect today. In 1972, K&K moved to its current location at 1818 Grant Street, adding new departments, partners and employees. With close to 75,000 items contained in under 60,000 square feet, knowledgeable customer service is still the store's biggest strength and essential to the success of the business. If an employee is ever unsure of something, they know someone else is always available to ask for assistance. Good teamwork is a quality they've found to be invaluable.

Boyd semi-retired in 1979 but continued to come to work frequently. He loved to wait on customers and give everyone a hard time, but his new schedule also gave him the opportunity to pursue his outside interests. In his younger years, Boyd had piloted his own plane, creating many airborne adventures for his family and friends. He often joked that, "Any landing you walk away from is a good one." As an avid traveler and fisherman, Boyd also made several cross-country trips with Adeline in their travel trailer. Every summer they'd head out west, while the winter months often sent them on the road to Florida. His wanderlust took them from Mexico to Alaska, Denmark and China, yet they always returned to their home in Quad Cities.

Simple, modest and humble in his everyday living, Boyd's deepest contributions were not

widely known. Whether it was groceries or Christmas gifts, his caring, generous spirit moved him to help those in need. After a good day fishing he'd casually offer his "extra" fish to families who were struggling through difficult times. Others who couldn't afford to fix a household problem turned to him for his handyman skills. No matter what it was, Boyd was eager to help, asking for nothing but a smile in return. To him, these were not extraordinary actions; to not lend a hand would have been wrong. Publicly, Boyd served on the Riverdale Town Council for over 30 years and was a charter member of the Bettendorf Lions Club. A fan of regional sports teams, he also supported the Bettendorf Bulldogs, the Iowa Hawkeyes and Chicago Cubs.

Although Boyd Keller passed away on December 12, 2007, his effect on the Quad City community remains. Neither Don nor Darlene ever hesitated to carry on their father's business. It's true they fell in love with it as much as he did. Today, K&K does \$10 to \$12 million in annual sales and is a staple of Bettendorf's downtown landscape. Boyd's legacy of giving back continues with the sponsorship of several youth and adult community sports teams, donations to various charitable causes and rebates to many area schools. To this day, all three of Boyd's grandchildren work at the store, maintaining a true family-owned business. No one could imagine it any other way, and though it's just a guess, Boyd Keller probably couldn't either.