

ARNOLD'S

FROM:

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By Gary Chefetz

After six months of failed attempts to get an interview with Arnold Dwyer, I was beginning to wonder if such a person really existed. In fact, so thwarted were my efforts that I began imagining I was a *National Enquirer* reporter chasing after Howard Hughes. I'm not sure whether it was gentle persistence or patience, or both, or neither, but I got my interview.

Although a heart condition has forced him to become somewhat of a recluse, Arnold Dwyer is by no means withdrawn from the world. Even during the evening hours his home phone is constantly ringing as business associates confer, subordinates report, and customers' needs are attended to. Running business activities from a kitchen table is particularly difficult for a hands-on entrepreneur with 50 years of business success behind him.

Arnold didn't grow up in Provincetown; however, his mother did. Because his grandparents, the Fishers, lived here, and because his parents had property here, he spent a lot of time in Provincetown. And, throughout high school, while he was repairing bicycles for 75¢ each in the backyard of his parents home in Lynn, Arnold's goal was to save enough money to open his own radio shop and settle in Provincetown.

Grandfather Fred Fisher sold radios to Provincetown residents out of his home during the thirties, the early days of radio. This is how, as a boy, Arnold Dwyer became enchanted with one of the most important technological breakthroughs of the industrial revolution.

So, he continued to repair bikes in Lynn, and managed to keep saving while working, without pay, in a Boston radio repair shop just for the experience. He worked that job by day, and by night he attended WPA Radio School. "In those days," says Arnold, "You couldn't get a job unless you had experience, but you couldn't get experience without a job, so, I had to work without pay to get experience. The experience was worth it: so were the empty boxes!"

"Empty boxes??? Ok Arnold, I'll bite. What did you do with empty boxes?"

"Well, when I came to Provincetown to open my store, I had \$125.00, my life's savings. \$75.00 of that went for half of my first year's rent of \$144.00, and all but a few dollars of what was left went to fixing up the place and living expenses."

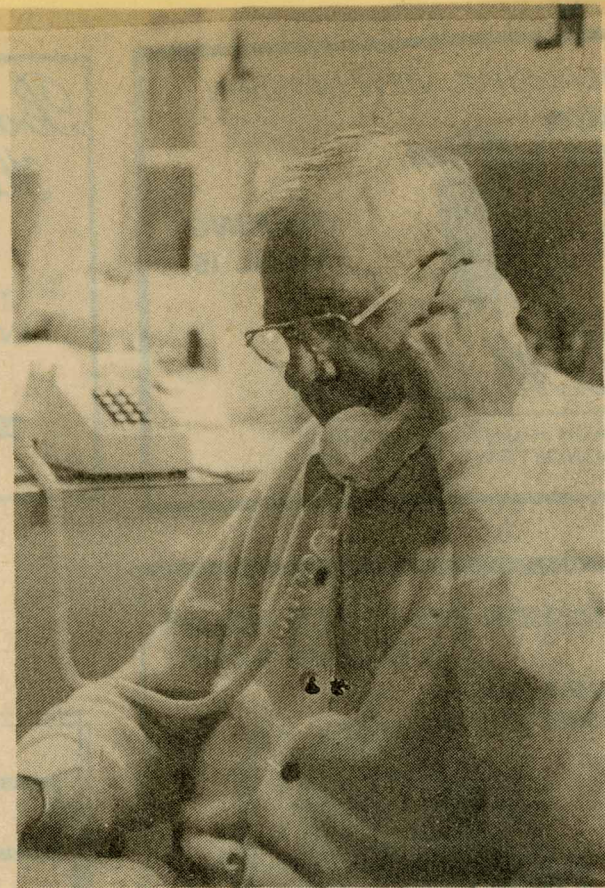
"So you stocked your store with empty boxes??!!!"

"The first thing my father asked me when he saw the store is what I was doing with all those empty boxes."

Well, it worked. Even though he actually had only a few small parts on hand, the illusion was successful. No one ever questioned him when a part was temporarily out of stock, especially since the needed item was almost invariably procured by the next day. And so it went. From a store stocked with empty boxes, Arnold's Radio and Cycle Shop grew to become one of the area's most successful retail businesses.

Through the years both opportunity and disaster have done their bidding. Three fires in one year might have discouraged someone else, but then, too, someone else may not have had the foresight to join one of the nation's first buying cooperatives. For more than four decades of rapidly changing times, Arnold has maintained a progressive approach to his business.

Arnold's now carries almost every brand-name major appliance available as well as home furnishings, floor coverings, radios, televisions, stereos, and, of course, bicycles. "If it's not in the store, then it's pro-



bably in our Bradford Street warehouse. If it's not in Provincetown I can have it delivered, usually in one day, from the Boston warehouse."

The Boston warehouse is maintained by the Key Cooperative of Boston, the cooperative purchasing group Arnold joined. It's now a nationwide concern with warehouses in many major cities. The Boston warehouse maintains a \$5 million inventory and is the reason why Arnold's prices are competitive.

"Many people think that because we're out here in the country that we can't offer the prices that the department stores do. The truth is, because of the cooperative, we buy for the same prices as the big stores do. In fact, some of the big stores are members of the cooperative. These days people automatically get into the car to go shopping when all they have to do is walk a few blocks. Our prices are as low as any other retailer on the Cape. We have to be competitive like everyone else. Plus we offer the kind of service that department stores can't give. Twenty or thirty miles is a long way when your television needs repair. We install and service everything we sell and that's the way we've always done business. It's the advantage of a small town."

The next time you have reason to be in the center of town you might consider dropping into Arnold's. Arnold's wife Ruth, who runs the store, or one of their employees will be happy to answer your questions. No gimmicks, no pressure — just friendly hometown service — whether you're buying or just looking.