

A “Gold Mine” Down the Street

Youthful Explorers and Entrepreneurs

In 1966, Bliley Electric built a new plant on West Grandview. A year later it was finish and ready for business.

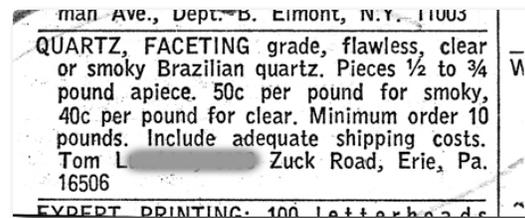
With the transfer of assets from the downtown Union Station railway building, came some surplus raw crystal. It was too bulky and not of a lot of value. Could they drop it out back in the field behind the building? Why not; after all, it was created in geologic activity of the plant Earth. The decision was made and it would be deposited in the field—the company’s back yard. The result was a pile of rocks about ten-foot in diameter and five-foot high.



The surplus quartz in the pile was generally not suitable for routine production, but was being saved for use in an emergency. Slowly but surely, the pile grew smaller for some unknown reason.

As it were, there lived a young man, Tommy L. just over a mile down the road who was developing a keen interest in geology and minerals. He and his “rock hound” friends were explorers regularly looked for interesting stones everywhere they went. This group of three youngsters discovered a “gold mine” of raw quartz crystals at the top of the hill in a field. Assuming it was someone’s trash, they began to harvest it, and take some home for examination. These rocks were equivalent to diamonds in the eyes of these young men. WOW!

Tom took a fancy to this quartz material and started to sell it 50-cents a pound, plus postage, by advertising in a national sportsman’s magazine—“Shotgun News”. This may have been a long shot, but Tom and his friends found it to be very beneficial. So much so, they even harvest it in the winter and hauled it home on a toboggan sled.



When an employee found the ad and saw the address, it was brought to the attention of the management of the Bliley Electric Company. The name and address made it quick and easy contact the “salesman”. To their surprise, Tom L. was but a young boy and barely a teenager. He was cooperative and was told it was O.K. to sell what he had in his parents’ home, but to harvest no more. He agreed.

Tom pursued his interest in geology and later attended Edinboro State College. After his first year, he changed his mind about a career, and chose an unrelated field but a long-term interest in municipal public service.

Reflections

The story of Tom's adventure took place almost 70 years later. He had no knowledge of the nature of the Bliley Electric Company.

A company whose crystal business on Grandview originated through Frank Dawson Bliley's interests in ham radio. In the 1930's crystal frequency control was becoming highly desirable, and soon military and public broadcasters everywhere were using them. The ham radio operators quickly followed.

Tom had a son who developed an interest in ham radio when he was a teen. To encourage and support his son, Tom and his wife soon became radio hams and still are today in 2021. And, the Bliley Electric Company, now Bliley Technologies, is celebrating 91 years in the crystal business industry.

Was there a connection for Tom between geology and ham radio? Probably not, but it is strangely ironic.

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