

CHANGING THROUGH THE YEARS

TOWNSEND AUTO SUPPLY, INC.



This page, top row: (left) Exterior view of original Townsend Unit Parts Co.; (right) Elwin Townsend filling a customer's order in 1931. Bottom row: (left) Son Lou Townsend in front of the newly opened location; (right) Employees John Szczepczenski, Eric Custo, Paul Townsend, Michael Townsend and Norman Townsend.

Anytime, it seems that whenever two people sit down to discuss business, the conversation quickly arrives at one topic: change. Changing customer bases, changing automobiles, changing parts needs and changing business requirements.

But few of us within NAPA have had the opportunity to see — and work through — as many changes as has Townsend Auto Supply, Inc., located in Niagara Falls, New York and serviced out of the NAPA Buffalo Distribution Center.

Elwin Townsend, who will soon turn 76 years of age, has been in the NAPA jobbing business since the days NAPA was originally formed. He remembers helping his

father set up for business in 2,100 square feet of rented space on 10th Street in Niagara Falls, New York. And he remembers opening Townsend Unit Parts, as it was then called, for its first day of business — in November of 1927. Elwin Townsend has made sure his store has sold NAPA's complete parts program from that day on.

Since that time, Townsend Unit Parts has grown and prospered through several changes. In 1940, a new building was purchased, with plenty of space for display merchandising and the addition of a machine shop. In 1958, Elwin's son Louis started working full-time at the store, after having worked there part time while attending col-

lege. And five years later, after making sure his son had a firm grasp of the business, Elwin decided to phase out his own participation in the store; after 36 years in the trade, Elwin decided to name Louis president of the operation.

Needless to say, the young Townsend has seen — and made — some changes of his own. It was Louis who changed to store name to Townsend Auto Supply, Inc. He also moved the business to a new 5,000 square foot building in a shopping plaza, where the facility now boasts 2,000 square feet of display space. With eleven people in the organization, an outside salesperson and radio dispatched vehicles, Townsend Auto Supply