

The Meter Setter

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The Government Camp Water Company

by: Larry Swan,
Ford Meter Box Sales Representative

One piece of advice I was given when I came to work for The Ford Meter Box Company was that I purchase a map, sit down and list every city, town, and village in my territory. I was also advised to list every water and sewer district, public utility district and private water company. I have taken that advice to heart and that is how I came upon "Maryanne."

While traveling through Oregon I noticed a point on the map called "Government Camp." Assuming this was some sort of military installation, I didn't plan to stop. After driving into town I realized it was actually a small town catering to skiers on Mt. Hood. I pulled into a gas station and asked for directions to "City Hall." When told Government Camp was unincorporated and there was no city hall, I asked who was responsible for its water system. The attendant replied, "Oh, that would be Maryanne," and he proceeded to give me directions to her home.

After introducing myself as a Ford Meter Box Company representative, and establishing that she was a Ford user, buying from the nearest Ford Meter Box distributor, she inquired, "Why in the world would a representative from Ford bother to call on me?" I replied, "All of our customers are important to us, big and small. Admittedly, some require greater attention than others, but to Ford Meter Box you are just as important as the City of Portland, and I can be a heckuva lot less formal."

Maryanne Hill is, in her own words, "owner, pipe layer, accounts payable clerk, accounts receivable clerk, receptionist, and janitor" of the Government Camp Water Company. She purchased the company in 1961 from her step mother, following the passing of the previous owner, her father Charles. "During Dad's illness, I resigned my job as a teacher in order to help out. It just seemed natural that, since I lived here, I might as well run the system

myself. After all, I was not new to the area. I moved to the community with my parents in 1932 from Nebraska, and developed my skills as a skier. I had also been helping Dad run the system since he bought it in 1957."

"At first," Maryanne said, "I just made sure the water kept running, the new services were installed, and the bills got paid. However, over the years the EPA and other bureaucratic agencies said that I had to conform to standards designed to protect water users, and I had to start attending classes to accumulate CEU's in order to maintain my certification. Initially, I thought it was the same old story of the government milking us out of all the money they could. Of course, over the years I discovered that most of these conferences were not only informative and useful, but enjoyable as well. I served on the Oregon Rural Water Association board for thirteen or so years, and as Oregon's director to the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) for nine years."

A regional manager for the local Ford Meter Box distributor remembered serving with Maryanne on these boards, and he remembered her buying habits. "She watched our prices like a hawk and if we were a little higher than our competition, she sure let us know." "Of course I watched prices," explained Maryanne, "we only have 259 services in our entire system so we don't generate a lot of extra revenue for those times we have to upgrade or repair our current mains or services."

Maryanne didn't flinch when I questioned her physical condition. "I participated in the qualifying trials for the 1948 winter Olympics in downhill and slalom. I may be over 60 years old, but I guarantee there aren't many women, or men, my age who can keep up with me."

When asked what a typical day consists of she answered, "I only have 259 connections... I don't have any typical days. All I know is that I'm busy all the time."

It was a pleasure meeting you
Maryanne - you are one of a kind.



Maryanne Hill, owner of the
Government Camp Water Company



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