

Celebrating 15 Years!

NEW SALEM GENERAL STORE

EST. 1996

NEWS

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We Thank You, New Salem!

Not every community embraces new arrivals. But 15 years ago, Lori and I got the warmest welcome possible when we decided to open the New Salem General Store. A decade and a half later, the warm welcome continues. If we've been a success – and I think we have – this community has been the bedrock upon which we built our business. Now it's time to party!

Please join me and Lori this Sunday, January 30, for a celebration of 15 amazing years (and, we hope, many, many more to come). You'll most likely leave with a door prize – or at least a General Store pen! It's our small way to say thanks, from the bottom of our hearts, for the huge gift you have given us – your patronage and your friendship!

Rick

Rick Oliver, Proprietor

Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Rick & Lori Tell All!



Rick Oliver, circa 1996

By John DeWitt

If you know anything about New Salem, you know there's one place to go if you need to know anything else. Need the official news? Unofficial news? How much snow is coming? Sure, you know where to go! You know who to ask ... when that thing is broken, or a strange horse is traipsing down the highway, or you can't figure out how to contact ol' Joe, or you need some firewood in February? The answer to just about any local question is

just up the road, inside the doors and behind the counter of the New Salem General Store. Where the staff's knowledgeable, and the man with a knowing smile ... well, he indeed knows.

Even when he's not telling ('cause you always know he knows more). Only now, he's telling all. And what he's not telling, his wife and partner, Lori, is. Turn the page and read our unfiltered, uncut, unvarnished, no-holds-barred interview with the founders of the New Salem General Store. Now you know!

News & Events

*"There's a party going on 'round here!
A celebration, to last throughout the year ..."*

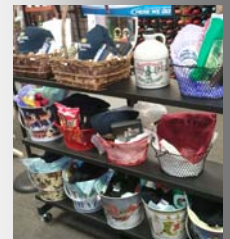
15th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, January 30, 2011 – 2 to 5 p.m.

Folks, this party's a can't-miss event for the whole family. We'll be sampling adult beverages while dishing out ice cream and soda and other goodies for kids (of all ages). The Roamin' Chef will be working his appetizer magic, and Dennis O'Laughlin will be pouring Organic Valley Milk (with cookies too). And the give-aways will be flying, thanks to the support of our local and regional suppliers. Here's a sampling of what we'll be sampling:



- Beers from Lefty's in Bernardston
- Rollies Soda from Paper City in Holyoke
- Maple Valley Ice Cream
- Organic Valley Milk
- Dean's Beans Coffee
- And much more!



30+ raffle baskets!

Anniversary Specials

Dean's Special Roast + Free Cup o' Joe!

Dean and his folks have concocted a special roast just for our anniversary. Try out a cup (or just get your favorite blend) for FREE! Just let us know you read about it in this newsletter. Like your free cup? Buy a pound for just \$9.39!

Winter Hours

Monday-Saturday 6 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Sunday 7 a.m. – 6 p.m.

New Salem General Store | 410 Daniel Shays Highway | New Salem, MA 01355

Looking Back, Looking Ahead: **Rick & Lori Tell All!**

John DeWitt: *How did you decide to open the New Salem General Store?*

Rick Oliver: Lori and I had been looking for a while. We both had retail experience – Lori at UMass, and I grew up in a convenience store. We looked around a lot, and then then this place showed up. We liked the numbers, liked the location, so we made an offer. There was a store here already – but it was pretty much run down, dirty, nasty. Ask anybody who has lived here longer about the previous store and they will tell you, it was not a pleasant experience. In fact, at the time we put an offer in, there was a group of businesspeople in town, including Bob Henderson, who were going to buy the building next to me just so they could get milk and bread. When they found out someone else was interested in buying, they backed off.

JD: *What was your plan for the store?*

Rick: We pretty much built it. It's the General Store – a little bit of everything. I thought about hardware and beer-making supplies, but that wasn't what people wanted.

Lori Oliver: Rick had a vision. One of Rick's best ideas was his idea of what the store should look like. For quite a few years, he would draw the picture on yellow lined paper and say, "This is what it's going to look like." For the longest time, I thought that was a far-fetched dream. But when it came a reality with the porch, it gave the store the right look that it needed. To look at what the store was, and what it is now, I have a hard time without the pictures – I would have never imagined what it would have been.

JD: *What was the most challenging thing about starting up the General Store?*

Rick: The initial leap. Not taking a paycheck for six months. After working regular paying jobs until we dove into this, it was scary. I worked every hour the store was open, Monday through Sunday – then we finally hired a part-time person.

Lori: It's a hell of a challenge on your family and relationships. It's very time-consuming. It doesn't end when you leave the store. It's always a part of your life, whether at home or on vacation – a major part of your life that you're always thinking about it as well as always following up on it. If you're not around, you always think about, "Is everything OK?" Even relaxing at home, your mind is always working at how to improve it, what can we do better. I have a fulltime job at UMass, but I come home and do stuff for the store. Rick is always doing paperwork or something. It's a never-ending battle. It's always there.

JD: *So, does that mean you have regrets about taking this path in business?*

Lori: Do I regret doing it? No. It's one of the smartest and best moves that Rick and I have done. A lot of people might struggle – if their relationship isn't strong, it could break it – but it's made our relationship stronger, and made each one of us appreciate each other in different ways than we would have had we not gotten into this.

JD: *What are you most proud of?*

Rick: That when people talk about this place, it's good comments. They walk into the store and say, "What a nice place!" I'm proud of what people say about us. We've developed a good reputation. Someone came in today and said, "I hear you've got the best sandwiches." I don't think I would have ever done food. I grew up doing mechanical stuff,



Lori works behind the counter, mom and sister are customers. Notice there's no deli in the background – the addition hadn't been added yet.



Larry Eaton (left) and crew (above) build the addition to the north side of the store – originally an ice cream shop that didn't work out, the space is now a deli.

maintenance, etc. Food I didn't know – but I had to hire the right folks and learn it. So when people say good things about us, we know we have moved in the right direction.

JD: *Why have you succeeded? Did you always know you'd be a success?*

Lori: I thought it would be a success, but it has definitely been more successful than I anticipated. I give 90% of the credit to Rick. Really, it's a combination of Rick and the community – our customers. We have a strong, loyal customer base and that does a lot for the store itself. Rick as well as our great staff have built that clientele to where it is.

JD: *What are the most important values to have in a store like this?*

Lori: Customer service – without hesitation. If you don't have good customer service, you don't have good business. The customer is always right. And if you didn't have good, strong, loyal employees, you would have a really hard time. You also have to try and provide the services that customers are looking for – and always have an open mind for new services to give people what they are looking for, even if they don't know what they are looking for.

Family values play a piece – in the person that you are and the person you become – and help you to be able to build the business that we've built. It matters because, by having family values, you bring them into your business. That store is a family, mom-and-pop type atmosphere. Generations of families visit that store on a regular basis. If people didn't honestly feel that you have family values, they wouldn't be coming through the door because you pass those values along through customer service.

JD: *Speaking of family values, what was it like moving here and raising your own family?*

Rick: It was good. Emma came to 6th grade at Swift River. Our others were out of grammar school, into high school, so they didn't get to know a lot of the kids in town. Amanda went to Franklin Tech, Anna went to Mahar. We wanted the store to be within walking distance – it's two miles, kids could do that, four miles round trip. They would come here, work for a while, go home – it was good, nothing wrong with keeping them in shape. Anna would walk here then go work at the orchard for Carol Hillman. She was doing a five-mile-a-day walk and stayed in good shape – though people would see them and offer them a ride home!

JD: *So what's the best thing you ever did?*

Rick: Best thing I ever did – we built the addition for ice cream, and we put a deli in as an afterthought. The deli took off and the ice cream failed. The deli was a fantastic move.

JD: *What about the Hilltown Brewfest?*

Rick: The brewfest has been good. It's a lot of work. We have been able to raise about \$10,000 for the New Salem and Wendell fire departments over past two years. I've seen a lot of people from town show up – so they're all very supportive of the fact that it's a fundraiser. They help us put up tents and pound stakes in.

Lori: The brewfest was an awesome idea – again that was Rick's idea. Though sometimes I have a hard time affiliating the brewfest with the store – it's definitely taken on a life of its own. I think it's a great success for the store as well as for Wendell and New Salem. It's nice to get the two towns together working on something.

JD: *Rick has an easygoing manner, but underneath he's an intense, hard-driving fellow. How do you balance Rick?*

Lori: It's not easy! By talking, bounce different ideas off of one another. Sometimes it's hard to balance, and it gets frustrating, but in the long run, he ends up knowing what he wants to do. It might take a while, but once everything comes together, it's more a feeling of satisfaction rather than frustration – especially when you see your ideas grow. And he's been able to see a lot of his ideas grow. For him to be able to see the ideas grow, it helps balance Rick in a different way. By seeing the success of your idea, you're able to feel that pride in what you've been able to accomplish.

JD: *If there's one thing you could say to the community, what would that be?*

Rick: What would I say to New Salem? Thank you for letting us be part of your town and this community.



Above, Rick holds the 2005 Red Sox World Series Trophy in front of the store (Rick swears Jimmy Buffett broke "the curse."). Below, one of the many winter Swift River soccer teams sponsored by the New Salem General Store – this team including Rick and Lori's daughter Emma.



1996—2011



We've come a long way, Baby!

It's been 15 great years and we're still going strong – thanks to our loyal customers and New Salem's community. Please join Rick and Lori for our:

15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Sunday, January 30, 2011 – 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Featuring:

- Tastings of Lefty's Beer and Casillere del Diablo Chilean wine
- Tasting of Rollies Soda (from Paper City)
- Hors d'oeuvres by Roamin' Chef Matt Scotten
- Organic Valley Milk Tasting (with cookies!)
- Ice Cream served by Maple Valley Creamery
- 30+ Raffle Items and Door Prizes including: Okemo tickets, Hilltown Brewfest passes, Patrick Zephyr prints, a Lori Flye handmade basket, Dean's Beans coffee basket, a 5-lb. Hershey's Bar, and Much More!

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