



### **Clinton Charles "Zip" Heth**

Born August 2, 1909, Clinton was the firstborn son of Charles and Elizabeth Heth. Clinton never cared for his given name (He felt it was too formal for him); so he decided early on to go by the nickname of "Zip" (after an old comic strip character that he enjoyed). The name stuck with him for the rest of his life, with very few people ever knowing his given name.

Zip grew up and lived all his life in Lake County. As a child, he lived with his parents and three siblings, Margaret, Raymond and Ruth, in Eastlake and Willowick. He graduated from Willoughby Union High school in 1927, where he played the tuba in the marching band. He loved the big band sound; and

following his graduation, he traveled the United States for a period of time playing in a band and transporting the band's equipment in his truck.

Zip's traveling days didn't last long though. Once he married, he and his wife, Maxine, settled into their home on 351<sup>st</sup> Street, off Vine Street, in Eastlake. They raised their four children, Larry, Paul, Patricia and Herbert, there.

Zip worked at a variety of jobs throughout his lifetime, starting out by following his father as a licensed plumber. He took great civic pride serving many years as a volunteer fireman for the City of Eastlake Fire Department.

Many area residents may also remember seeing Zip driving around Lake County in his orange Ford truck, with custom box, during the thirty-eight years that he made deliveries for the Willoughby Coal and Supply Company. He also served as their night watchman for a time. As a side note, Zip is now one of resident ghosts at Willoughby Supply Company on Erie Street in Willoughby.

I believe Zip's favorite position was when he became employed as a railroad crossing guard for the Nickel Plate Railroad. Here, he was responsible for lowering and raising the gates for the trains that crossed Vine Street in Willoughby before the underpass was built. As he sat and watched the trains



from both the Nickel Plate and New York Central Railroads travel up and down the tracks each day, his true love for the railroad grew by leaps and bounds. He set up a railroad layout in the basement of his home, and loved running the toy trains for the enjoyment of his children. He also enjoyed building the railroad cars that he ran on his layout.

During the 1960's, while helping a friend put in a large-scale layout on the acreage behind his home, Zip had the desire to build this large-scale engine for himself. There is no way to calculate the amount of money he put into his engine nor the number of days, weeks, months and years that Zip spent working on it, along with the attached cars. The amount of time he spent was insignificant to him though because this project was truly a labor of love for him.

After a wonderful, well-lived life, Dad died suddenly from a stroke in 1982 at the age of seventy-three. As his family who loved this kind, gentle and good-hearted man, we are thrilled and thankful to see that Dad's engine has found a new home. I know that he would be so pleased knowing that his engine is being preserved and being displayed where other railroad lovers can enjoy and admire his "labor of love."

Written in 2019 by Zip's daughter Patricia Heth Zirm  
With input from Zip's nephew Donald Schultz and his wife Linda