



Joel Lerner/Pioneer Press

The Shutan family, from left, Scott, Melvin, Mark and Bob have taken over the downtown

business space once occupied by Powell's Camera Mart.

New camera business has deep community roots

By LENA RAYES
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Last fall, when Powell's Camera Mart went out of business in downtown Highland Park, the closing of what was once a treasured family-run store, marked half a century of service to the community.

But not far away, another Highland Park family, the Shutans, were quick to re-establish the business as Shutan Camera & Video.

With three generations of family ownership and management, the Shutans are neither newcomers to Highland Park nor the industry.

The family founder, the late Edwin Shutan, opened the first store, Chicago Camera Co. in 1918 in Chicago.

Today, his son, Highland Park resident Melvin Shutan with his children Scott and

Bob and a nephew, Mark, operate three stores, two of which are located in Chicago.

Like many immigrants who fled their countries in search of more freedom and opportunities, the late Edwin Shutan was only about 8 years of age when he, and his parents immigrated to the U.S. in 1906 from a small town outside Kiev in the former Soviet Union.

At the turn of the century, the photography industry was relatively young and flourishing. He managed to get some education and worked in the camera department of the now-defunct Hillman's department store, before he decided to go on his own at the age of 20.

He passed away in 1962, leaving the business in the hands of his two sons, Melvin, and Harold, a now-deceased son.

Today the heritage lives on, and the family prides itself in the attentive and personal service they have been delivering for 76 years.

The Shutans say customer satisfaction and competitive prices are their biggest concerns. Unlike many camera stores which have big employee turnover, Mark said, when it comes to treating customers properly, "we personally stand behind what we do."

For example, "When customers come back to our stores they see the same sales people and that's important for them in order to build a nice rapport," echoed Scott and Bob.

That's the reason why Shutan does not

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hire “part-time clerks, rather we hire sales people with experience,” according to Melvin.

And it is not unusual for any of the Shutans and their employees to spend as much time needed to teach a customer how to thoroughly operate that first camera.

Although Shutan Camera & Video stocks 95 percent of their products in catalogs, the store has a large selection of videos, cameras, zoom lenses, tripods and camera bags and all photo accessories such as films, lens caps, pouches and cushion straps.

It also offers projectors, phones, and most of all a big selection of telescopes.

“You can look far and wide in area stores and not find a telescope comparable to the selection we have in our stores,” Scott Shutan said.