

Tom Pfeiler: A Life of Achievement

Tom Pfeiler started in the trucking industry while he was still just a boy. That's when he started helping his father deliver Standard Oil fuel to farmers throughout rural Dubuque County, Iowa. As a teenager, he experienced the initial thrill that came from driving a truck, but, as much as he enjoyed it, he still never envisioned that he'd be in the trucking business for the rest of life. His career began in 1970 when a friend helped him get a job as an apprentice mechanic at the local International Harvester dealership. Tom claims that before this job, he'd never thought of himself as a "gear head." He admits that he didn't know a grease zerk from a bleeder valve or a fifth wheel from a steering wheel. But, that did not stop him. He learned quickly and within less than two years, Tom became the shop foreman, guiding other mechanics who were often three times his age.

In 1974 Tom joined the new GMC and "Big Four" dealership in Dubuque as the Service Manager. At the time, it was only the second location for the McCoy Group (Truck Country), and it was the start of a relationship that lasted 30 years. Tom credits his seven years in this position for honing his interpersonal and logic skills and learning the intricacies of part sales, truck sales, and leasing from the perspective of providing customers with great service. He came to understand that providing good service meant not only taking care of the customer, but also the staff he managed. It was here that he developed the motto "Whatever It Takes." He also learned about hiring the right people and dealing with, what he calls the humbling experience of firing someone. After 40 years, Tom still considers mentoring and offering second chances when possible to be his highest professional priorities.

Tom's career in truck sales began in 1983 when he started selling the full line of trucks from pickups to tractors and trailers. He remembers this as a very exciting time in the truck business, as the creature comforts we find in today's trucks had just started to be included. He recalls that at that time, it was nothing to hook a brand new Freightliner or Volvo to a brand new grain trailer and spend the day prospecting for sales while showing off his wares. He fondly remembers treating the neighborhood kids to rides in the bunk whenever a long day ended at home instead of dealership. No doubt those kids, now grown up, remember it too!

Switching to sales gave Tom the happy experience of having his first contact with his customers be a positive one. Rather than having to face an unhappy customer only after there was a problem with a truck, he got to build his relationships with his customers as they chose and purchased their trucks. His positive attitude served him well over the next six years as he worked with owner operators, fleet owners, and consumers, reinforcing his core value of integrity.

In 1989 Freightliner and Truck Country decided to get into the fleet used truck business. Tom took the position of Corporate Used Truck Manager. Along with seven other large Freightliner dealers, they formed a dealers group to market the Freightliner trades, which turned out to be a precursor to FMDC and DTR. He spent the next 16 years building new relationships, hiring new staff, and acquiring new dealerships. He remembers this phase as a roller coaster of high and low inventories. For a time he was responsible for 12 locations with 34 dedicated used truck sales people. Many of the sales people he hired and trained during this time are still successful in the business today.

Thirty years after starting with Truck Country, Tom went to work for Freightliner, joining many of the people he'd been collaborating with for the previous 16 years. The transition

from dealer to corporate executive was smooth, because of the strong relationship he had built with Freightliner. For the past 10 years, Tom has had several responsibilities as a district manager, always interacting with DTNA dealers and Select Centers. Most recently, he's has developed and managed a wholesale operation for Daimler Trucks Remarketing. Tom is happy to acknowledge the many good friends and business partners he's gained through his 40-year career. They have helped him grow, both professionally and personally. His expressed his hope that he has paid some of those gifts forward through his devotion to mentoring and training.

Tom and his wife, Marlene, have been married for 46 years. They have spent their entire lives in Dubuque, the "Pearl of the Midwest." They have two children, Tanya and Jeff. They also enjoy their three granddaughters, Lauren, Olivia, and Ella and their two great-grandchildren, Finn Thomas and Lucy Margaret. Tom is a member of the Holy Family Parish New Mellleray, Peosta, Iowa and has served for 23 years on several committees within his faith community. He has served as UTA Treasurer and as a board member and chairman of the Tri State Transportation Club in Dubuque. He has been a board member and chairman of the Boy Scouts Troop 7 St Anthony Parish and the official camp cook. He also is a booster of the Wahlert High School wrestling team and a member of the Knights of Columbus, Council 5513.