

Charles Cathey

Charles' career began in the fall of 1971 when he joined Nalley Motor Trucks in Atlanta, GA. "I was dating the daughter of the general sales manager," he recalled, "and that got me in the door. I earned \$675 a month, 30 percent of the profit, and a company car. My job was to order all trucks for stock and sold orders, assist all the salespeople, get their trucks through the shop, upfitted, and delivered, plus sell a truck when I had the time, which wasn't a whole lot of the work day." That was when Charles first developed his career habit of "basically working all the time." Charles admits that this isn't necessarily the best way to build a healthy personal or family life, but there seemed little choice at the time. "I had never driven a truck larger than a half ton pickup," he said, "but I had to quickly learn to drive cab-over road tractors, dump trucks, and medium duty trucks. We sold Peterbilt, Brockway, and medium-duty and heavy-duty Chevrolet trucks." The first truck Charles sold was a 1970 Chevrolet C65 with a London-Log body (12' length logs) for \$6,900, including tax! "Today a new engine costs more than that," he said.

Charles spent 17 years with Nalley before he took a four-year break from trucks to sell Mercedes-Benz cars. He worked for two years for Volvo-GMC trucks in Atlanta, (now Vanguard Truck Center), and then changed direction in the 1990s. That's when he went into the leasing business and spent 11 years with Lease-Plan. Charles spent 48 years in the truck/auto/leasing business before retiring after his last stint of 14 years with Black Book. Along the way, Charles notes that he had a lot of fun and interesting experiences.

"The OEMs whose trucks I sold when I was with Nally realized how much I just plain loved driving and messing with Class 8 trucks," he recalled. "Peterbilt put me in touch with Universal Studios, which resulted in my working on the production of Smokey and the Bandit, in 1976. His job was to round up most of the trucks used in the movie. "Hanging out with Burt Reynolds, Sally Field, Jerry Reed, Jackie Gleason, and Dom DeLuise was more than a blast," Charles says. "At the time I never realized how big that movie would be." Peterbilt also asked Charles to spec-out a couple of cabovers for the PGA Tour to be used for transporting their first electronic billboards from tournament to tournament. "I did, and as a result I got to play one of the first rounds of golf at TPC Sawgrass," he said. When Wayman Bishop with Chevrolet asked Charles if he would help in specking out, ordering, and delivering a couple of cabover Titan 90s for NASCAR, he didn't hesitate. "It took me about a second to say yes, and that got me pit passes to Daytona races for several years," he happily remembers.

Charles joined the UTA in 2005 and served on the Board of Directors in 2016 for three years. He continues working with the Board as an advisor. "It is ironic that I worked with Jim Sundy in the 1970s and 1980s at Nalley and met Al Hess in 1976," he said. "Both were very good friends in my early career and it's ironic that I got hooked up with both of them via the UTA. That's probably the coolest good fortune of my career."

In his retirement, Charles is devoting his time to his family. “It is my family that is my life now,” he said. “I have three grown sons, three grandchildren and the time now to spend with them.” Family time is something Charles is catching up on now that his long and successful career has ended. “My sister, a retired employee of the Atlanta Falcons, lives with me in Atlanta. It’s been kind of a long road,” he recalled, “but I consider myself to be a pretty lucky guy to rebuild a few body parts and enjoy being with my family and have more time to work with the UTA.”