

Tom Cullison

Tom Cullison started selling trucks in September 1966. “I was 22 years old,” he said. “I’d been working at the GM assembly plant for 3 ½ years. I hated working there.” Tom admits that he hated dealing with the union shop, and he just didn’t see his future on a factory assembly line. Having realized that life must have something better in store for him, he took it to heart when his friend—Tom Allen with White Motor Company—recognized the young man’s natural ability and saw that he’d have a good future in sales. “He told me that I never met a stranger. That’s true,” admits Tom. “I can walk up to anyone and make conversation.” The elder Tom took the young man under his wing and became his greatest mentor. Now, several years into his retirement, he shares some details of his long and successful career.

Tom’s career in truck sales kept him and his family moving around the country, advancing, and always looking forward to the next challenge. He worked in Texas, Tennessee, New Mexico, and finally, settled back again in Texas. Along the way, he’s sold new trucks and used trucks. He’s owned his own dealership, and he’s managed a lot of people who came into the industry after him. He retired at the end of May 2015 from his position as National Wholesale Manager and Corporate Buyer for Rush Trucks in New Braunfels, TX. He still calls his time at Rush the best of his career. It was the first thing he mentioned when asked to consider the proudest parts of his career. “My 20 years with Rush,” he said. He spoke with joy and pride about his UTA Dealer Member of the Year Award (Central Region) that he won just a few years before he retired. He talked about the people he’s helped train and the ones who enjoy successful careers today. It became clear that Tom’s career brought him many opportunities to feel proud of his achievements. “Almost every day, I’m proud,” he explained. “In my position that’s what I did. Every day I bought or sold trucks. Every day that happened.”

As a man who was so happy and satisfied in his work, it's not surprising that he holds many fond memories. Over the years, it became the work he did to help others be successful that kept calling Tom’s attention back. “I’ve trained a lot of people in my life,” he said. “I tell them ‘you’re either born with the ability to be a salesman or you’re not.’” Tom noted that without this personality trait, it’s very difficult to become a success in sales. He was instrumental in not only training individuals who now enjoy great careers, but in also establishing programs that can take even the greenest members of the staff and show them the ropes. Tom singled out a program that Rush offers, a Boot Camp for salespeople. “We recruited them right out of college,” he explained. “We brought them here to corporate headquarters and exposed them to the sales side of things.” The recruits came directly through Tom’s office where he taught them not only how to sell, but also how to value trucks.

Mentoring has always been important to Tom. He spoke with special pride of his friend Tony Chiarello of Dallas Truck Center. “He’s a good friend of mine,” Tom said. “He was in the car business and had been for many, many years. I was the general manager at FWF Truck Sales, and I helped teach Tony the truck business.” Tom and Tony are still good friends. “He owns his own place and does very well,” Tom said. “He’s very successful.” And this praise comes from a man who understands the meaning of the word. “I’ve loved my work my whole life,” Tom said. “I loved my work, I loved making money, and it was good for me. For a dumb ol’ boy, I’ve done OK!” We won’t argue with Tom about his self-assessment, although most would disagree about the “dumb” part!