

TOWING & RECOVERY FOOTNOTES

DRUGS & DRIVERS
Page 28

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Can't We All Just Get Along? ~Part III~

Towers talk about working with fire, police and rescue

By Sharon Freeman

Two months ago, we ran the first of three installments in the series entitled "Can't We All Just Get Along?" In that first story, police officers talked about their relationship with towers. In last month's issue, in Part II, fire and rescue personnel commented on their fellow responders in the towing industry. In this issue, in part III of the series, towers finally have their say about their relationship with police, fire and rescue personnel.

All highway incident responders – police, fire, EMT, and towers – face crucial, difficult, and often life-threatening roles at a crash site, especially at accident scenes where heavy vehicles are involved. However, sometimes there are

disagreements among them about the best way to handle the recovery and/or rescue at the scene, including who should do what and when and how.

T&R Footnotes talked to a lot of people – all experts in their respective fields – who have a lot of opinions about how to improve this relationship and how to keep the lines of communication open in a sometimes combative environment.

They've told stories of honor and horror and humor. Most important, in this three-part T&R Footnotes series, they have shared their experiences with you and their take on how best to get in, get out, stay safe, and leave the scene in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

"Sometimes fire and rescue think they can do everything at an accident scene. Let me ask you this: When an 80,000-

pound tractor-trailer turns over on a car, how are they going to lift it? Or stabilize the larger vehicle on top of the smaller one?" – Kevin S. Cieciorca, Chatham County (NC) Alignment and Towing; instructor, Big Rig Rescue

It's all in understanding what the other person can do. Kevin Cieciorca has been in the towing business for 18 years. He was aware of the training available to towers, but never thought much about it until he sent his employee to a WreckMasters weeklong class. Cieciorca was amazed with the knowledge his operator brought back.

Cieciorca was intrigued, so he enrolled himself in WreckMasters. In the back of his mind, all the while, Cieciorca asked himself: "Why am I here?" He found him-



Erik Stewart

See GET ALONG, page 6

In This Issue:

RECOVERY TIPS

A TOWING AFFAIR

THE DANCO STORY

Volume 17, Number 7

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THE SALES JOB

What the sellers say about selling you a new tow truck

By Allan T. Duffin

Whether you've spent decades in the towing business or are about to open your first shop, purchasing equipment for your company can be a nerve-wracking and expensive process. How can you ensure that you buy the right truck for your needs at the best possible price?

To answer this question, we went straight to the source and asked distributors and salespeople for their advice. Establishing solid, lasting relationships with good retailers will ensure that you're always able to dispatch the right type of tow truck wherever and whenever it's needed.

Tow truck distributors across the country work with a wide variety of customers, from single-vehicle businesses to giant corporate fleets. "I deal with shops that range from one person to 50- or 60-man operations," said Mike Alvino of DG Towing Equipment and Service. The New York-based company spent more than three decades in towing and automotive repair before becoming a distributor for Dynamic wheel-lift trucks.

Alvino's phones ring constantly. "We get a lot of new guys just starting in the business who call me up to buy self-loaders," Alvino stated. "It's an easy unit to operate and safe for the driver because they don't have to get out of



Denver's Mountain State Truck Center: Robb McNaughton, AATAC Factory Rep; Larry McDaniels, Sales Manager; Steven Cline, Commercial Accounts Manager

the truck. The repo industry is big on our Dynamic self-loaders."

Several states to the south, Chris Taylor of Eastern Wrecker Sales in Clayton, NC sells rollbacks and wreckers manufactured by Jerr-Dan, a division of the Oshkosh Truck Corporation. "We're the oldest active distributor of Jerr-Dan equipment," Taylor noted. Eastern Wrecker was founded in 1969 and originally sold Holmes wreckers. While Taylor's largest clients are corporations with huge fleets of transport equipment and multiple offices across the United States, "the small business owner remains our most consistent and important customer," he said.

Taylor highlighted one example of

Eastern Wrecker's successful sales approach: the company has sold equipment to succeeding generations of owners at the same tow companies, thereby cementing family-type relationships between seller and buyer.

Although distributors use many common marketing approaches to find and build a customer base, the focus can vary by sales region. "We use various publications for our print ads as well as direct mail and cold calling," explained Eben Brady, a sales manager at Santex Equipment Sales in San Antonio. Most of Brady's sales are in rollbacks, but he's also seeing an increase in sales of self-loading

See THE SALES JOB, page 17



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2007 CHEVY C6500
Stock#401717, 215 hp Duramax, automatic transmission, 25,950# GVW, spring suspension, Century 21' steel carrier, aluminum overlay solid rail, 8,000# winch, cable roller guide, remote winch free spool.



1999 KENWORTH T-600
Stock# 816460, 460hp n14 Cummins, 13-speed, 54,000lb GVW, 14,000# steer axle challenger model CH30, serial# ch30t35 0122f99, 30-ton boom, 2-35,000# planetary winchs, air winch free spool, 116" reach 3-stage underlift



1996 KENWORTH T-300
Stock#685313, featuring a 250 hp diesel engine, odometer shows approx. 225,000 miles, 31,000# GVW, air brakes, Century 4024, 20-ton boom, 2-20,000# winches, air winch free spools, cable tensioners, 24,000# 3-stage underlift.



2004 FORD F650
Stock#614732, 3126 CAT diesel, automatic transmission, 151,800 miles, AM/FM CD player, Jerr-Dan 21' steel shark, Serial#21slpb 35105, 10,000# deck, 8,000# planetary winch, cable roller guide, federal amber light bar



1994 INTERNATIONAL
Stock#081261, 425hp CAT, 9-speed trans, air ride suspension, odometer shows 843,000, Century 5030t35, 30-ton boom, 2-35,000# planetary winches, 3-stage underlift, tailboard remote, aero pylon



1991 HI 4700
Stock#339898, DT 466 185hp, 6-speed trans, 88,000 miles, air brakes, Century wrecker 712, 712-0157-c90, 14-ton boom, 2-12,000# winches, med duty truck hitch, hydraulic spades



1988 FORD LTL 9000
Stock#009286, 310hp 3406 CAT, 15-speed transmission, 240" wheelbase, odometer shows 3300,284, Century 925, 25-ton boom, 2-25,000# winches, 136" ca steel body, hyd spades, hdu underlift

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2003 PETERBILT 378
Stock#584643, featuring a C-15 475 hp CAT diesel engine, 10-speed transmission, 399,000 miles, air ride suspension, Century 9055, 50-ton boom, 3-stage boom, 50,000# planetary winches, low rider underlift with 156" reach.



2005 PETERBILT 335
Stock#856371, C7 CAT diesel engine, 6-speed transmission, spring suspension, air compressor on motor, Jerr-Dan 21' steel carrier, aluminum removable rails, 8,000# winch, 2 steel tool boxes with stainless steel fronts, upper floods.



2002 FORD F-550 4X4
Stock#A30112, 7.3L Powerstroke engine, automatic trans., 189,000 miles, crew cab, Vulcan 19' steel carrier, 8,000# winch, remote winch free spool, cable roller guide, Whelen strobe light bar, independent wheel lift.



1983 IH 9370
Serial#B11523, 350 hp Cummins, 9-speed transmission, 50,000# GVW, 38,000# rear spring suspension, 1988 Challenr 6800 T-1, Serial#W39100488, 35-ton recovery boom, 2-30,000# winches, air winch free spools, cable tensioners



1987 VOLVO WHITE
Stock#120537, featuring a 430 Cummins diesel engine, 8-speed transmission, Jake brake, air ride suspension, NoMar Model 2025, 25-ton boom, (2) 25,000# winches, HD tow bar and Whelen strobe light bar.



2006 FORD F-650
Stock#330572, featuring a 260 hp Cummins diesel engine with a 6-speed manual transmission, Vulcan 897.



2006 INTERNATIONAL 4300
Stock#307253, DT466 255 hp engine, 6-speed transmission, 31,000# GVW, air conditioning, Vulcan model V-30, 16-ton boom, 2-15,000# winches, 36" stainless steel tool box, 84" stainless steel body.



2004 INTERNATIONAL 4300
Stock#651201, 250 hp DT466 engine, 6-speed transmission, 29,200# GVW, air brakes, Vulcan model 897, 14-ton boom, 2-14,000# winches, 36" tunnel tool box, remote winch free spools, Federal light bar.



1977 FORD L8000
Stock#090589, featuring a 3208 CAT diesel engine, 10-speed transmission, 210,000 miles, air conditioning, Holmes 600, extendable booms, 2 Whelen mini strobes, upper floods, Zacklift under reach, fork extenders.



1999 IH 4700
Stock#206762, DT 466, 7-speed trans, 25,500 GVW, air conditioning, Vulcan model 896, Serial#896 00503, 12-ton boom, 84" steel body, 24" tunnel box, 2-12,000# winches



2001 FRIEIGHTLINER FL 60
Stock#H59044, 5.9 Cummins, 6-speed, 99,000 miles, 25,500 GVM, 2001 Century 602/6500, Serial#602-3160-f01, 10-ton boom, 2-8,000# winches, remote winch free spool, 84" Daytna body



2006 HINO
Stock#S50075, featuring a 220 hp 6-cylinder engine, automatic transmission, 25,500# GVW, pw, Century 21' steel carrier, 8,000# winch, remote winch free spool, cable roller guide, removable rails.

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TOW LINES

Letters to the editor from our readers

T&R Footnotes invites and encourages readers to submit letters on any topic by email to the editor at bcandler@traderonline.com or by snail mail to Bill Candler, Towing & Recovery Footnotes, Dominion Enterprises, 100 W. Plume Street, Norfolk VA 23510. Publication and editing of letters will be in the editor's sole discretion.

To the Editor:

I just finished reading the "Can't We All Just Get Along?" article. Though I agree with everything in the article, there is still one major factor that is a constant problem in the towing industry – favoritism.

I am the owner and operator of Hart Towing and Service in Waterloo, New York. Waterloo is a small rural village in a small rural county. Here we have village police, sheriff departments, and the NYS police all in the same area. I am also a lieutenant in our Fire Department, the captain of our department's Fire Police, and the president of the county Fire Police Association. I am well trained in firefighting as well as vehicle extractions and towing and recovery.

I work hand in hand with all the police agencies; however, I'm not a "political nut." I do not agree with the policy of the "It's who you know, not what you know" adage, but that seems to be a huge factor in this area as well, I'm sure, in others. I do not perform favoritism to the police for such activities as repairing their personal vehicles free of charge, or practically free of charge, in return for the expected majority of towing calls from the police agencies.

I'm a firm believer in a fair towing rotation list for the nine different towing companies here. I'm pretty much constantly monitoring the "duty calls" of the police agencies to make sure that the dispatchers are going by the list; however, on a regular basis, there are

those dispatchers or on-scene officers who favor a certain tow company and it begins to sound like a broken record: "Such-and-such towing is en route" or "Your duty hook is such and such," which normally is the same company.

When this happens, I'm right on the phone to dispatch and inform them that the same company has gotten the last five duty hook calls. I never mention that the drivers are untrained and just "off the street" people. All I ask is that they go by the list as it was planned.

*"Trust me,
learning as
you go is
very expensive."*

— Jon McAulay

At times it's like beating my head against the wall. So, with that said, me and my personnel are trained firefighters and trained tow operators and we work hand in hand with the local firefighters and on-scene police personnel, but I can't for the life of me seem to beat the favoritism factor. Thank you for letting me vent.

Lynn Swinehart

Hart Towing and Service
Waterloo, New York

To the Editor:

Just a note of thanks for the articles on the WTRAA scholarships and the article on Virginia Bertling, the class of 2006 Hall of Fame inductee and also a member of WTRAA.

Your paper does a fine job of highlighting women who are involved in the towing industry and I for one really appreciate that. I believe women play important roles in this industry and I thank you for your continued support.

I received several emails from the article you did this past spring on WTRAA and we also acquired a few new members.

Gerri Roskopf

President

WTRAA

To the Editor:

The following email from Tom Luciano was received by us and others about how to properly tow 2006 and newer International busses. We sent it around to our own list of towing and recovery professionals:

To release the brakes safely:

1. Jack up one side of the rear end to relieve pressure – a must!
2. You must remove both axles.
3. You must cover both axles.

This is the only way to release the brakes.

Do not run with the key on. This may damage the anti-lock computer. The cost to replace the computer is around \$1800. There are some companies this has happened to.

In response to Luciano's email, we received this comment from MWBigtoe@aol.com:

This is not what we were told [about] how to tow a new Navistar school bus. We were instructed how one may release the brakes differently; however, the parking brake system in question has already been recalled in large numbers, so who's liable?

What we were told by Navistar was to unbolt the park brake cylinder from the frame. This would relieve the cable actuator tension, thus relieving the park brake pressure. Label "inactive" on steering wheel, notify service manager.

I have a good relation with Navistar and will check if there has been any changes we were not informed of, but to my knowledge the above action is still what Navistar suggests. Anybody got anything in writing?

And we also heard from an old friend of T&R Footnotes:

See TOW LINES, page 11

Towing & Recovery Footnotes®

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Coming Clean

Handling complaints this way leads to satisfied customers

By Stormin Norman Horton

Not Our Problem

On Friday after Thanksgiving, which in the retail world is called "Black Friday," one of the "big box" stores advertised a television with some features that I had been looking for. Not only did the store advertise the features I wanted, they had the TV at a killer price.

So my wife went down, stood in line, and bought and paid for the television that was advertised in the paper. A week or two later, we got a call from the store saying that we could come pick up our new television. I picked it up, got it home, un-packed it, and lo and behold, it did not have the main feature on it that I most wanted!

I called the store; they were obviously very busy since this was during Christmas season. I explained that I did not have the specific feature on my new television that was advertised.

The first words out of the clerk's mouth were "Well, that's a very good question." I waited for the answer, but it never came. I was told to speak with another clerk in the electronics department. I called back several times and left messages for the manager in the department but I received no return calls.

More Calls, No Results

I called back and spoke with another clerk and explained the situation again and got the exact same response as my first call: "Well, that's a good question." Finally I asked for the store manager. My call was routed all over the store and then they hung up on me. I called back and, believe it or not, the same thing happened again. Folks, I already knew that I had a good question and did not need to be told again that it was a good question.

I again called back and left my name and number for the store manager who never called me back. Finally I reached a point where all this runaround was getting ridiculous. So I wrote a letter to the CEO. I got a response that said that the television advertised did not contain the feature I wanted, that I was mistaken about it – in essence that I did not know what I was talking about and to have a good life. Not once did they suggest that I return it for the proper unit nor state that they would have the store contact me, let alone apologize for the poor customer service. So I wrote another letter and pretty much got the same response again.

Some time later they ran another advertisement and lo and behold, it was my television – and right there in black and white it stated that it had the feature I wanted but now did not have!

Once again I wrote another letter and received a response. I was told that they had a misprint with this latest ad and they printed a retraction. Then to add insult to injury, they said that I had talked to the store manager and he had offered to exchange my television for one with the feature I wanted and that I turned it down!

Since this was the first that I've heard of that offer, I responded that I would take their offer on the exchange. Oops! It's been over 30 days and we cannot do that now. I was then offered a minuscule gift card for my troubles. By this time, I realized that these people were saying that I did not know what I was talking about, that it was my fault and so it was my problem.

"Ask your customer what it will take to make things right"

Never once did I receive a reply about their customer service or lack of it. These people had problems admitting it when they screw up and that their employees could lie to a customer. To them, the CYA was more important than losing business. Didn't they realize that people talk and it would cost them less to just step up to the plate and make things right? All I asked for was what they had advertised. Instead I was lied to, given the runaround, given the corporate shuck-n-jive, and was basically told that I was stupid.

Have You Done This?

If this had happened to you, you would be fuming also! But think about this: if you have been in business for any length of time, isn't it probable that you may have done something like this to a customer? In towing we have the opportunity to mess up every single day since all we have to offer is service.

It is not hard to give an ETA that is shorter than it will actually be. It is not hard to trigger the already volatile emotions of a customer who has been in a wreck or sitting by the side of the road for a long time.

Our customers may not be wrecker people, they may not be towers, they

Carl Black

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may not know the front end of a truck from the back end of a truck, but they are not stupid.

My daughter plays the piano incredibly well. Can I play the piano? Nope, but I can sure tell when she is not playing well. Your customer is no different. While they may not know the ins and outs of towing, they know when something is going right and when something is not.

Talking The Talk

Do not get emotional with your customer. If you are asking the questions, you are in control of the conversation. Finding some point that you can agree on with the customer on will usually take wind out their sails. After all, you cannot reason with a drunk or someone that is emotional.

Repeating the problem back to the customer is good, and it also helps calm them down. Don't stop with "That's a really good question" but let your empathy go beyond that point to "Yes, I agree there is a problem," "Yes, I agree that you are right to be frustrated," and "Yes, I agree that things could have been done better." The point is to come clean and admit your screw-up if that is in fact what happened.

Now you can ask the customer this question: "What do you feel is fair and what do you think is the right way to take care of the problem?" They will be so shocked that someone was actually honest with them that you'll be surprised at how little it takes to make a good customer happy.

A Simple Solution

There's a story about a customer service situation that got handled a little differently from my experience with the alphabet-soup big box electronics store. A couple bought a stove from Sears that malfunctioned and ended up burning some of the carpet on the floor and smoked up the wall.

The couple called Sears to complain and nobody knew what to do or know how to handle the situation. Sears was scared that these people were going to sue them for some unearthly amount. It finally went all the way up to the top to an executive who actually went to their house.

The couple told him what had happened and the executive agreed that yes, there was a problem. He asked them a question that had not been asked to this point: "What would you like for us to do?"

Now when you ask someone that, it does not mean that you are going to do what they ask of you. You are just finding out what it is that they want. You'd be surprised how often what a customer wants is much less than what we have conjured up in our minds.

Making It Right

The old couple looked at the executive and asked him if he could get them a picture to hang on the wall to cover the stain, a throw rug to cover the carpet burns, and some cleaner to clean up the room. Then they would be happy. The executive gladly took care

of those little issues for the customers and walked away with the realization that his expectations of what he thought the customers wanted and what they really wanted was completely different.

So in your towing business, please do not proceed with the assumption that the customer is stupid. Find out what the problem is and if it is your fault, then come clean. Ask your customer what it will take to make things right and then come up with a solution that is satisfactory to everybody. It is more profitable to keep your customer than it is to be a stick-in-the-mud and not take care of them.

Remember, if you want to throw your customer under the bus to save a buck, customers do talk. I just did! ☘

Stormins' Online Poll

Here's your chance to let towers know what's on your mind about the towing and recovery industry!

On Stormin Norman's website at www.stormins.com, you can vote (anonymously) on issues of interest to towing and recovery owners and operators everywhere - and then read about the results of the voting on Stormin's website and in *T&R Footnotes*.

Here's how you voted on a recent question:

How do you handle your accounting?

Choice:	Percentage
• CPA	67%
• Use own computer	0%
• Accountant	0%
• Ledger (by hand)	33%
• I don't!	0%

Stormin invites you to visit www.stormins.com and vote on the next question...

Wilburn To Conduct Advanced LD Course

Towing & Recovery Footnotes is teaming up with Danny Horton Equipment Sales, Miller Industries, GE Motor Club, and Wes Wilburn Consulting to bring the Advanced Level Light-Duty Towing and Recovery Training and Certification Course to the mid-Atlantic region.

This hands-on session will be conducted on Thursday, November 16 in Baltimore, MD from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. According to Wilburn, he has been able to reduce the class price from \$195 pp to \$115 pp because of the support of T&R Footnotes and the other named sponsors.

GE Motor Club will be providing some new high-end vehicles, such as Porsche and Mercedes Benz-style vehicles, for the hands-on portion of the class. Wilburn will focus on many different aspects of towing and recovery, including quicker/safer methods and new ideas from all across North America. There will also be many opportunities to network with other progressive towing operators.

Wes Wilburn has written training and certification programs and conducted them in more than 400 sessions for leading towing companies, equipment distributors, and towing associations across the United States. Wilburn is known for a straightforward, down-to-earth teaching style.

For information and/or to register, contact Wes Wilburn Consulting at 910-486-8928, by fax 910-486-8930, or by email to weswilburn@aol.com

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#3753W - 2006 CHEVROLET C5500 WITH A VULCAN 21' STEEL 6.6 Duramax Diesel, Allison Auto, AC, Am/Fm/CD, 138" CA, 19,500GVW, Pwr W/L, Cruise, Tilt, Remote Mirrors, Keyless Entry, Air Ride Seat, 48" Toolbox w/SS Door, SS Simulators, Galvanized Sub Frame, Scoops.

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#3995W - 2006 CHEVROLET C6500 WITH A CENTURY 21' STEEL 7.8 Duramax Diesel, Allison Auto, Am/Fm/CD, 144" CA, 25,950 GVW, Solaris Lightbar, CHROME GRILLE, Pwr W/L, Cruise, Tilt, Keyless Entry, Air Ride Seat, 48" Toolbox w/SS Door, SS Simulators, Galvanized Sub Frame, 3-way arms, Aluminum Overlay Rails, SIDE WINCH.

#3284W - 2006 CHEVROLET C5500 WITH A 21' VULCAN STEEL 6.6 Duramax Diesel, Allison Auto, 138" CA, Am/Fm/CD, Pwr W/L, Cruise, Tilt, Keyless Entry, Remote Mirrors, Air Ride Seat, 48" Toolbox w/SS Door, Solid Rail, SS Simulators, Galvanized Sub Frame, Scoops.

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GET ALONG

continued from page 1

self responding, 'I'm 50 years old, but I need to know an easier way of doing heavy-duty recovery work.'

He also learned how to do it safer, and more efficiently. "We worked with individuals nationwide. In the morning we had intensive classes—information on percentages, resistance, determining stuff like how much weight was to be moved, how much does it take to upright a vehicle, what are the capabilities of my equipment? In the afternoon, it was hands-on training.

"I came back from the school realizing something very important. You know what your resistance factors are by doing the math, you hook the equipment up, pull on that winch lever, and everything is safe."

Cieciorka doesn't believe the towing industry should be regulated nor does he think education should be a requirement. That said, he thinks that if a tower wants to be the best he can be, while gaining hard-earned respect from other towers, rescue personnel, firefighters, and law enforcement, he must know what he is talking about. And then prove it.

"Don't get me wrong, experience is important, but there is always something else a person can learn," he said. "Training with fire and rescue helps to educate them about what the tower's role could be and his equipment's capabilities. Education also improves communication on the incident site and helps to alter the perception among fire/rescue personnel and law enforce-

Scooby's Tips For Towers

Howard Eagan has been a tower since the late 1980s and in rescue for almost as long. Here are some of his suggestions for towers at a major accident site:

- Park your wrecker in a smart spot off away from the incident. Out of the way. Walk to the side of the scene, unless you are otherwise directed or escorted. Many towers impede traffic, park in a stupid spot and have to move.

- My guys were involved in an incident a few years ago where a tractor trailer went over a cross rail and hit another tractor trailer head-on. We parked our rig and went up to the scene. We sent a kid on our staff out to get coffee and cigs since we knew we were going to be there for a while. When the kid came back, he drove his pickup right up and parked it in the middle of the mess. Cost us some time. Not too professional-looking, considering I was complaining about the site being congested with equipment all over the place.

- Check in with who's in charge, police or fire. Look for a white helmet or incident command vest. Introduce yourself and ask what

you can do. I carry two-way radios on a dedicated frequency. Oftentimes I give the spare radio to the incident commander so he can be in contact with the tow team if the tower has parked too far away to be seen.

- Stay out of the way until the incident commander checks with you.
- Use your time wisely and be observant. If it's a big scene, sometimes you'll have time to call in for any special equipment that you need.

- Carry a first-aid kit in your equipment and, if at all possible, attend a standard first-aid course. It is quite possible you might be the first-response help on the scene.

- Take the first step in contacting and training with your local police, fire and rescue personnel if you don't do it at present.

- Warrant the respect you deserve. Make sure you have proper gear, boots, and safety vests, and that your rig is clean and equipped. A disorganized wrecker doesn't cut it.

- Do the job and do it professionally. Clean up after yourself. Take pride in your work. You don't want to be remembered as the guy who dripped oil all over the New Jersey turnpike.

ment that towers aren't needed at a crash site. Fire/rescue personnel will know what we can do or can't do to help them.

"It makes the job a little easier for law enforcement and fire/rescue personnel, when an 80,000-pound tractor-trailer has turned over on a car, knowing that, if needed, help is just a phone call away.

"I think the towing industry lacks in professionalism and training." – Erik Stewart, Ex-Team Extrication, Port Orange, Florida, employed at Savatech

R-e-s-p-e-c-t. That's what Erik Stewart of Ex-Team Extrication says is the biggest problem faced by towers today. "We have no training standard and this hurts us... Firefighters and police train regularly.

They have to go to school just to get the job. Most any occupation requires some kind of training – even the guy driving the forklift in a warehouse has to be certified.

But not towers.

Stewart is a tower and has been for 20 years. He holds certification in light, medium, and heavy wrecker operation with an instructor's certification for heavy-vehicle rescue and extrication. Stewart also has a BS in engineering.


With Ex-Team Rescue, he's trying to bridge the gap between firefighters and towers by providing training that allows everyone to work together. He wants towers to see why rescue services work the way they do and why proper safety and protective equipment is necessary. He wants these first responders to be

aware of what towers can do, and what capabilities wreckers have to help in certain rescue situations.

Most important, he wants to bring both parties together, to train together, to establish trust so that when the real thing happens, it's done right.

According to Stewart, the Ex-Team is in the process of establishing a training program that should go nationwide soon. With help from several state firefighters associations, the Ex-Team is getting accreditation for CEUs for firefighters. They will be listed as new tech training at operations level, and have met and exceeded the current NFPA standard.

"The tow industry needs to set its own standards and teach it to operators. The only people who can change this industry are the people in it. If we



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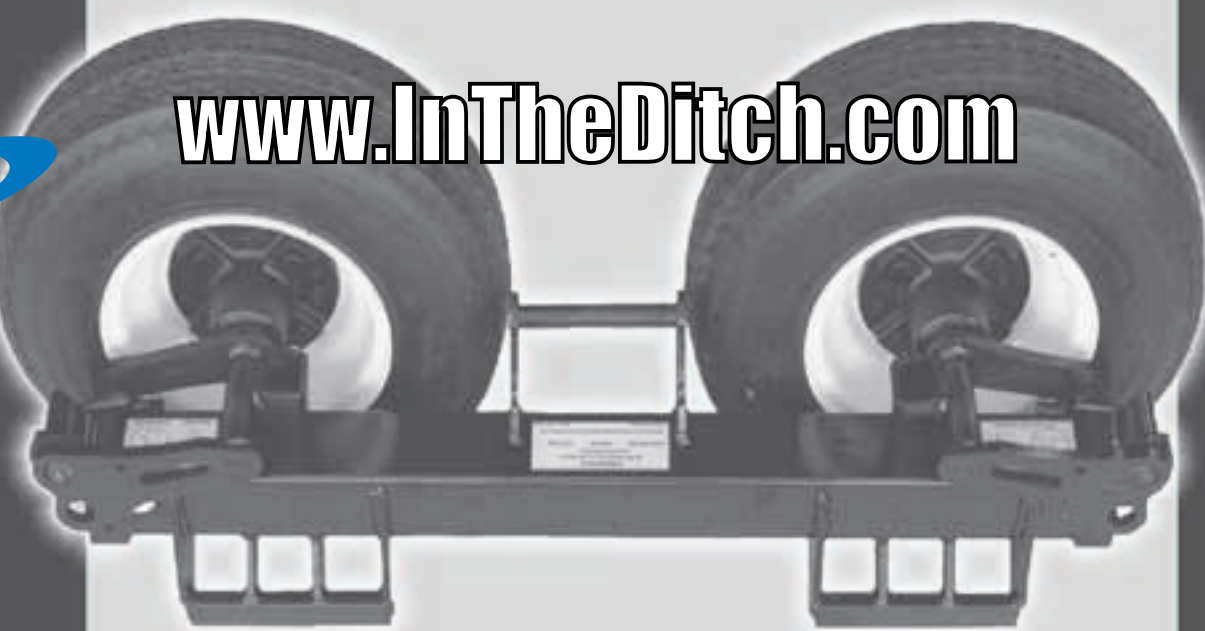
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don't do so, some 'outside expert' will start establishing rules for us and we'll have to play by those."

"One of the most frustrating experiences I've run into at an accident happened when law enforcement wanted the hazardous scene cleared in an hour, and it was a three-hour job." – **Bryan Albrecht, owner of Cavin Wrecker Service, El Reno, OK, and third-generation tower.**

The extrication was taking longer than what the policeman wanted, and the officer was becoming rude and belligerent. He later apologized when Albrecht told him what it would actually take to remove the wreck.

"We're still looked on as 'for hire' companies, not first responders. Perception is better with the fire and EMTs, but is still slow to change with law enforcement," Albrecht said.



Bryan Albrecht



Howard Eagan

"The key is communication, as well as setting guidelines for all parties involved at a crash site. The perception is still there that towers aren't professionals. Wrecker operators two decades ago were garage grease monkeys. They were mechanics whose first priority was the cars they worked on, with towing being the secondary part of the business. There was no formal training and these guys learned by trial and error."

It is Albrecht's belief that younger people breaking into the industry know the importance of training and learning. "It's opening a lot of doors for the industry, and for me, personally. I've taken two Big Rig Rescue classes and in the fall of this year, will be traveling to New York to train with NYFD."

"There are other things a tower can do to keep a dialogue going. Get to know your local fire department. Show them your wrecker; give them a thorough demo of what its capabilities are and the extent of your knowledge. If the only time they see you is at an accident, they don't know what you can do."

Albrecht said that setting and enforcing universal industry standards would help. "What we need are a national set of guidelines for the truck and the equipment on the truck. For example, in the state of Oklahoma, to be on rotation, a

tower is required to have a minimum amount of equipment on the wrecker. That way when a wrecker needs a grade-eight chain to do an overhead lift, we know someone is not going to pull up with grade four. It's a safety issue."

"Why should rescuers spend considerable time at an accident site trying to move a 70,000-pound overturned casualty when a competent tower can do it safer and more effectively, in less time?" – **Billy Leach Jr., developer and senior presenter of Big Rig Rescue, member of NC Emergency Management Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 7, sponsored by Ash-Rand Rescue & EMS, Inc.**

Billy Leach, in collaboration with Central Carolina Community College, Sanford, NC, has developed a popular, hands-on program that provides training for incidents involving big rigs versus smaller vehicles. Leach is a 30-year veteran of the emergency services field and specializes in comprehensive training for heavy truck and bus extrication.

"Big Rig Rescue offers the towing and recovery community the opportunity to interact with other emergency responders. The major advantage is that both responder groups learn about each other's capabilities in a classroom and during simulated accident scenarios. They actually respond to very challenging, yet realistic scenarios such as a tractor-trailer overturned on a car, or a cement mixer rolled onto an auto. Full-size big rigs are crashed, stacked and tilted to provide an intensive learning experience. Rescuers treat each scenario as an extrication, where 'victims' are involved and must be freed," Leach said.

"Rescuers have traditionally tried to move big vehicles with the equipment they have. Most of the time, in a situation involving vehicles such as loaded cement mixers, the rescuers' equipment does not have the capability to lift and secure these loads efficiently."

"By cooperative training with the towing and recovery industry, rescuers are beginning to understand that the optimum tool for lifting and stabilizing larger vehicles is the heavy recovery vehicle. Once they understand that these tow operators are indeed well-trained and proficient, rescuers can integrate that tool into everyday rescue operations."

According to Leach, most towers and rescuers are willing to train together to make all parties safer and more effective at their tasks. While his desire is to see a universal training effort, he reluctantly doesn't think that it will happen since each state, maybe each locality will differ in their requirements for training. "Regardless, it is imperative that rescuers train with the towing community with goals of improving safety, efficiency, and saving lives as paramount," said Leach.

"There's good reason why first responders and towers don't all get along at times. Sometimes these guys get out of their vehicles looking like slob." – **Howard Eagan, J and H**

See GET ALONG, page 8

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GET ALONG

continued from page 7

Supply owner, in sales and training for MATJACK Air Bags, and a former rescue squad chief and state extrication instructor

According to Howard "Scooby" Eagan, that's the tip of the iceberg. "Those rescue guys undergo intensive training and in some areas of the country, firemen and rescue personnel also have to be EMTs. When I was in rescue, we had to re-certify every three years as an EMT. In the towing industry, there is no mandate for certification.

What it comes down to is that some towers just don't want to be trained. Eagan said he's learned at the "school of hard knocks" for 25 years and knows what he's doing, even though the other responders at the incident site has had to undergo some kind of training/certification by law.

"Take a cohesive rescue unit – guys who know each other, have trained with each other. You add the tower, who is often an unknown entity, into this mix. It only makes sense that whoever is in charge is concerned because sometimes you don't know who is going to show up and possibly disrupt, or even endanger, your team.

"Maybe part of the problem is that the tower is a private entity, and has to make a buck to survive and keep his business going. Fire, rescue, and law enforcement, even the volunteers – their paychecks and equipment are

funded by taxes or in some cases, private companies. Might boil down to a money issue.

"The perception by some in the rescue field is that towers are a bunch of idiots. Some are and some are not. In fact, quite possibly in some areas, the wrecker operator could be the patient's best chance of living due to his training and knowhow. It's up to the towing industry to change that image.

"Go to the cross-training seminars and listen and participate. These seminars are popping up like mushrooms all over the place and they are highly accessible. Operators should also attend some type of towing/recovery classes also. The bottom line is that towers, if they want to be viewed as professionals, need to train. Doctors go to school to learn to do what they do. So do accountants and lawyers and cops. Towers should too. They can always learn something.

"And most important, whatever guidelines are established, they need to be set up by the towing industry. If towers don't take the lead, the state or federal government will."

When the dust settles it is apparent that members of the towing industry and other responders have some pretty strong opinions about what works and what doesn't. There are some old resentments between the groups that may never die. But their mutual, ultimate goal remains the same - to help safely remove and transfer victims to the closest trauma center, recover the unit, and open the highway while insuring that those working the crash site stay out of harm's way.

On Training With Towers

I have been involved in fire and rescue operations for the past six years. During that time I have worked side by side with the towing industry on several occasions. From working accidents on the highway to teaching classes across the state, a well-trained tow truck operator can become a valuable asset to an emergency scene.

I have had the opportunity to work with several different tow truck operators, many of whom are eager to help in any way that we ask. A tow truck operator who is well trained can assist an emergency scene with many duties, especially when it comes to big rigs. Stabilization is critical at an emergency scene and a tow truck can be just the tool we need when it comes to this. A tow truck operator can stabilize the heavy obstacles in order for us to make patient contact and for patient removal from a scene.

We really have to be careful when trusting a tow truck operator. Many want to just get in there, pick it up, and call it good, and this is where training with the operators can come into play. When training together, tow truck operators can learn what we expect of them at a scene and we can learn about the correct equipment that needs to be used and how to use it properly.

I like to include tow truck operators in a class as much as possible. Simply watching a tow truck operator work the



Jason Louthan

equipment can tell me what kind of operator he is. Does he take the extra time to properly rig the chains and hooks, or does he simply throw a chain around something a call it good?

When it comes to my accident scene I want the operators that take a little more time and have pride in what they do. I encourage all tow truck operators to get with their local emergency response organization and see what can be done to build and improve relations, and be willing to train with these organizations. If the organization knows that you have a good work relationship, they are more apt to call on you the next time they need help.

– Jason Louthan, Rescue Coordinator, Oklahoma Fire Service Training, Oklahoma State University, and Firefighter, Seiling Fire & Rescue, Seiling, Oklahoma



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THE REPO MAN

Still Can't Get The Car?

Follow the 10 Commandments of Demanding and you will

By David Gandal

So, here you sit. You have done everything imaginable to reach a debtor and now he is on the line, finally returning your call after weeks. He is calling in on one of your trap lines and you can see that he is calling from the number that you already had for him – in fact, it rings at the address that your adjuster has been checking for a month.

And guess what? He doesn't have the car.

This is a problem skip tracers face daily as it becomes more and more evident that probably a third of your toughest skips don't have the wanted vehicle. Still, the skip now is sitting on the other line on hold, waiting as you decide how to proceed.

It's time to demand, and here are 10 things to keep in mind as you take this route to recovering your client's vehicle.

The 10 Demandments

1. Know thy debtor. As you pick up the phone to demand the unit from the debtor on hold, make sure you are up to date with everything that has been going on with the account. Be aware of all addresses checked and know what your adjuster has reported as he checks the addresses. Know what his employer has reported as well. The debtor may try to tell you that the vehicle is sitting where you know it is not and claim to work where he got fired from six months ago. Also be aware of the financial condition of this account. Is it a first-payment default? How much does he owe?

2. Thou shall not be a collector. If the debtor is trying to make payment arrangements that put him in contact with the lien holder, and if you are demanding the unit, make sure your client is aware that they will be billed for services should they accept the payment

arrangements and they are kept. Distance yourself from all discussions of repayment of the loan because the debtor will see you as a collector and not an investigative specialist hired as a third party to recover the vehicle.

3. Ask for thy vehicle. Once you have established who you are and why you are calling, it may become obvious that the unit is not in possession of the debtor. Don't be shy. Ask for it. The bank wants their car back.

"Most folks will come to their senses eventually and then progress can be made"

4. Thou shall not argue. Arguing will get you nowhere. The debtor might have a bone to pick with the dealership who "sold him this piece of junk" or with the collector at the auto finance company who has given him a royal headache. You are now his point of contact and the debtor may feel obligated to give you some grief. Take it and wait. Most folks will come to their senses eventually and then progress can be made.

5. Keep thy peace. Sure this may sound like not arguing, but it is more than that. Not only may you become a sounding board, but eventually you will

become the voice of reason. Stress that this is just your job and that you are trying to do it properly. The debtor knows he can't keep the car without paying for it and he also knows that it may be too far gone to try and save this loan. Stick to your guns, you want the car but remember to remain calm, always calm.

6. Listen to thy debtor. So often even the best of us have trouble with this aspect. Once you have let the debtor know your intentions, shut up. A little dead air never hurt anyone. Let him think this through himself. The bottom line is not a secret here.

7. Respect thy debtor. Whatever you do in this business it is very important that the debtor receives the common respect he deserves as a fellow human being. He has already faced much disrespect along the road he has ended up on, which is directly related to the ensuing repossession.

8. Remember thy client. Another reason to safeguard against arguments and disrespect is that you are representing a client in these dealings. The entire financing industry is a major conservative cog in America and your debtor contacts become their reputations.

9. Thou shalt follow up. If the debtor does claim he will pay the account up to date or if there are other payment questions on the table, then he will be talking to the financier. Call your client as soon as you are aware that the debtor should be calling them and check back to see that this is done.

10. Thou shall not maketh idle threats. Too many skip tracers will threaten a client with civil or criminal



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2006 Sterling Acterra, silver in color, wood grain dash, MBE 210HP, Allison auto, Jerr-Dan 21' alum., stationary head board, Stk#8280



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2006 Sterling Acterra, MBE 210hp, Allison auto, LOADED!! Jerr-Dan 21' steel, removable rails, (2) boxes, (1) basket, Stk#8267

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court action. First of all, there is no debtor's prison in the United States so let's try and stay away from this kind of threat altogether. It is incorrect and even illegal in itself. There is always the possibility of a replevin warrant being filed, yet if this is threatened, where else are you going to take this? Leave all doors open and one of your options will become your success.

The author has nearly 25 years' experience in the skip trace industry, most of them specializing in repossessions. He is a public speaker and offers private seminars. He can be reached at david@shpondow.com. Copyright 2006 by David Gandal. All rights reserved. ¶

*"Driving experience?
I've won several demolition
derby trophies."*



Walt Phillips

TOW LINES

continued from page 3

The big question that you asked, and the most important, was Who is liable? If you have this knowledge and you do not follow proper procedures, then you are liable. If you go forth with ignorance, thinking you will figure it out when you get there, you are liable for your actions.

From the standpoint of the [towing] company, when you accept a call to tow any vehicle, the liability starts right there. You are claiming that your company is capable of safely transporting that vehicle and you trust your driver to complete the task without incident. The company should make every effort to provide towing procedures, even if he/she has to send the driver out to find it.

The professional tow truck driver should do everything that he/she can do to get training on vehicles that they handle, regardless of vehicle weight. By following the recommended procedures from the manufacturer or dealer, the driver should have fewer problems and companies will suffer fewer damage claims. With that point made, the driver who does not research the proper towing procedures on these vehicles should also accept liability.

I have never towed one of these Navistar vehicles. Rest assured, if I had to, I would certainly ask somebody how to safely tow it before I set out on the task. Trust me, learning as you go is very expensive.

Jon McAulay

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1:43 Diecast Flatbeds

Wes Wilburn's Automemories offers four new diecast licensed collector flatbed trucks: a Freightliner Bus C1 M2, a Kenworth T300, a Peterbilt 335, and an International 4200 at \$10.75 each or all four for \$34.75 plus shipping and handling. You can order online at <http://stores.ebay.com/Wes-Wilburns-Automemories> or call 910-486-8928.

New Grease System

Landoll Corporation now offers a Centralized Grease System as an option. The system is an aluminum block mounted at the rear of a trailer in the bumper area. The grease system has grease ports available to service the axles and the traveling undercarriage rollers. It has an easy-access location so a mechanic can service the majority of all grease points on a trailer from one location within minutes.

This grease system is manufactured by Landoll and can be installed as an option on new trailers or sold as an aftermarket upgrade to used trailers to help reduce downtime, maintenance, and overall operating costs. For information, call 800-428-5655 or visit www.landoll.com

Speedcrane At Zip's

Zip's Truck Equipment Inc. has added the Speedcrane to its product line. The Speedcrane carrier combination enables operators to supply improved incident management, operate in tight quarters, handles recoveries in minutes, and minimize incidental damage. A special tire-lifting auto cradle allows loading and unloading without the need to enter the vehicle.

Speedcrane combines lower clearance and long reach with lifting power. Fully extended, an SCR2424 Speedcrane can reach 35 feet and lift 4,189 pounds. At nine feet, two inches, it boasts a hefty 17,241-pound capacity.

Speedcrane can be installed on a single axle or a tandem chassis in a

variety of reaches and capacities. It can be fitted with pallet lifts and handling devices for drywall and other materials.

Speedcrane-equipped trucks can recover vehicles from accident scenes without disturbing evidence important to investigators and can place stolen vehicles directly into forensic labs if necessary. Call 800-222-6047 for more information.

Kenworth Top Ranked

Kenworth Truck Company achieved the highest ranking in customer satisfaction among Class 8 truck owners in the Over The Road, Pickup and Delivery, and Dealer Service Segments for the second year in a row, according to the new J.D. Power and Associates

2006 Heavy Duty Truck Customer Satisfaction Study.

In the J.D. Power and Associates Heavy Duty Truck Dealer Service award, Kenworth was rated the highest for Dealer Facility, Service Quality, Service Initiation, and Service Advisor.

Kenworth has many new products planned for 2007, including the Kenworth T660 and Kenworth Clean Power System, and will invest nearly \$100 million this year for improved facilities throughout North America. Kenworth's Internet home page is www.kenworth.com



Signal Stat's LED lamps



Dieselcraft's fuel test kit

THE GEAR MART

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Signal-Stat LED Lamps

Truck-Lite has added two new Signal-Stat LED backup lamps to its line of LED safety lamps. The backup lamps come in four-inch round and six-inch oval sizes. Both have an extensive pattern of multiple diodes and use standard plug connections so they can be retrofitted to virtually all existing heavy-duty trucks and trailers. Signal-Stat LEDs are completely sealed in epoxy to be less susceptible to shock and vibration and to better resist corrosion and moisture. For more information, call 800-562-5012.

Diesel Test Kit

Most diesel engine problems are related to fuel problems. Diesel fuel has two contamination issues: diesel sludge and bacteria and fungus growing in the fuel to clog filters.

To identify these fuel problems for a proper fix, Diesecraft Fluid Engineering markets two tests: a simple fuel test kit for biological contamination and a lab package to identify fuel instability.

The test kit is a simple dip slide test. The lab package will indicate if the fuel is up to ASTM standards and if there is an unwanted rapid degrading taking place in the fuel. For further information, see www.diesecraft.com or call 530-823-7075.

Auto Body Machine

The Signature auto body frame machine includes an optional pulling tower configuration of three, four, or five round-shaped towers.



Landoll's Centralized Grease System

The Signature's 10,000-pound lift capacity is supported by both the frame's steel construction and the lifting power of dual hydraulic rams.

A hand-held unit on 25 feet of cord controls the Signature's high-pressure centralized hydraulic system. Twenty-foot-long treadways and a seven-foot, four-inch total bed width allow auto repair specialists the ability to work on vehicles of many sizes. The Signature's weight varies, depending on the tower configuration. For more information about the Signature frame machine call 218-847-2608 or visit www.staraliner.com



Kenworth's J.D. Power Award

Help For RV Towers

Master Lock has a new website, www.TowingTroubles.com, which seeks to educate motorists about the proper towing tips and techniques that will help keep them and their recreational trailers safe on America's highways this year.

Sales of boats, RVs, and campers are on the rise, but so are the number of accidents involving passenger vehicles that tow trailers – 65,000 in 2004, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Association, a nearly 20 percent increase from 2003.

The website stresses tips like, "Inspect tires for wear and tear, and check the tire pressure on the tow vehicle and trailer – 40 percent of trailer accidents are a result of faulty or under-inflated tires."

Selling Parts Online

eBay Motors Parts and Accessories is one of the fastest growing categories on eBay, with more than 50 million parts sold on eBay so far. Terapeak has launched a motors research tool specifically designed for eBay Motors Parts and Accessories sellers.

Terapeak's Motors P&A Research will provide sellers with access to in-depth research on the past year of motor parts sales activity on eBay. Sellers will receive reports which indicate the best time to sell, how much to sell for, and what keywords drive profits. For a free trial, visit www.terapeak.com/motors or contact support@terapeak.com.

New towPartners Partner

As most towers know, towPartners is an industry association that provides a variety of value-added services for tow companies and more than 11,000 member companies and state associations.

For more than five years, Sprint Nextel has partnered with towPartners to provide the towing industry with both GPS devices that operate on the Nextel National Network to efficiently manage fleets and walkie-talkies for easy communications between drivers and dispatch. Even more advanced technology allows towers to wirelessly process credit card payments, track inventory, and reroute trucks.

Building on this long-term relationship, towPartners has contracted with Sprint for its member companies to utilize Sprint Custom Network Solutions.

For tow companies that may need enhanced in-building coverage so employees can easily access wireless voice and data services within the facility, this contract provides a process for these companies to easily request and receive in-building solutions when the primary means of communication is through wireless devices.

"In our field, data accuracy and bar coding (for automobile identification and storage-yard inventory control) in real time is crucial," said Jeffrey Godwin, vice president of towPartners. "Credit card swiping is gaining acceptance as towing companies are trying to make it easier for their customers to pay, as well as providing a method to reduce bad debt."

Sprint also helped towPartners arrange a new discount program for members for Xora GPS applications. Xora and other GPS solutions enable towing companies to manage their fleets more efficiently through dispatching, asset

tracking, and routing a truck to a particular location.

Tow companies also benefit from SMS/2way messaging which is often utilized for electronic dispatching through an application developed by towPartners' parent company, towXchange. The TOPS dispatch and towing company management product from towXchange includes several data offerings designed for the Sprint Nextel network.

Helping The Survivors

The relationship between Sprint and the towing industry goes beyond just providing technology. Sprint has donated \$20,000 to the towPartners-supported Survivor Fund, a new non-profit organization that provides financial assistance to family members who have lost a loved one while on the job, and has become its first Diamond Supporter.

"This generous donation by Sprint Nextel will get us one step further toward our goal of raising \$500,000 for the Survivor Fund," said George Connolly, president of the International Towing & Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum in Chattanooga, TN.

The Survivor Fund complements the new Wall of the Fallen memorial recently dedicated at the museum to recognize individuals who have been killed in the line of service while aiding the motoring public. More information can be found online at www.thesurvivorfund.com

towPartners offers discount programs and other benefits to the towing and recovery industry as well as related industries. towPartners currently has over 11,000 members nationwide and is the primary benefits provider to the towing industry and to many industry associations and groups. For more information, visit www.towpartners.com.

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SCAVING THE TOWING INDUSTRY SINCE 1984

THE TOW SHOP

Danco's Driving Force

Building tough carriers for towers on the move

By Lynn Ford

Dan Reynolds always knew he was going to run his own business. In the late 1960s, Reynolds took secretarial and bookkeeping classes with the girls in tenth grade so he'd know how to keep track of the money. Some people made fun of him then, but he's still running his own business more than 40 years later.

As president and CEO of Danco Products, the 58-year-old Reynolds has made his mark in the towing industry. He was the "Dan" part of Jerr-Dan and, today Danco is a recognized manufacturer of a full line of rollback carriers ranging from five-ton, 15-foot models to 15-ton, 30-foot ones. The company also builds swivel car carriers with a 70-degree range of swing, light- and medium-duty wreckers and eight-, 10- and 15-ton haulers for moving heavy equipment.

A year ago, the company opened a new 17,000-square-foot production building near Reynolds' hometown of Greencastle, Pennsylvania, just across the Maryland line on I-81. The facility, in addition to the existing 40,000-sq-foot one, is dedicated to new truck manufacturing with about half dedicated to installing and assembling rollbacks and half to state-of-the-art paint bays.

With the introduction of the Prowler at the Baltimore show last November, Danco is going for a larger market share. Designed to tow small cars up to mid-size trucks, the Prowler is built in-house from start to finish and rounds out the company's Grizzlies line of carriers and heavy-duty farm equipment haulers.

"We built it with an integrated boom and integrated wheel lift and no A-frame," Reynolds said. "Everybody always complained about A-frames. So we're building eight- and 16-ton models instead. We've got people waiting."

Back in the Day

Reynolds' story started back on the farm, he said. His dad had a strict policy: If you break it, you fix it. "There was a lot of limestone rock on that farm, so you broke something every once in a while," he recalled.

His father had another rule, too. "He was an older fellow who didn't believe in welding. I guess he thought it was too hard to get it back apart if you made a mistake," said Reynolds. "You had to fabricate and drill and use bolts to put things together."

By tenth grade, Reynolds knew he wasn't following in his dad's farming footsteps. "I don't like cows and there wasn't any money in hogs or beef," Reynolds said. "I don't like chickens either."



Danco's Dan Reynolds

So, naturally, what did Reynolds do the minute he got out of high school? He went to work welding in a machine shop. "My dad was so opposed to welding," Reynolds said, "but our business is made up of welding. That's how we put it together today."

On His Own

In 1967, Reynolds went to work for a machine shop that sold out to Grove Manufacturing, a company in Shady Grove, Pennsylvania that builds the world's largest cranes. Within two years, he was ready to get out on his own. In 1969, Jerr-Dan was launched with several partners.

In 1973, Reynolds went solo. Danco was born with a lot of machine shop equipment and little cash. However, Reynolds had a strong customer base. The company built 85 to 100-foot scissor lifts, specialized in scraper blades for snow plows, and made sandblasting equipment. Reynolds purchased the Grove Agricultural division, which produced durable, long-lasting products. The company also started building heavy-duty haulers for tractors, farm equipment and other weighty items.

Still, Reynolds wasn't satisfied. "I wanted to get into a product of my own," he remembered.

Shifting Gears

"People got to talking about us. They were impressed and, before long, they were coming to us to haul automobiles and build car carriers," Reynolds said.

See DRIVING FORCE, page 16

Customer Towing Equipment

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1997 Auto Car, 500hp Cat, 54,000 GVW, 18 spd.w/ 2000 Vulcan V60 30 ton wrecker, details @ www.cantow.ca

1986 FREIGHTLINER INTERSTATE
1986 Freightliner Classic 300hp Cat, 10 spd, 32,000 GVW, Interstater 25 ton wrecker, details @ www.cantow.ca

1973 MACH 6x6
1973 Mach 6x6, 237hp Mach, 5 spd. transfer, Remco hydraulic wrecker with 5 winches, details @ www.cantow.ca

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#W2363 - 2006 INTERNATIONAL 4300

DT466 50 State 225 hp, 6 speed manual, air compressor with tank, Jerr- Dan 21RRSB 21 FT steel 2 car carrier, 102" wide removable rail, air shift PTO, (2) 36" tool boxes, simulators, tow lights.

\$62,900



#W2482 - 2005 CHEVROLET C5500

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#T1104 - 2005 CHEVROLET LS 3500 4X4 SILVERADO

300 hp Duramax Diesel, automatic, Jerr-Dan HPL35, aluminum dual Line, 3500# underlift, dual 8,000# winches, T37 pivoting wheel grid, simulators, tow lights.



#T1073 - 2005 CHEVROLET C4500

300 hp Duramax diesel, automatic, electronic exhaust brake, Jerr-Dan HPL60 Aluminum Cougar Wrecker, 6000# underlift, dual 10,000# winches, tow lights, T37 pivoting wheel grid, simulators.



#W2401 - 2005 FORD F450 XLT 4X2

Trim, 6.0L Diesel, automatic, cab steps, express 301M composite wrecker body, single line, simulators, wrecker light, tow lights.



#W2398 - 2005 FORD F450 XLT 4X2

Trim, 6.0L diesel, automatic, cab steps, 34 gallon fuel tank, Vulcan 810 Intruder, single line wrecker, light pylon, simulators, tow lights.



#W2160 - 2004 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

Featuring a 6.0L diesel engine with an automatic transmission, cab steps, 34-gallon fuel tank, Recovery Solutions 512 wrecker, 8-ton boom, dual 8,000# planetary winches, simulators.



#W2600 - 2006 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

Trim, 6.0L diesel, 6-speed manual, cab steps, Vulcan model 882 dual line wrecker, SS 90" wide, 24" tunnel tool box, simulators, tow lights.



#W2599 - 2006 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

Featuring a 6.0L diesel engine with a 6-speed manual transmission, cab steps, Vulcan Model 882 90" dual line wrecker, 24" tunnel tool box, simulators, fender flares and tow lights.



#W2605 - 2006 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

Featuring a 6.0L diesel engine with an automatic transmission, cab steps, Vulcan Model 882 dual line wrecker, 24" stainless steel tunnel tool box, simulators, fender flares and tow lights.



#W2575 - 2006 FORD F550 4X4 SUPERCAB XLT

Trim, 6.0L diesel, automatic, cab steps, polished aluminum wheels, Chevron model 410A twin line wrecker, stainless body options, wired remote control, tow sling w/chains.



#W2569 - 2006 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

Trim, 6.0L diesel, automatic, advanced security group, Chevron 408A twin line wrecker, auto load, stainless body option, wrecker light, simulators, tow lights.



#W2635 - 2007 FREIGHTLINER M2

Conventional Cab, Mercedes Benz 230 hp diesel, 6-speed manual, air compressor, (2) 40 gallon aluminum fuel tanks, Century 21ft Steel 2-car carrier, removable rails, (2) 48" steel tool boxes, simulators, electronic shift PTO, chains, tow lights.



#W2531 - 2006 FORD F650 4X2

Regular cab XLT Trim, 5.9L 230 hp Cummins diesel, Allison automatic, air compressor, DRVR seat air suspension, Chevron 21.5ft steel 2-car carrier, (2) 49" aluminum tool boxes, simulators, all chains, tow lights.



#W2640 - 2006 INTERNATIONAL 4300

DT466, 220 hp diesel, automatic, air brake, air suspension, Chevron 21.5ft steel 2-car carrier, "series 10", removable rail sides, simulators, air free spool, all chains, tow lights.



#W2648 - 2007 INTERNATIONAL 4300

Extended cab, DT466 220 hp diesel, Allison automatic, air compressor, Chevron 21.5 ft aluminum 2-car carrier, removable rails, (2) 49" aluminum tool boxes, all chains, tow lights, simulators.



#W2565 - 2007 INTERNATIONAL 4300

Extended cab, DT466 220 hp diesel, Allison auto, air brake, exhaust brake, polished alum. wheels, Jerr-Dan 21NGAR 21' aluminum 2-car carrier, removable rails, (2) 36"x18"x18" tool boxes w/SS doors, tow lights.



#W2624 - 2007 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

6.0L diesel engine with an automatic transmission, cab steps, 34-gallon fuel tank, Century 19' aluminum 2-car carrier, removable rails, simulators, hot shift PTO, all chains, tow lights.



#W2623 - 2007 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

Trim 6.0L diesel, automatic, cab steps, 34 gallon fuel tank, Century 19ft aluminum 2-car carrier, removable rails, simulators, hot shift PTO, all chains, tow lights.



#W2621 - 2007 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

Features a 6.0L diesel engine with an automatic transmission, cab steps, 34-gallon fuel tank, Century 19' aluminum 2-car carrier, removable rail, (2) 49" aluminum tool boxes, simulators, all chains, tow lights.



#W2622 - 2007 FORD F550 XLT 4X4

Trim, 6.0L diesel, automatic, cab steps, 34 gallon fuel tank, Vulcan 19ft aluminum 2-car carrier, removable rails, (2) 48" steel tool boxes, simulators, hot shift PTO, all chains, tow lights.



#W2618 - 2007 FORD F550 XLT 4X2

Featuring a 6.0L diesel engine, automatic transmission, cab steps, 34-gallon fuel tank, Jerr-Dan 19NGAR aluminum 2-car carrier, removable aluminum rails, (2) 36"x18"x18" tool boxes w/SS doors, simulators.



#W2652 - 2001 CHEVROLET C6500 SLT

CAT 3126 7.2L 210 hp diesel, dual 35 gallon fuel tanks, Jerr-Dan 21RRSB 21 ft steel 2-car carrier, removable raised rail, work lights, simulators.



#W2612 - 1997 FORD F350 XL 4X4

Trim, 7.3L diesel, 6-speed manual, Vulcan model 881 single, tool box, wrecker light, aux tow lights.



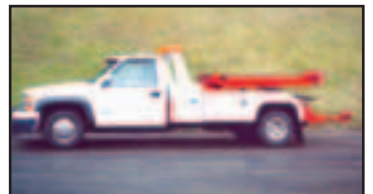
#W2666 - 1996 FORD F350 XLT 4X4

Trim, 7.3 diesel engine, 5-speed manual, Century 412 dual line 60 CA, wrecker light, spotlights, tool box, work lights, 84,311 miles.



#W2619 - 2000 FORD F450 XLT 4X4

7.3L power stroke turbo diesel, 6-speed manual, Vulcan model 882 dual line wrecker, 24" tunnel tool box, two tool boxes, free spool, chrome rails, visor.



#W2515 - 1999 CHEVROLET CK30 LS 4X4

454 Vortec gas, 5-speed manual, Vulcan model 882 dual line wrecker, tunnel tool box, wrecker light, push bumper, visor.

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DRIVING FORCE

continued from page 14

In 1983, Danco added the manufacturing of rollbacks to its production.

Things got interesting when Reynolds attended the 1995 tow show put on by the Professional Wrecker Operators of Florida. A designer brought in a swivel rollback that turned 35 degrees, left and right, and wanted Reynolds to assess the model. "I went over and looked at it," Reynolds said. "I told him the concept was good, but there was going to have to be a lot of engineering or it would never work for the tower out in the field."

Initially, Reynolds turned him down, but told him to come back if he couldn't find anybody else. "Nobody else was interested," Reynolds said and found himself tackling the project. "He was rotating with a cable, with no positive stop one way or the other. It was all visual. But it had to be done with hydraulics attached to the turntable," Reynolds explained. "We worked on that, perfected that."

The patented swivel rollback was soon added to Danco's line. According to Reynolds, the carrier's unique maneuverability also enhances operator safety in highway recovery and makes crowded parking lots easier to handle.

The Next Stage

Danco's next project began by filling a need. "You just have to keep your eyes open," Reynolds said. "We were coming back from the Florida show seven years ago. I kept seeing pickup trucks pulling trailers with three or four cars on them."

Reynolds said he cringed every time one went past. "They didn't have the braking and stopping capacity," he noted. "Every one was an accident waiting to happen." Reynolds told his son, William, that they needed to design a three-car carrier that didn't require a CDL license.

The two looked at transferring weight and drafted a model that would put one car over the cab, one on the bed, and one on the wheel lift. The combination only put 200 pounds on the front axle and was within the licensing limits.

"That's the Pac Rat. That's been a good seller for us," Reynolds said. The company added a 14-function wireless remote that operates the main and upper deck functions, two winches and wheel lift, keeping the operator out of harm's way.

The Philosophy

"I see it so often," said Reynolds. "A guy wakes up in the morning and decides he has to have a new truck. By nightfall, he's got a new truck, whether it's right, wrong, or indifferent." For this reason, Reynolds said Danco always keeps the needs of the operator in mind, and the company often incorporates customers' ideas into more user-friendly products.

After watching towers get pulled in by gadgets and accessories, Reynolds advised towers to keep it plain and simple and make sure the purchase has a money-making purpose. "Fancy chrome and carpets don't make you money," he said. "You put a lot of stuff on your truck, then it breaks down and you've got to get it worked on. Anytime you're down, you're not making money."

"You need to plan," he continued, "you need to study what's on the market and what will work best for you, not be persuaded by a high-pressure salesman or put stock in bells, frills, and fancies."

Family Matters

Reynolds is proud that his two sons have joined the business; he said it gives him a great affinity for the towers he's been designing and building for all these years. "Most towers are family-owned and operate just like us," Reynolds said. "We know what it takes to make things go. We want towers to know that because a lot don't realize we manufacture everything from start to finish."

Reynolds' oldest son, William, started in the business driving bolts into holes with a hammer. Today, the 30-year old vice-president of Danco has an associate degree in engineering and operates the AutoCAD for the company. Reynolds' younger son, Robert, is a national sales rep for the company.

Reynolds' wife oversaw the books for the company for a number of years.

"The first 16 years we were married, we never took a vacation," he recalled. "We worked from the time we got up till 10 or 11 at night. I'm here 12 hours a day yet, five days a week, and on Saturdays for three-fourths of the day."

Reynolds said the key to his success has been "stick-to-it-iveness" and the grace of God. "God's been good to me and blessed me with good health."



The Danco plant

THE SALES JOB

continued from page 1

wheel lifts, which prove useful in quickly clearing freeway incidents.

Brady also pointed to the effectiveness of Internet advertising. "One new market that has increased significantly is our web site traffic," he said. To maintain solid contacts in the industry, Santex participates in local and state towing associations and product expos. "We really enjoy seeing our customers and their families at tow shows and other events."

The Personal Approach

Maintaining an aggressive outreach strategy is critical for newer distributors like Santex, whose customers operate primarily in central and southern Texas. "We try to concentrate on our local area first and foremost," said Brady. Santex is gradually stepping up its marketing as the company grows. Key to the plan is the construction of a brand-new sales facility, with a nationwide sales campaign to follow.

With so many different ways to reach potential customers – print media, television and Internet, among others – Brady also likes to spread the word the old-fashioned way. "My favorite type of advertisement is word-of-mouth," he said. "It's free, and if a customer is out there recommending you to his friends, that really lets you know you are doing your job."

In the city of Dallas, General Manager Jean Steward of Tex-Star Equipment Sales spends a lot of time on the road. "I travel as often as possible to meet new



Customers Toby and Raymond Taylor of Home Motors in San Angelo, TX are proud of their new "Bear Necessities" wrecker from Tex-Star Equipment Sales in Dallas

people and show them our product," she said. This personal approach has paid off extremely well for the company: 65 percent of Tex-Star's business comes from repeat customers. Referrals account for approximately 23 percent of sales, while the remaining 12 percent of customers are brand new to the company.

Tex-Star distributes equipment built by Miller Industries, which includes the Century, Challenger, Champion, Eagle Claw, and Holmes product lines. "We mount these on the chassis of the customer's choice except when building demos," said Steward. "In those instances I try to use all brands: Chevrolet, Ford,

Freightliner, International and others."

Steward sells equipment to private companies as well as the United States Army. On occasion, she said, Tex-Star also builds trucks for export overseas. Clients from the private sector range in size from one-truck operations to corporate fleets of 20 vehicles or more. "Most of our larger customers have trucks ranging from auto-loaders (repo units) to 60- to 75-ton rotators," she noted.

For Steward, follow-through after a sale is extremely important. "I try to let all my purchasers know that I support them and their business," she said. To keep current on their customers' needs, the

staff at Tex-Star sponsors and attends multiple training schools. The company also supports the Texas Towing and Storage Association's educational courses, traffic incident management training and legislative efforts.

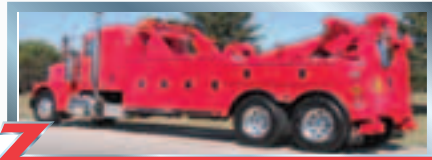
Prepare To Purchase

With such extensive knowledge and marketing firepower, the salesperson is well equipped to make a sale. But the road from initial pitch to final handshake can be a bumpy one. What can the potential customer do to make sure he or she purchases the right tow truck at a fair price?

First, salespeople recommend that customers gather as much information as they can about the type of truck they need: What will the truck be used for? What types of terrain and climate will the truck operate in? How much can you afford to spend? If you're starting a new company, do you have a sound business plan?

From a purely managerial standpoint, Chris Taylor of Eastern Wrecker Sales recommends that towing company owners ensure that they deal with legal issues immediately. "For example, having a truck with enough GVWR – Gross Vehicle Weight Rating, a federally mandated system of rating the capacity of a truck chassis – to carry your load both safely and legally is more important than ever. Getting one's company set up correctly – incorporating, for example – and getting the proper insurance and licensing will protect your investment."

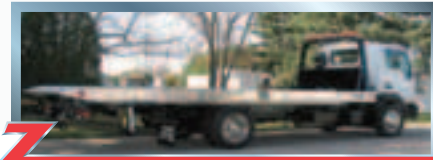
See THE SALES JOB, page 18



NEW - 2006 Peterbilt 378 w/36" Sleeper w/Century 5230. C15 - 475 HP Cat Diesel, Fuller 18 Spd, GVW 54,320#. Tandam Axle 156" C.B. Alum Modular 30 Ton Wrecker with 16,000# 112" Under-Lift, 180-HDAMT 180" C.B. HD Alum Modular Box Upgrade (5230/CH32) #7790



NEW - 2006 Ford F650 EC w/Century 21' Alum. Carrier. 5.9 - 230 HP Cummins Diesel, Allison 2200 Auto, GVW 26,000#. MX 7000 Light Bar, 1/4 Fenders, 36" Tool Box, Wireless Winch, Galvanized Subframe. #7605



NEW - 2006 Ford LCF W/Century 21' Alum. Carrier. 4.5L - 200 HP Diesel, Auto, GVW 19,500#. Wrecker Special Light Bar, 48" Tool Box, Stainless Steel Wheel Simulators. #7731



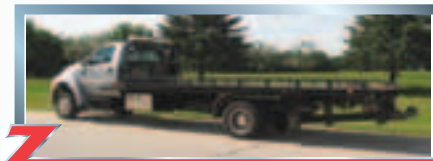
NEW - 2007 Hino 258LP w/Century 21' Alum. Carrier. GVW 25,500#, 220 HP Diesel, Allison 2200 Auto. High Dump Angle, Stationary Cab Guard, Galvanized Subframe, 48" Tool Boxes. #8164



NEW - 2006 Pete 378, Day Cab w/Vulcan V100. GVW 66,000#, GVWR Front 20,000#, WB 312. Throttle - Rear Switch & Program, SS Storage Tube, Under Frame Tire Lift Storage. #7710



2000 Freightliner FL60 w/Challenger 21' Steel Carrier. 5.9 - 225 HP Cummins, 6 Speed, GVW 25,000#. Close Cross Members, 8,000# Planetary Winch, 2 RH & 1 LH 30" Tool Boxes. #7755



2004 Ford F650 EC w/Vulcan 21' Steel Carrier. 5.9L 215 HP Cummins Diesel, Allison 2400 Auto., GVW 26,000#. Stainless 1/4 Fenders, LH & RH Tool Boxes, MX7000 Light Bar. #8172



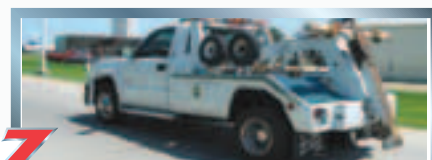
2001 Ford F550 w/Champion 19' Steel Carrier. 7.3L Power Stroke Diesel, Auto, GVW 17,500#. Stationary Cab Guard, Code3 Light Bar w/ArrowStik, Removable Side Rails. #7280



2007 IH 4400 w/Vulcan V30. DT466E - 285 HP Diesel, Allison 3000_RDS_P Auto, GVW 31,020#. Toolbox Lights, Strobe Micro Edge System, Alum Trim, Tower & Boom Side Trim. #8103



2003 IH 4300 EC w/Vulcan 881. DT466 215 HP Diesel, Allison 2400 Auto., GVW 25,500#, 24" Tunnel Tool Box, Jet Strobe Light Bar, Chrome Hand Rails, Steel Fenderettes. #8045



2003 Chev K30 4x4 w/Century 301. 8100 Gas, Auto., GVW 12,000#. 12 Volt Portable Air Compressor, Jet Strobe Light Bar, Self Loading Dollies. #7751



2003 Ford F350 EC w/Century 311. 7.3L Power Stroke Diesel, Auto, GVW 12,500#. Tomar Light Bar, Landyard Remote Control, Rollover Light Pylon Kit, Self Loading Dollies, Chrome Hand Rails. #7468

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THE SALES JOB

continued from page 17

Owners of startup tow companies need to be realistic in evaluating their market and budget. "If you are new to the business, you might not want to purchase a new \$65,000 rollback. Consider a more affordable used unit instead," suggested Taylor. "A used rollback at \$30,000 might not have the warranty you get on a new one, but for that \$35,000 savings you can afford to make some repairs. The lower investment can make the difference between turning a profit and just turning your wheels."

Know Your Needs

Steven Cline of Mountain State Truck Center in Denver finds that customers usually know what they want because they like the equipment they already have and want to buy something similar. Cline sells Ford F450, F550 and F650/750 trucks coupled with AATAC rollbacks, wreckers and self-loaders. Due to the weather and terrain in Colorado, nearly all of the F450/550 series trucks are of the four-wheel drive variety. Cline's largest clients boast fleet inventories of at least 65 vehicles.

To ensure his customers target the truck they want at a price they can afford, Cline utilizes a software application from Ford Trucks that produces a detailed performance report. The report is generated from the customer's preferences for the truck body, the proposed model, and payload and performance requirements.

Western Wrecker Sales of Portland, OR offers trucks from the Miller Equipment line. During its 40-year history, Western Wrecker has grown to service all types of wreckers and carriers and maintains an extensive inventory of more than 47 new carriers and wrecker units.

Owner Mike Reese provided some helpful advice: "When getting quotes from vendors, compare apples for apples by checking off each item: chassis, gross vehicle weight, make, model, special equipment and ratings on equipment. Last, but not least, ask your friends for their experience with a particular vendor's service, warranty, work done promptly without an argument, and whether the vendor has a good supply of consumable parts. Good relationships are made by being honest about any deficiencies on trade-ins."

Those good relationships are critical not only to the success of a towing company but also to the longevity of the distributor. Poor sales mean a short life in business, so the sales force makes every effort to ensure that customers are treated prop-

*"Some customers
get fooled by
the lighter
GVW trucks"*

— Eben Brady



A line of new carriers at Eastern Wrecker Sales Inc., Clayton, NC

erly. After all, "we want to sell you a piece of equipment," said Chris Taylor. "Even more, the best equipment dealers want to establish a good working relationship with you. Why? For one thing, it helps us to sell you more equipment. More than that, it helps us to sell you the right equipment."

Talk To Them

Taylor places a premium on detailed and constant communication: "Talk to us. Help us understand your goals, what you need to tow or to haul, what kind of budget you have, how soon or often you need to buy, and what kind of financing you need. That way we can offer you a range of options that you might not have thought about. And don't be embarrassed if you are just starting out or have a smaller budget. All of our customers are important to us."

In addition, Taylor encourages customers to examine the distributor's serv-

ice capabilities. "Ask to see our parts and service department. Ask about our installation department. Go to our website and download the brochures available there. And come look at our equipment."

Haggling over price can cause monumental headaches for both the salesperson and the customer. Santex's Eben Brady recommends a common-sense approach: don't buy a piece of equipment just because it was the least expensive product available. "Look over the unit's specifications to make sure it will do the job you want it to do," he said.

Mike Alvino of DG Towing Equipment agrees. "Know exactly where you want to be. Do you want to do repo, regular towing, or something else? Keep to your needs. Don't overbuy."

Brady notes that most of his customers have done their homework and understand the truck specs they need. Since it's his job as a salesperson to ask as many questions as possible, Brady often

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helps fine-tune customer requirements. For example, he sometimes helps clarify differences among trucks with lighter GVWs. "Some customers get fooled by the lighter GVW trucks," he said. "I try to help by explaining the difference between a 19,500 GVW truck and its capacities versus a 26,000 GVW - and why the 26,000 GVW is going to cost more."

Keeping Up

Technology changes as the years roll by, so Chris Taylor stresses the importance of keeping up with the times. Customers need to stay advised of changes in equipment. According to Taylor, Oshkosh Truck Corporation, the parent company of Jerr-Dan, has spearheaded improvements in rollback and wrecker design which have lowered operating costs and boosted safety. As an example, Taylor points to Jerr-Dan's maintenance-free, no-lube slide pad system as a cost- and time-saving device that was introduced in recent years.

On an emotional level, Eben Brady advises customers to "make sure that you feel good about the distributor you purchase the unit from. Make sure they are going to take care of you after the purchase is made."

Jean Steward agreed: "Towers need to always feel assured that they are getting the best price on the front end (purchase) and on the back end (trade). Always ask about the selling price prior to letting on that you have a trade. This keeps everyone honest. The tower needs to know he is getting the best price, and that the sales price is not being artificially inflated into more profit for the seller just so he can make it look like he is giving more for the trade than he really is."

A constant theme echoed by salespeople is a genuine concern for the customer and his or her business. "I want only what is best for the customer," said Steward. She offers a simple, practical piece of advice: "Even if you do not purchase equipment from us, make sure you purchase equipment that will be right for your company and its needs."

Lean On Me

As always, for the salesperson, building trust with the customer is the key to success. "Selling is built on relationships," said Eben Brady. "I believe that staying in touch with your customers as much as possible is essential to keeping a strong client base."

Chris Taylor feels that customers should feel comfortable enough to lean on their sales representatives when needed: "Take your time, take advantage of the knowledge of old hands like ourselves, and evaluate your market and your budget carefully."

In the end, the tow truck distributor or salesperson has the same goal as the customer does: get the right equipment into the right hands. "I live by being honest and forthright in this business," said Jean Steward. "If I do not or cannot provide the best equipment for the purchaser I will refer them to someone who can. Ultimately, I like to be able to sleep at night and get up and look in the mirror with no regrets in the morning." ☛



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TRUCK TALK

Meeting The Challenge

Bill Bottoms is famous for building really big iron

By Torrey Meeks

For a customer of Bill Bottoms, a deal is as good as the hand it's shaking. Bottoms' friends say that he is honest to a fault; if something goes wrong with one of his trucks, he figures he didn't build it right and he'll fix it to your satisfaction.

In more than 40 years of building tow trucks at his company, B&B Industries in Chicago, the foundations for success haven't changed much, said Bottoms. His longevity in business and repeat customers that come from multi-generational family lines are testament to the truth of that statement.

"I think it's very important when you're making a big investment of \$150,000 to \$200,000 to know who you're doing business with," said Bottoms. "It's a lot easier straightening out a problem with someone who's going to be on your side. It's not 'Take a number.' You are the number."

What it comes down to, said Bottoms, is that he's never used sales hype or bought into what many modern companies do: slash production values to gain a bigger bottom line, sell more for less, and push inferior products on the customer. If anything, he's downsized to preserve the integrity of his business, so when it comes to quality, Bottoms knows a thing or two.

Claim To Fame

If the name Bill Bottoms doesn't ring a bell, Challenger is sure to. The Challenger is a tow truck currently built and marketed by Miller Industries but invented by B&B Industries in the early 1970s.

The Challenger gives Bottoms a valid claim to fame, but bringing it to the market came only after more than a decade of hard labor. According to Bottoms, the name Challenger was

inspired by the difficulty he had in developing the truck to his satisfaction. "We were sitting there and throwing out names and my wife said, 'You ought to call it Challenger. You're always doing stuff that's a big challenge,'" said Bottoms.

With the name in place, Bottoms moved forward on production, but the trail leading to that milestone required plenty of good fortune. In the early 1960s, Bottoms got into building trucks on accident. A tower friend approached him about constructing a wrecker frame, a special, one-time design. Bottoms looked around his home garage workshop and told the fellow he'd give it a shot.

A week into that first project, another tower got the word that Bottoms was building custom frames and asked if he could build another one. Bottoms, figuring business was business and that this looked like the good kind, told the next man that he would. "One friend led to thousands of friends," said Bottoms. "That's how I got started really. Towers will get a kick out of that. I really started off in my house building one or two tow trucks a month."

At the height of the Challenger boom in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Bottoms employed 300 workers and had a factory in Elkhart, Indiana for production solely

of that line. B&B Industries acted as a holding company for the separately incorporated Challenger branch. On the B&B side of the business in Chicago, Bottoms ran a truck equipment house that sold parts and accessories for everything from snow plows to dump trucks.

A Good Move

Business ticked along well for close to 20 years with high demand for the Challenger line and most of Bottoms' energy devoted to producing it. In the late 1980s, however, he decided he wanted a slower, more custom-oriented pace for his business. He sold the Challenger line to a holding company with 30 or 40 other businesses under its umbrella. This company promptly experienced financial trouble and liquidated the operation, setting the stage for Bill Miller's takeover of the Challenger line in 1991.

A big part of Bottoms' decision to sell in the late 1980s had to do with increasing state and federal regulatory pressure. One thing he's noticed happening is truck manufacturers telling legislators that while they are building bigger trucks, scaling is still possible. However, according to Bottoms, "states and restrictions are getting ridiculous. Nobody with a tow truck in the industry can meet requirements



Big Iron: a B&B Industries 80-ton



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and weight laws. The way they treat towers right now is unfortunate. Sometimes you cannot under any circumstances get it legal. They want it light as a feather and strong as King Kong. Nobody can do that."

Other concerns Bottoms has for the truck building industry center around the rising price of metals such as copper and aluminum. Copper, for example, is getting so expensive that it now costs more to mint a penny than a penny is worth. Aluminum has risen 300 percent in the last three years.

Coupled with the difficulty in making wreckers that conform to pie-in-the-sky laws, it's not an easy situation. "The price of metal is one big thing I'm concerned with," said Bottoms. "I have no idea why prices are up so high. I'm not a politician. Ask our president what happened to our country."

Custom Jobs

Currently Bottoms has around 35 employees and makes his Signature series trucks with 14 standard frames and an infinite number of customized variations. The Signature series is marketed directly through B&B Industries and was most recently picked up by McDonough Truck & Trailer distributors for on-the-lot sales in Georgia and Florida. "I go back a long way with Denis [McDonough]," said Bottoms. "I'm glad to have my trucks on his lot. He worked for me a couple different times with Challenger wrecker."

According to Bottoms, the customization that goes into each truck is probably the most well-known trademark of a B&B build. "I'd rather overbuild than underbuild, so that's probably what I'm known for," said Bottoms. "I heard a guy say, 'You want big iron go to the big house in Elkhart.' That's because I'm known more for big trucks than little trucks."

Bottoms explains the difference in truck-building styles by contrasting American trucks with many European ones. He feels trucks are generally underbuilt overseas. Where others might use a lighter frame and a 3/8ths-inch bolt, Bottoms will use a 1/2 to 5/8ths-inch bolt just in case. "As long as a truck's got a decent frame underneath it, no one's gonna get hurt," he said.

Though Bottoms' family has always been supportive of his business endeavors, for the most part it's been his baby. His son Billy, now 44, worked for awhile in the business along with Bottoms' younger daughter.

Bottoms sees his secret to success through the years as equal parts luck, hard work, and total commitment to a given undertaking. Nothing comes easy in the business, said Bottoms, from marketing to human resources to building the actual truck. So while there's always going to be a challenge, he feels the trick is figuring out how to take pleasure in the work. If a businessperson is enjoying what he's doing, it shows in the product.

"I'm competitive in life other than building wreckers. Unless I can give it 100 percent, I don't get involved," said Bottoms. "I like what I'm doing. I like building trucks." ❖

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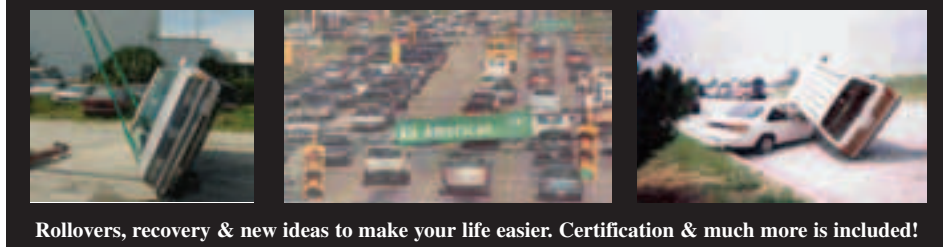
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TOWING PIONEERS

Murray's Legacy

The Rudes have worked to improve New York's towing industry

By **Cindy M. McMahon**

Nat Rude was a Brooklyn, N.Y., electrician in 1925 when someone suggested he turn one of his trucks into a towing vehicle. Rude took the advice, building his own single crane with a tow bar on the back. Two years later, Rude's son Murray was born.

With these two events, the seeds of one of New York's oldest and most enduring towing operations had been sown. "He was very well-versed in mathematics," Murray Rude said of his father. "He knew how to set up a crane in such a way that it would balance." Nat Rude's "balancing act" later became known as the Rude System of Towing.

Rude's was a family business. Nat's wife answered calls from their Brooklyn home, while Murray rode with his father and got a special driving permit when he was only 12 years old. Nat built all of the company towing vehicles, advancing from his first single crane to a heavier double crane with two chain blocks and a winch in the middle.

The business eventually expanded to 10 trucks. Rude System of Towing serviced several states and provided 24-hour service, seven days a week. "We were one of the only companies providing 24-hour service back then," Murray said.



Murray and Estelle Rude have been married more than 57 years

The Son Also Rises

Murray worked for his father until 1973, when Murray's decision to purchase a truck led to a split. "I wanted a 1972 GMC chassis. I went to Chattanooga and got a 1600 Holmes crane," Murray said. It was the first truck Nat hadn't built and he was not happy with his son's purchase.

Murray took his experience and his new truck and launched his own towing service, Murray Rude Service, in 1973. "I had a flatbed and a heavy-duty tow truck when I started. It grew into 10 trucks and I had about eight drivers."

In addition to towing, both father and son fought for the industry that fed their families. Murray was one of the founders of the Interstate Towing Association (ITA), a forerunner of the Towing and Recovery Association of America (TRAA). He also organized the Society of Citizens for Free Choice, which fought against cities and towns setting fixed rates for consensual towing.

The Rudes spent about a year successfully fighting New York City Hall to get tow rates increased. "A proposed tow law would have fixed payment at two

dollars for a hook and first mile, with 50 cents a mile thereafter," Murray said. "We fought it and in 1951 got four dollars for the first mile and one dollar thereafter. Then there wasn't another raise for 21 years."

In addition to battling set rates on consensual towing, Murray missed a son's high school graduation to travel to Albany to convince New York's legislators to allow tow trucks on the state's thoroughways. "My life has been dedicated to making a living through towing, but also dedicated to the betterment of the towing industry," Murray said.

The Third Generation

Murray's sons Howard and Marc represent the Rude family's third generation of towmen. They worked with Murray until he sold Murray Rude Service four years ago.

The brothers formed their own company, Rude System of Towing, Inc., adopting their grandfather's company's name. Howard and Marc opened their business in the original Brooklyn location.

Howard remembers his dad missing his walk down the graduation aisle. But he is proud of Murray's accomplishments and was there when Murray was inducted into the Towing Hall of Fame in 1987. "It was a big

honor for him," Howard said. "He's been in it all his life and put in a lot of hard work."

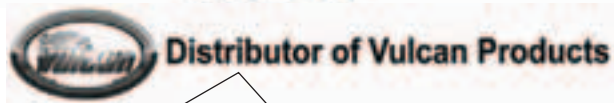
Howard remembers riding in his grandpa's truck as a boy and watching his grandmother run the switchboard. "He (Nat) should have been in the Hall of Fame, too," he added.

Howard was a college student when Murray started his company. "But I decided to put off college and stay with him. I was born into it." He begins his day about six a.m. and goes "until whenever the last call comes in." It's a family tradition.

Two Thoughts

Murray said the towing industry still has a few "bugs." He objects to drivers having to pay and take tests to become towmen. "Go out and watch other towmen. My father said you always learn the real work out in the field."

According to Murray, the real credit behind success in the towing industry belongs to the women in towers' families. "My wife, my mother, they worked 24 hours a day, too, answering the phones, doing paperwork and taking care of the children. If it wasn't for the wives, there would be no tow business." ❖



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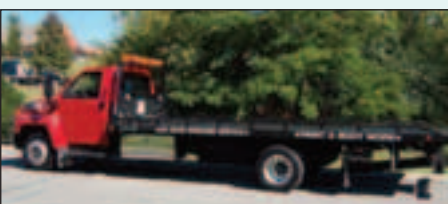


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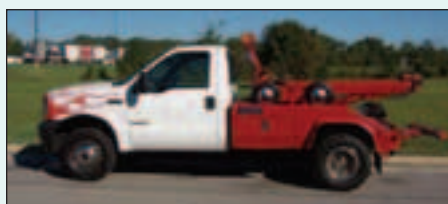
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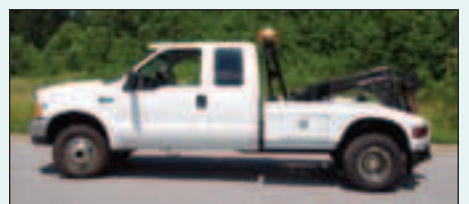
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