

to Face Face with...

Jim Rys

Long-standing UTA member Jim Rys is the President and founder of The House of Trucks, Inc., in Willowbrook, IL. Jim designed his dealership to provide late model, low mileage reconditioned tractors with factory or extended warranties. Customers would be able to purchase trucks that looked and ran like brand new at lower, more affordable prices. Now the company has been thriving for more than 25 years and expanded into new markets, too. But, that's getting way ahead of ourselves in this story.

Jim began his independent dealership after gathering experience working for others. His first job in trucking was as a parts driver for Ford Heavy Trucks. He also spent 14 years in Ford Truck Sales. Along the way, he took the advice he still offers to younger people starting their careers. "Take advice from successful people. Never stop learning and growing in your education of sales and sales

management," he said. All along the path that led him to open his own shop, he lived by this advice.

In the 27 years since opening the House of Trucks, Jim has served the Chicago trucking industry and become a vital part of the local trucking community. He has participated with the Midwest Trucking Activities and served on the board of the Illinois Trucking Association (ITA). "Trucking has allowed me to create a family of friendships and people to support and help along the way," he told us.

We asked Jim to share some secrets of his own success. "I have great employees who believe in our concept, 'the customer is our number one priority,'" he said. "Hard work stands behind what we sell." Customer satisfaction is the reason for the House of Truck's success, and a key part of the company's mission statement. "Customer satisfaction is not a goal...it's our guarantee" reads the statement. That satisfaction translates not only to sales and inventory, but also to every other part of the operation. Remarketing, storage, appraisals, finance, insurance, and some new inventory, too, all offer potential customers support with their trucks, from purchase to reselling that purchase when it's time for an upgrade.

To support this lifelong relationship with his customers, Jim recently expanded both his dealership and his inventory line. He added staff to his sales, finance, and remarketing departments and expanded his shop. He also added some new truck

inventory including Autocar Spotters, Benlee Trailers, and Cora's Trailers.

In the midst of all this growth and expansion, Jim still savors his daily ritual of a morning sales meeting. When we asked him about his favorite part of his job, he simply said, "mornings." That's when he meets with his sales team to discuss the day's opportunities. He well understands the challenges facing younger salespeople today, and he's still using that advice he both gives and takes, continued support for sales education and growth. Success will require ongoing training and educational opportunities and hard work in building a sales network of customers. His staff will have to stay on top of arranging financing and finding good equipment. To top it off, Jim recommends, "Stay active in your community, supporting trucking." All this seems to come to a tall order, but Jim is the living proof of the success that his advice can bring.

When we asked him to look back at some proud moments throughout his career, of course, opening his independent dealership was at the top of the list. Other proud moments came when the dealership was awarded the ITA Dealer of the Year in 2007. As we mentioned, there are the anniversaries to celebrate, including the 25th, and just last year, the dealership topped \$15 million in sales.

Jim has been married for more than 40 years to his childhood sweetheart, he told us. He also said he is lucky to have his wonderful brother as a partner in the House of Trucks. He has a great sister-in-law and brother-in-law, and two nieces. In his spare time, Jim works with the Special Olympics Committee and he is a Down's Syndrome sponsor. We'll end with a mention of the one Jim holds special. "My special guy is a snoodle named, what else, Mack!" ■

