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ARKANSAS T R E P O R T TRUCKING

WAYNE SMITH
A QUIET PASSION
FOR TRUCKING

ANNUAL CONFERENCE COVERAGE • TREAD ACT • USED TRUCKS



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COVER PHOTO OF WAYNE SMITH BY JON D. KENNEDY

A Glance

Current Position: Owner and President, Wayne Smith Trucking

Born: December 11, 1946,
Morrilton, Arkansas

Family: Married 34 years to his wife, Peggy; two children, Tonya and Michele; three grandchildren, Lauren, Mallory, Derek.

What his friends say about him:
"He is a good business man and is always in tune with every aspect of his company."

—Don Allen
Diamond State Trucking, Inc.

"Wayne's leadership and solid judgement have been one of the key elements to the success of our Arkansas Trucking Association Self-Insurers' Fund."

—Bud Fine
Southern Transit Company, Inc.

A Quiet Passion

TRUCKING IS ALL
I'VE EVER WANTED
TO LEARN.

By Lorrie Barr
Contributing Writer
Photos by Jon D. Kennedy

The days when Wayne Smith had to be a jack of all trades has long past, but the owner and president of Wayne Smith Trucking in Morrilton still enjoys putting on a new set of tires or working on a rig every now and then. "When we were much smaller, I was driver, dispatcher and mechanic. I did a little bit of everything. I now have enough employees to keep things running smoothly, but it's hard for me to stay behind a desk for too long so I like to go tinker in the shop or talk with the drivers," he explains.

A soft-spoken, thoughtful man with an easy smile, Smith is modest about the success of Wayne Smith Trucking, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. In 1976, Smith was given first option to buy a small trucking company run by two Morrilton brothers. He has steadily built the business from two trucks and five trailers to an 80-truck, 230-trailer operation. "Trucking is all I've ever wanted to learn. My goal was

to have five trucks one day and now I have 38 of my own plus 42 owner operators," says Smith. "We've been very blessed and whatever success we've had can be contributed to a lot of people. I've had help every step of the way."

Smith was born and raised in Morrilton, but he and his family spent their summers in California. "We'd go out there and pick fruit or vegetables until it was time for us to come back and go to school. At one point, I knew as many people in California as I did here, but Morrilton was always our home," Smith explains.

When he was 14, Smith began driving a bob truck out of the orchards to the cannery. "I'd haul peaches, potatoes, walnuts, just whatever, up and down the California interstate, which was busy even way back then." Those summers out west instilled in Smith a love of driving that has remained for more than 40 years. "You either

really like to drive or you don't like it at all. I've always enjoyed it. There's a sense of freedom and independence that

comes from driving." It also taught Smith valuable people skills that have

served him well as a business owner.

"When you live in a labor camp like we did, you learn how to make friends and get along. I was exposed to all kinds of people and situations that I probably never would have experienced here, which helped shape me into the person I am today."

At age 17, Smith was hauling loads of rock to build dikes on the Arkansas River. "I would have to drive my dump truck backward to unload the rock that built up the dike. I was young and didn't think anything of it back then, but there's no way I'd back up into the river now," he chuckles.

Smith became an owner-operator with the purchase of his first tractor-trailer at the age of 21. He hauled a variety of loads – pulpwood, sod, cotton. However, Smith did not have the rights to haul finished product. His purchase of the trucking company allowed Smith to transfer its operating authority to haul finished goods. "Back then it was very hard to get hauling rights for finished products. You had to prove you could do it better than someone else," Smith explains. He began hauling cloth from Morrilton to a finishing plant in Osceola and loads of rolled paper and other finished goods for the local paper mill.

Today, Wayne Smith Trucking carries a wide variety of products to and



Smith with office manager and "right hand" Vicki Berkemeyer.

Continues

n for Trucking



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: (1) **Sonny Simer**, (2) **Whit Berkemeyer**, (3) **Alan Hayes**, (4) camera-shy **Brian Eubanks** and smiling **Lonnie Curtis**, (5) laughing **Vicki Berkemeyer** and **Tonya Simer**, (6) **Arron Rees** and **Josh Burkemeyer**, (7) **Mike Bixler**, (8) **Neil Corder**

from 35 states in the Midwest and California. Its reputation for outstanding customer service has allowed the company to establish and maintain long-term customers, including Green Bay Packing and International Paper. "It's not about how big you are, it's about taking care of the customers you have.

Service is the most important aspect of our business," he explains. Smith's attention to service has garnered his company International Paper's Texarkana Regional Carrier of the Year Award for Service four years in a row.

"A company used to choose a carrier that could get the product from point A

to point B for the lowest price but it seems like more and more businesses are throwing service into the mix for consideration," Smith says. One reason for this, Smith believes, is the change to just-in-time inventories. Manufacturers used to stockpile large warehouses of product. Carriers would have two or three days to haul that product to its destination. Today, though, manufacturers are making and moving product as needed, thus increasing the demand for timely delivery. "One company told me it was working with a carrier that had a 73 percent delivery performance. That means that 27 percent of the time, the goods were not delivered on time. That's simply not acceptable," Smith explains.

Smith is quick to acknowledge the caliber of his employees and credits them with upholding the company's high standards. Many of his employees have been with Smith through good times and bad. Approximately half of his owner-operators worked directly for the company before buying their own vehicles and contracting with Smith. "Wayne makes it easy to be loyal," says office manager Vicki Burkemeyer, an 18-year veteran of Wayne Smith Trucking. "He's a fair, honest man who will do whatever he can to help."

Smith, in turn, expects his drivers to represent the company well. He demands that anything with the Wayne Smith Trucking logo be clean and neat, from the trucks that get washed every Saturday to the uniforms he provides each driver.

And he absolutely will not tolerate disrespectful behavior toward customers. "I tell all of my drivers, if a customer makes you mad, call me and give me a cussin' but don't get smart with the customer. That's one thing that will get you fired

Continues

quicker than anything."

Smith's open door policy has allowed him to forge strong relationships with his employees who know they can drop in his office for advice on what tires to buy or counsel on personal matters. Safety meetings with the drivers are held every three months, which also gives Smith an opportunity to update them on how the company is doing. "Since fuel has been so high, many companies have already gone out of business. We try to keep them informed as best we can so they're secure with what's going on," Smith says.

The slowing economy and the diesel fuel price crisis have taken its toll on the trucking industry overall but Smith is remaining optimistic. The company's approach will remain the same: provide the best possible service to its existing customers and expand as needed. "I've seen a lot of people that will buy 20 trucks and then go look for business. That has always seemed backwards to me. We wait until we need a truck before we buy it," he says. "We've always shopped for the best deals on everything we buy - trucks, tires, insurance - and

we'll continue to do that." Smith says he'll probably drive his trucks a little longer simply because of the glut of used equipment on the market. "There are so many trucks out there that we don't have a lot of equity anymore. Trade-ins just aren't what they used to be," he explains.

Finding and retaining qualified drivers is an ongoing problem in the trucking industry. Many trucking companies across the country are now doing everything from increasing "home time" to devising elaborate incentive programs in their efforts to get drivers to stay on board. Wayne Smith Trucking, however, has always placed an emphasis on driver satisfaction.

Smith's drivers are home on the weekends and usually one or two days during the week. "It's hard to have a family life when you're gone two or three weeks at a time. My drivers leave on Sunday afternoon or Monday morning and are home every two or three days," he says. Smith also tries to accommodate a driver's request to be home for a special occasion. "If a driver has to be home to see their kids play ball or for a graduation or if he wants to go to church on Sunday, then we'll try to schedule around that," Smith



explains.

In fact, Smith has been known to bring a driver home with no load just to be with his or her family. "We may be

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in Atlanta on a Friday afternoon with no load to bring back because of a delay or whatever. I'll send that driver home to be with his family on the weekend rather than make him stay and wait for the load," Smith says.

Another incentive Smith's company provides is fully paid health insurance for all employees. When asked why he covers the total cost of health insurance, Smith answers simply, "To help them." Several years ago, employees were rewarded with fully paid dental insurance after the company's workers' comp and liability insurance premiums were lowered. "We hadn't filed a claim all year and I told them at a Christmas party that they were the ones who made the lower rates possible and that they should reap the benefits," he explains.

"There are people who have left our company because they could make more money somewhere else, but they always come back because they're not treated as fairly or as generously," explains Smith's daughter, Tonya Simer, who has worked at the company for seven years.

Smith believes that his practices have helped the company retain a better

class of drivers, which in turn keeps accidents to a minimum. "We have the highest safety rating from the DOT, which is a satisfactory rating. I have drivers who have logged 1.7 million miles with no accidents or tickets. It's the employees who have kept it all together and that's the bottom line," Smith says.

Smith is a strong advocate of reform within the trucking industry. He supports the Arkansas Trucking Association's efforts to test 19 and 20 year old persons as truck drivers. Many insurance providers currently require that a driver be at least 25 years of age with



Smith with his hobby, a 38-foot Dutch Star RV.

two years of on-the-road experience. "By the time someone is 25 years old, they're probably already working at what they're

Continues

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going to be doing for the rest of their lives," Smith explains. He supports lowering the age to 19, which would allow companies to recruit potential drivers in high school like other industries do. "After graduation, he or she could go to a two-year driving school and then start driving. It at least gives them an opportunity to see if driving is what they want to do. Right now, it's just too hard to get started doing it."

Smith is also the chairman of the board of trustees for the ATA's Self-Insurers' Fund, which offers affordable workers' compensation insurance to about 40 of ATA's smaller member trucking companies. "We joined the ATA when they began the Self-Insurers' Fund and it's been great for all of us. Our workers' comp doesn't cost us any more than the big guys and we get a dividend back each year thanks

to the ATA," Smith boasts.

He is excited about other opportunities ATA membership can provide. "I think that working with the ATA, small-

try advocate are only two of the many hats Smith wears. He is also a dedicated family man and an admired community leader. He and his wife of 34 years,

Peggy, have two children, Tonya and Michele. While Peggy was a stay-at-home mom, she and the kids were always involved in the business. "Mom used to bring us to the shop after school and we'd pump gas or follow dad around," Tonya says. A self-proclaimed "daddy's girl," Tonya has fond memories of traveling with her father on short trips. She now works for the company maintaining the driver's logs and Michele owns a travel agency.

His two children are now married with kids of their own. Smith beams as he discusses the antics of his three grandchildren — Lauren, Mallory and Derek. "I know why they call them grand," chuckles Smith, who keeps a stash of treats in his



Smith with grandkids Lauren and Mallory Simer and Derek Corder.

er companies like myself could go in together to negotiate lower prices for fuel or begin other programs to strengthen the industry," Smith says.

Business owner and trucking indus-

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2001 NATIONAL TRUCK DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIP

Hosted by American Trucking Associations
August 21-25
Minneapolis, MN

2001 NATIONAL TRUCK DRIVER APPRECIATION WEEK

August 25 - September 1

2001 ATA SAFETY & LOSS PREVENTION MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Hosted by American Trucking Associations
September 23 - 26
Opryland Hotel & Convention Center
Nashville, TN

2001 ATA FALL CLASSIC GOLF SCRAMBLE

October 12
Greystone Country Club, Cypress Creek
Course Cabot, AR

2001 ATA MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

Hosted by American Trucking Associations
October 28 - 31
Opryland Hotel & Convention Center
Nashville, TN

Back by popular demand— ARKANSAS RAZORBACK TAILGATE PARTY

More details coming soon!

office for their frequent visits. "The first thing they say when they come in is 'Pawpaw, where's the candy?'"

When he's not in the office, Smith is usually in town attending a meeting of one of the many projects he involved with. He was one of the original organizers of Petit Jean State Bank and sits on the board of directors. "Wayne

Smith is a man of high integrity and character. He is well respected for his leadership skills and generous spirit," says Charles Penick, president and CEO of Petit Jean State Bank, who has known Smith for many years.

Smith is passionate about the Conway County

Community Foundation, a newly formed organization with a mission of revitalizing a community that has been hit hard with layoffs and plant closings. "Just as much as I don't want to fail in my own ventures, I don't want to see Morrilton fail. I want to see that people here have just as much opportunity as they do in Conway or Russellville, which are booming. There is no reason why we cannot have the same growth as those cities." The foundation will allow local civic and community groups to apply for grants to fund new programs or projects.

Smith is also active in the local Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club and serves on the board at Central Baptist College Conway and Life Word Broadcast Ministry, both in Conway. His company sponsors a youth softball team as well as a bowling team. Photos and trophies from their many winning seasons are displayed throughout the company's offices as well as certificates of appreciation from various organizations.

Although Smith can now enjoy the fruits of his labor, his pleasures remain

simple. "I never wanted to have the best of everything. I don't care about driving a big car or buying a big boat. I just wanted to make sure that my family and my employees were taken care of," Smith says.

Labeled a workaholic by friends and family, Smith does afford himself one hobby, which, not surprisingly, involves



Smith with his wife of 34 years, Peggy.

driving. He and his wife, who shares his passion for the road, frequently take week long trips across the country in their motor home. "Mom and dad will say it's time to go and before you know it, they're on the road going somewhere,"

Tonya says.

Their next destination is Arizona and then a trip to Eureka Springs to meet one of his

four brothers, who will be driving in from Fort Worth, Texas. Two of Smith's brothers work for the company and his youngest brother works at a local retailer.

All aspects of Smith's life are reflective of his strong Christian beliefs, from the emphasis on family to the way he treats others. "His parents were strong Christians and I think my dad's been such a success because he prays about everything," says Tonya.

"I do believe in God. I've seen guys that I know are better operators than I am and anyone is certainly smarter than I am, but they can't make it. I credit Him with everything I have today," Smith says.

Wayne Smith has quietly made his mark in Arkansas and will continue to be a vocal and passionate advocate of the industry that has been his life for the last 40 years. "My father-in-law once asked me many years ago if I ever considered getting a regular job. I told him I thought about it - once," laughs Smith.



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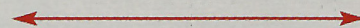
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