

FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

Ted Billman



At Midland Garage Door, 1982.



At McKee Door, 1986.



Receiving an IDA Affiliate Charter with Dewey Stewart (center) and Pat Sullivan (right), 1998.



Receiving the IDA Jerry Reynolds Volunteer Leadership Award from Michael Beltrami (left) and Bob Hammersley (right), 2011.

Milestones

Editor's note: Ted Billman has had a unique career in the garage door industry. In his 44 years in the business, he has held management positions with six different manufacturers, held leadership roles with NAGDM, DASMA, IDA, IDEA, and CSDDA, and has worked closely with dealers for almost 20 years. Here's a sketch of his background, along with his reflections.

- 1973 ▶ Ted Billman earns a B.A. in business administration and accounting from St. Martin's College in Lacey, Wash.
- ▶ Kinnear, a maker of rolling steel doors and wood and steel sectional garage doors, hires him as accounting manager for its wood door division in Centralia, Wash.
- 1978 ▶ Midland Garage Door, a start-up manufacturer in Fargo, N.D., hires him as general manager. He is later named secretary/treasurer of the company.
- 1985 ▶ McKee Door, a maker of residential and commercial sectional doors, hires him as operations manager for its headquarters in Aurora, Ill.
- 1987 ▶ Billman returns to Kinnear as director of manufacturing and is soon promoted to vice president and general manager at the age of 40. He is responsible for plants in California, Oregon, Washington, Mississippi, and the main plant in Columbus, Ohio.
- 1990 ▶ After the sale of Kinnear to Wayne Dalton, he is hired by General American Door Company (GADCO) in Montgomery, Ill., and is soon promoted to vice president of sales.
- 1990s ▶ Billman serves as chair of the Training & Education Committee of the National Association of Garage Door Manufacturers (NAGDM).
- 1996 ▶ He is elected to the board of directors for the International Door Association (IDA) and serves through 2002.
- ▶ Upon the creation of the Institute of Door Dealer Education & Accreditation (IDEA), Billman is elected to its first board of directors and serves as its first vice president.
- 1997 ▶ Upon the creation of DASMA, he serves as chair of its Training & Education Committee.
- 1998 ▶ Billman ventures out on his own as a manufacturer and starts Kardor in Naperville, Ill.
- ▶ He is elected to the board of directors of the Central States Door Dealer Association (CSDDA) and serves as its treasurer. (He continues in these capacities to the present.)
- 1999 ▶ Billman closes Kardor and starts Billman & Associates, providing rep sales and marketing services to garage door dealers. He now represents six different companies: American Garage Door Supply, Asta Door, DuraScreen Systems, Mars Air Door, Murphy Industries, and SuperSeal.

continued from page 68

Ted Billman on his most unforgettable industry teachers:

- D. Thomas Voris of Kinnear taught me to use my imagination in bean counting.
- Ralph Nordick of Midland Garage Door taught me to always be firm but fair in all dealings. Trust your instincts. Give the customer what he wants, when he wants it, at a fair price.
- Chet McKee of McKee Door taught me how to negotiate.
- Lou Vago of GADCO taught me to know as much about the competition's product as about my own and to remember that all products are manufactured for a specific application. If they aren't, they become part of the scrap heap, never to be seen again.
- Ed Nofziger of Haas Door and Gene Renner of Delden taught me to have fun always in what I do. If it is no longer fun, it's time to retire. *It is still fun.*



What products were real game changers for the industry?

Ted: The foamed-in-place commercial two-sided steel door changed the market for energy savings. The carriage-house-style door took away the cookie-cutter look.

What companies made noteworthy positive moves that were good for the industry?

Ted: Wayne Dalton's innovation of the foamed-in-place product line. LiftMaster's safety innovations and smartphone technology for operators. Miller Edge, EMX, Bircher, and others are constantly looking at ways to improve the safety of commercial operators.

Who stands out in your mind as making noteworthy contributions to the industry?

Ted: There are several. Not to offend others, but here are three: Willis Mullet, for introduction of the foamed-in-place line; Bill Sachs, for marketing to the home center business and thus providing education to the end consumer; and Joe Hetzel, for his tireless efforts in raising the bar for product and safety compliance.

You spent 25 years with manufacturers and have worked closely with dealers for the last 20 years. What have you learned about dealers that every manufacturer needs to know?

Ted: Probably the most important thing is for suppliers to listen more. The door dealer is on the front line daily with the end consumer. Provide programs that help the dealer with marketing, financial understanding (cost of doing business), safety training, and ways to build a productive team. Continued education is the key to success. ■



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