

## BUSINESS



## All in the Family

Business Traditions Worth Preserving

Many of McKinney's most successful places to shop, dine and receive services are businesses that have quietly staked their territory and cared for customers for decades. Some are from a time when handwritten bookkeeping was the norm and adding machines were technological marvels.

Their roots run deep and they thrive thanks to a supportive family – and generations of professional know-how.

Crump's Garden Inc., McKinney Office Supply and Bob Tomes Ford are three such businesses that are still owned and operated by their founding families. Their common threads are quality customer care, team work, an ability to adapt to changing times, and, most importantly, balancing professional obligations with family life.

### Crump's Garden Inc.

Crump's Garden Inc. began in McKinney five generations ago in 1939 on the Crump family farm north of U.S. 380. The business grew from the popularity of Bill Crump's great-grandmother Burtsy's socials in the family flower garden. When the women attendees asked to buy her plants, the business was born.

Brice Crump, Burtsy's son, kept a journal in which he recorded the first day of flower sales on May 13, 1939: "Busy day... Made bouquets of half-dozen lilies and baby's breath to sell for 25 cents." Brice later expanded the business with the addition of greenhouses, and the business bloomed from there.

Crump's current president Bill Crump and wife Debbie still operate



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF OUR FEATURED BUSINESSES



By Steven Nester

under the founding philosophy: They sell only fresh plants, and their plants are varieties that survive and thrive in Texas. The Crump family is business-savvy and exhibits the initiative that turned a backyard flower garden into one of the oldest family businesses in McKinney.

"McKinney is growing, and as it does, we work to keep the old customers and develop new ones," Debbie Crump says. "To do that, we've added products and services. We've expanded into the wedding business as well and continue to flourish in the florist business while being recognized as one of the top FTD Master Florists in Texas. When brides come out, they almost always visit the garden center."

Bill and Debbie's son Kevin Crump knows that need to adapt can come from other sources as well.

"Homeowners and landscapers want new products," he says, "and we see a demand due to the wide variety of gardeners' tastes. The water situation has made us adjust our products, so perennials are huge now because customers want maintenance-free plants."

Owner Bill Crump Sr. still comes in to discuss any business changes the family is considering.

"He understands things have to change for a business to stay on top and remain successful," says Bill and Debbie's daughter Lindsey. "When we talk to him about changes he understands us. He trusts us."



## McKinney Office Supply

The philosophy behind McKinney Office Supply can be summed up in a story told by Janet McDougal, daughter of founder Al Ruschhaupt. It's a story about Ruschhaupt and the standards he and his family have adhered to since opening their business in 1947.

"I got a flat tire out in the country on the way to a job," McDougal says. "I was out of cell phone range so I stopped at a house and knocked on the door to ask the man if I could use his telephone to call AAA for help."

The homeowner was adamant that he would not change McDougal's tire – until she happened to mention her father in conversation as they waited on AAA. His attitude changed immediately and he insisted on changing her tire.

"It turned out he was a businessman whom Dad believed in when no one else would," McDougal says. "It's so amazing to me that ... I still hear stories about [Dad] after all these years. He's still someone whose life and actions set a standard to live up to."

McDougal and siblings Judy Rodgers and Richard Ruschhaupt, and Ruschhaupt grandsons Reed and Dustin, have kept this business stalwart flourishing on the Historic Downtown McKinney Square. While some family members have worked in other professions, they all returned to continue the legacy that Al Ruschhaupt began. Judy worked in nursing for many years and Reed came from a finance and real estate background. Matriarch Gerry retired two years ago, around the time Reed joined the business. Being together is a blessing, and everyone has a role, they say.

McDougal is an office designer, Rodgers is the bookkeeper, and



Richard Ruschhaupt oversees the school furniture side of the business. Reed and Dustin run the office supply and office furniture business.

Reed, on top of technology, brought the business up to Internet speed with a new online presence. He says working with family is a joy.

"It's easy to build trust because we've known each other for a long time. They watch my back and I watch theirs," Reed says.



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Dustin says McKinney Office Supply is firmly embedded in the community and it's a source of pride to have flourished and kept customers happy in an age when bigger merchants seem to dominate.

"To hold this family business together and carry on the work of grandparents, aunts, and uncles with the big boxes as our competition is a neat thing," says Dustin. "And working with family eliminates office politics, allowing us to focus on customers."

### Bob Tomes Ford

There really is a Bob Tomes who works at Bob Tomes Ford in McKinney, a family owned business in operation for 29 years. It was founded in 1983 and is currently located on U.S. 75 (Central Expressway).

Bob Tomes' office is where the buck stops and the service to customers and community begins. Automobiles and generosity run in the Tomes family.

After a tour of duty in Vietnam from 1970 to 1972, Tomes learned the number-crunching side of the car business when he joined Ford corporate in Nebraska as an analyst. It was there that he met his future wife, Barbara, who worked for Ford corporate and came from a family of car dealers. Her father, Bill Utter, was a Ford dealer in Denton, and her two brothers each currently own Ford dealerships.

After the pair married, they left the corporate world to learn sales at Bill Utter's dealership. It wasn't long before they took on the challenge of bringing Ford to McKinney, which in 1983 was a city of 17,000.

The dealership was initially located on the east side of McKinney until Bob Tomes realized that it would be better to have a presence on a major thoroughfare to draw in buyers. After working out the details with Ford, Tomes and his wife opened the dealership on U.S. 75 and made a success of it.

Building relationships through a commitment to excellence in sales and service reinforces the dealership's growth. "We conduct our business in a forthright manner and we respect everyone," Tomes says.

"Commitment to community is important," he adds. Tomes family

{ "commitment to community is important" }

members, McKinney fixtures, serve on numerous boards and donate to community groups and charities.

Son Brandon joined the company in 2007, and his involvement is deep, beginning with jobs during high school and summer vacations. After graduating from Southern Methodist University and the National Automobile Dealers Association's Dealer Candidate Academy in 2008, Brandon was named General Manager of Subaru.

"Working at a car dealership is something I've always wanted to do. I even designed my college degree around it," Brandon says. "I did work outside of the industry just to make sure it was a good fit."

Working with family is a plus – and leads to better deals, Brandon says.

"We support each other, and that helps a lot in the car business," he says. "...Sometimes we can accomplish more in car ride to lunch than at the office."

Not only does McKinney have a rich past, but with unique family run businesses such as Crump's, McKinney Office Supply and Bob Tomes Ford, the community can also look forward to a rich future.

*About the Author: Steven Nester is an educator and freelance writer who hosts "Poets of the Tabloid Murder," a mystery author interview show that can be heard on public radio.*

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