

Bosselman Family of Companies started 54 years ago

By Carol Bryant

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The Bosselman Family of Companies continues as a family affair for a business that started 54 years ago with the Bosselman and Eaton Truck Stop on East Highway 30.

Founders Fred and Maxine Bosselman remain involved, attend board meetings and still go to work when they're in town, said their son, Chuck Bosselman.

Fred Bosselman, 85, "gets up every morning and goes to the office. We have lunch together, then he goes to the farm," Chuck Bosselman said. Maxine Bosselman, 80, still works with the selection of gifts that are sold in Bosselman stores.

Chuck Bosselman attributes the Bosselman Family of Companies' selection as a Partners in Progress Award winner to their employees and their Midwest work ethic.

"We're just surrounded with good people all of the time," Chuck Bosselman said. "One of the biggest things we've received from our parents is our work ethic."

The award was presented on Tuesday at the Grand Island Area Chamber of Commerce annual meeting. Roger Nygaard, chamber of commerce president, said the Bosselman Family of Companies "has been a tremendous economic boost to the community. They've grown substantially in the last 50 years. Their new facility is indicative of their commitment to the city, county and region. They have a strong history of providing community support."

Bosselman companies include Bosselman Travel Centers, Bosselman Pump and Pantry, Bosselman Energy, Bosselman Tank and Trailer, Fuel Systems Inc., Bosselman Carriers and Grandma Max's Restaurants.

The Bosselmans also have the original Bosselman family farm near Worms, settled in the 1860s; a 9,386-acre cattle and grain operation in Colorado; and Francis Villas, a condominium and apartment complex on West Koenig Street. The Bosselman Family of Companies has approximately 1,150 employees and around 1,200 employees in the summer, Chuck Bosselman said.

Children of Fred and Maxine Bosselman and their spouses who are or have been involved in the business:

Chuck Bosselman, the Bosselmans' oldest son, is president of Bosselman Inc. He oversees retail operations, which include 37 Pump and Pantry convenience stores, six Grandma Max's restaurants, four truck service shops and seven travel centers.

Chuck Bosselman's wife, Jan, is corporate secretary.

Fred Bosselman Jr. is president of Bosselman Energy, Bosselman Carriers and Bosselman Tank & Trailer.

Mary Bosselman Sahling is corporate treasurer.

Her husband, Scott Sahling, is farm manager.

Barbara Graves is retired and formerly was administrative executive secretary.

Her husband, Gene Graves, is also retired and formerly was Pump and Pantry division president.

Grandchildren of Fred and Maxine Bosselman who work for the company are:

Charlie Bosselman, Chuck Bosselman's son, oversees all Bosselman retail locations.

Brandi Bosselman, Chuck Bosselman's daughter, is a corporate attorney.

Tracy Gardner, Mary's daughter, is assistant credit manager.

Fred and Maxine Bosselman had family involved, as well, when they opened Bosselman and Eaton Truck Stop. Fred's brother, Charles, and sister and brother-in-law, Charlotte and Al Eaton, were also involved in the business. As business opportunities came along, the family expanded its holdings.

"As the family got bigger, it worked out pretty well," Chuck Bosselman said. "We're all in charge of different things."

"Once a week, we have board meetings where we go over everything," Mary Bosselman Sahling said.

The showpiece for the Bosselmans is the new Bosselman Travel Center at the Interstate 80 Grand Island interchange. The \$12.5 million, 80,000-square-foot travel center opened in May 2001 and replaced the previous travel center there, constructed in 1965. The old travel center building has been demolished, and the former restaurant building remains, with its use undetermined. Retail lots are for sale at the location.

"We've had some fast fooders talk to us about real estate there," Chuck Bosselman said.

He credited others for assistance in developing the new travel center.

"With the help of the city of Grand Island, the Nebraska Department of Roads and the officials of Hall County, we were able to put together a plan that blossomed into the operation we have today," he said. "Our company has always had a philosophy that we need to be on the cutting edge of our industry to offer our customers the services that are available in the market and to compete against our much larger competitors.

"You can't sit still. You must always be pushing forward. Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over eventually if you just sit there."

The travel center's truck shop has four areas: a lube center, a repair center, a tire center and a parts store. A similar truck shop will be constructed at their Oklahoma City, Okla., travel center, one of seven travel centers the company has, he said.

"We compete with truck stops that have 100-plus locations," he said.

Corporate offices for the Bosselman companies are in Grand Island, and the family remains tied to Grand Island.

"It's our home," Chuck Bosselman said. "All of us were born here. We love it.

"My father's business philosophy is be honest, be fair and work hard," Chuck Bosselman said. "Every time you grow,

you take the chance of putting it all out there. If you miss, you're over.

"My philosophy of business is walking a tightrope. You fall one way and you win. You fall one way and you lose. You take a day off, you better make sure you have things covered."

Chuck Bosselman said a business is like an automobile. It won't run itself, except downhill.

"So 24 hours a day and seven days a week we cater to our customers' needs and manage our business with an on-hands philosophy that was taught to me, my brother and my sisters by our father and mother, Fred and Maxine Bosselman," he said. "It's great having the kids involved in the business. There's a philosophy, 'It's not given to you. You earn it.'"