

VAL BREITAG

Good Friends, Good Business

Of all the lines Jerry McGuire still sprinkles into our conversations today, that iconic movie got at least one wrong. “It’s not ‘show-friends,’ it’s show-business,” sports agent Bob Sugar shrugs at McGuire as he ruthlessly drives his one-time mentor out of the company he built. Well, Bob, you obviously never met The Larson Group’s Val Breitag

Val is a beloved and indispensable figure in the trucking industry. His no B.S. honesty, bone-dry wit, and deep knowledge have helped pave a remarkable journey. An unparalleled reputation for integrity has shaped his 49-year run.

Upon graduating high school in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Val enlisted in the United States Army. Following training in air defense systems, he was stationed at several bases across the Midwest and Southwest. He was later deployed to the German city of Wiesbaden. He completed his service in South Dakota.

After military service, Val tagged along on a few trips with trucker friends. He caught the bug and attended MCT Driving School. A chance meeting with Claire Larson, founder of The Larson Group (TLG), resulted in a truck deal sketched on a napkin. It ended with Val starting his own company, Iron Lightning LTD., running in 48 states, Canada, and Mexico.

Rewarded, albeit tired, Val eventually let go of his Peterbilt and relocated to Scottsdale, Arizona to be closer to family. As a result of their involvement in the horse industry, Val secured a job as Farm Manager with Vanier Arabians, where he managed two facilities. He was able to use his trucking experience to transport the farm’s Arabians to horse shows across the country. Hauling a dozen valuable animals between states is a prospect many would find daunting. But Val’s background with Iron Lightning enabled him to do such a high-risk task with ease. Away from the barns, he met celebrities and was once asked to get on stage during a Beach Boys performance.

Vanier Arabians was sold to a developer and turned into a subdivision in 1989. Val reconnected with Claire Larson and his son Glenn. He went to work for The Larson Group, selling new and used trucks. He has excelled in his 35 years there, climbing from Salesman to Corporate Sales Manager. He has served on the Peterbilt Red Oval Committee for the past decade, and plans to attend the Peterbilt Top 100 event for the 20th time in 2024.

Val is quick to credit his wife, Kathi of 30 years, for her compassion as he navigates stints away and calls at odd hours. Their relationship extends far deeper than work. They have raised three sons, and now have five grandchildren. When not at the office or with family, Val enjoys hunting, fishing, travel, and the occasional car show.

At 68, most people would have chosen to retire long ago. Yet Val is dreading the day he has to stop trucking. “It’s hard to quit when you’re having so much fun,” he says. “Life’s been great.”

