

MARK FISHEL

Good day to my fellow UTA members, past and present.

First and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude for being considered as a nominee for the UTA Lifetime Achievement Award.

I am truly humbled by this recognition of my peers, knowing full well that there are many members just as—if not more—deserving of this honor. I consider this nomination not just for myself, but for the two generations who preceded me—my late father, Marvin Fishel, and our founder, “Grandpa” Bill Fishel—as well as the fourth generation, my son, Allen Fishel.

I have long considered myself one of the “lucky ones,” knowing from my earliest memories that I wanted to be in the family business of used trucks.

My grandfather, Bill Fishel, came to this country from Lithuania as an eight-year-old. With little more than an elementary school education, he—along with my great-grandfather, Ike Fishel—began buying and selling horses to the drayage industry. As horses and wagons were gradually replaced by motorized vehicles, their business naturally evolved into what would become our family’s entry into the used truck industry.

Vandeventer Truck Sales was founded in 1928, originally under the name Vandeventer Auto Sales. The name changed in the early 1980s. I’m proud to say we are still operating at our original location, continuing to buy and sell used commercial trucks. The lessons of previous generations have been handed down and remain our guiding principles to this day: “Your word is your bond” and “A handshake is a deal.”

As a kid, I spent many Saturdays at the office with my dad. While he played in an all-day card game in a room thick with cigarette smoke, I played in every truck on the lot, learning early on that grease-stained clothing was a badge of honor.

As a senior in high school, I opted for a program that allowed me to attend school in the mornings and work at the office in the afternoons. This became my Monday-through-Friday indoctrination into the family business. After college, I moved back to St. Louis and have been here consistently since 1979.

For those of you born into a family business, it was all about starting at the bottom and working your way up. Cleaning Trucks, Parking Trucks, and my personal favorite (at the time) decking three and four ways and driving anything, anywhere at any time. (Pre-CDL, Pre-Elog, and most definitely Pre-Emission) The greatest lesson was learning respect for the next person’s job.

If memory serves me correctly, I’ve been a UTA member since 2003. At the time, an ad rep asked me how I’d like to spend three days with truck dealers from around the country, talking trucks from sunup to sundown. My response was simple: “I’m in.” And I’ve never looked back.

In my opinion, the evolution of the UTA has helped make our industry more professional, profitable, and honorable, including establishing one of the industry’s first codes of ethics.

I’ve had the honor of serving on several UTA committees over the years and am currently a member of the Dealer Group. I encourage all members to give back to the UTA in any way possible.

I want to thank my entire family—including my sons, Allen and Steven, and my brother, Rick Fishel—for their unwavering support through the years.

Being a truck dealer is truly a lifestyle that governs your time. It was the constant encouragement of my family, friends, and especially my peers in the trucking industry that gave me the opportunity to give my all to the industry I was born into.

