



Local tire dealership celebrates 40 years of business, changing more than tires

BIRDSBORO, Pa. – December 27, 2011. As 2011 comes to a close and many are looking to a new year, it's a time when Paul Levensgood Sr., known as "Skip" to most, likes to reflect on the past. This year has marked somewhat of a milestone for Skip and his son Paul Levensgood Jr., of Birdsboro, PA — the 40th anniversary of their business, CJ's Tire & Automotive Services.

The family-owned and operated business, which started in Birdsboro (small town in the westernmost suburbs of Philadelphia) on the dirt floor of a converted boat shop, is now comprised of 12 retail stores throughout southeastern Pennsylvania; a wholesale division which operates out of a 80,000sqft warehouse in Pottstown, Pa; a Mighty Auto parts franchise serving four counties; and an e-commerce division.

Despite CJ's growth, retail is how it all started and remains the foundation of the company's future. Each of the twelve retail locations has maintained the reputation of being "the local tire store" as a result of management's commitment to the customer and to the local community.

In the 1960s, Skip Levensgood was working as a tire builder at the Firestone tire manufacturing plant in Pottstown. While working in the industry for 8 ½ years, Skip noticed a pattern at tire dealerships in the area — poor customer service.

"I knew I could give better service than what I was receiving at these places. I didn't want to gouge customers and I was tired of being treated poorly," said Skip. "So I decided to open my own store."

Skip and his original partner opened their doors as C&J Tire in the spring of 1971, naming the store for their wives, Carol and Judy, or "C" and "J." For more than a decade, Judy worked alongside her husband, keeping the business afloat during its tumultuous early periods. Skip would work his shift at the tire plant while his partner operated their retail store. When his shift at the plant was over, Skip headed to the shop and finished the day's business, often working well into the evening to make certain that the customer was taken care of.

The store was small but doing a decent business, when Skip received a startling customer complaint that revealed his partner had developed some of the bad habits of other local tire dealerships. Knowing that their business couldn't survive with a split personality when it comes to customer service, he knew he had to buy out his partner. It took every dollar that Skip and Judy had but at least they'd own the store outright and Skip could operate it "his way or no way."

To make ends meet, Skip continued working full-time at the Firestone manufacturing plant and picked up shifts working part-time as a bouncer at a local night club. On weekends and the occasional night off, he and Judy worked on managing the tire inventory, paying the bills, and balancing their books.

As fate would have it, shortly after completing the buyout, burglars ransacked the fledgling business in the middle of the night, stripping the store of most of its assets and just about every tire in inventory. Forced to work creatively with their suppliers, Skip and Judy somehow managed to keep the doors open and the business survived.

In 1973 Skip gave up his job at the Firestone plant and immersed himself into C&J Tire full time. By the end of 1974, two-and-a-half years following the break-in that wiped the business clean, the store celebrated its first year "in the black." For the next seventeen years, C&J grew and became the local market leader in tires and automotive services.

In 1991, the name C&J Tire evolved into *CJ's Tire & Automotive* and Skip opened a second location in West Lawn. That was followed with locations in New Holland in 1993, and Lititz in 1994. At the same time CJ's was branching out with retail locations, the wholesale division was also taking root as the region's premier tire distributor.

From just four employees in 1971 to more than 200 full and part-time devoted sales people, tire and auto technicians, managers and administrative staff in 2011, CJ's has developed into a thriving entity.

"Our formula is really pretty simple" explains Paul Levensgood Jr. "Taking care of the customer, hiring people with very high morals, and treating both customers and employees like they are family is what we are all about. Tires are a commodity...so it's up to us to show our customers how and why we're different. That's why we emphasize that 'it's not about who is right, it's about what is right'."

"As we head into 2012, we're already planning to open our next two retail stores by the end of June. In addition, we're re-styling several of our showrooms to make them more functional and comfortable, re-inventing our websites, and taking a fresh new approach to marketing our businesses. In our own way...we're *changing more than tires.*"

About CJ's Tire

Headquartered in Birdsboro, Pa., CJ's Tire & Automotive Services is a family-owned and operated company with 12 retail locations throughout southeastern Pennsylvania. In 2011, CJ's celebrated its 40th anniversary and continues to combine a high-level of name-brand product lines with an even higher level of customer service and satisfaction. For more information, visit www.cjtire.com or contact Heather Zabicki at 610-404-0224 ext. 142.

Press releases and accompanying images are available for download on CJ's Tire online media center: www.editorpressroom.com/cj_tire/index.html.

Contact:

Heather Zabicki
Marketing and Communications Coordinator
CJ's Tire & Automotive Services
610-404-0224 ext. 142
hزابicki@cjtire.com

###