Central Penn Business Journal

BIZstory

PIVOTAL MOMENTS IN BUSINESS

The decision to go into business seldom is easy. It takes meticulous planning, tough sacrifices, nerves of steel and sometimes even blind faith. But for those who make it, the sacrifices are well worth the costs. The Central Penn Business Journal traces the entrepreneurial paths of midstate business owners who recall their humble beginnings, share what it takes to survive and describe what they want their legacies to be.

CENTRAL PENN BUSINESS JOURNAL

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INSIDE BIZstory

Ken Potter and his wife, Sandra, bought Martin's Chips in 1971. Potter credits his wife for the company's best-selling product, the kettle-cooked potato chip. Photo/Amy Spangler

Click here to listen to Potter's story in his own words.

Launching a kettle revolution

Family and sacrifice helped Ken Potter build the Martin's Potato Chips empire

BY BRENT BURKEY

Ken Potter was already living the American dream. The general manager at the El-Ge Potato Chip Co. in York County had started with the company in high school, working his way up the ranks by the early 1970s. He enjoyed the benefits of a steady paycheck, paid vacation and the other trappings of his hard work.

But all that changed in 1971, when he sold his house to buy Martin's Potato Chips after seeing a short sales ad in the local newspaper.

The ad didn't even say what chip company it was. When he inquired, Potter said, it turned out to be Martin's, whose owner would bum machine parts off him at El-Ge to keep the operations running.

Harry Martin was a nice guy whose books were unfortunately correct — less than $100,000 in annual business was accomplished. Martin wasn't taking anything for himself, Potter remembered.

But it was always a dream of Potter's to own a business. In a certain way, it was easier and more enjoyable than his old job. At El-Ge, he handled problems. But at Martin's, he sold chips.

His brother mortgaged his house to help close the deal. And so did Potter's mother-in-law. But Potter said he never doubted his plan for a minute, and he set to work selling snacks to York County and eventually beyond.

Potter would dress up as a clown and give balloons to elderly ladies and kids as he sold his potato chips.

Even today, at 72, Potter has tireless energy. And back then, he was an object in constant motion.

Potter would dress up as a clown and give balloons to elderly ladies and kids as he sold his potato chips. He also grew sales by filling delivery trucks headed to chip sellers with more product than they had ordered — and as it turned out, they could sell the extras.

Business was and is fun, Potter said with a glint in his eye. But his wife, Sandra, had to be sold on the idea again each day, Potter said. She was the person doing the hard work, balancing the books and cutting the checks.

Meanwhile, the family learned every which way to cook a potato for meals during the lean years, Potter said.

They cooked those meals in the house on the Martin's property that came with the business. It was a family of four at the time — eventually growing to six — and the husband and wife lived on $50 a week, Potter remembered.

Potter credits Sandra for making the business work — as well as Martin's early forays into kettle-cooked potato chips.

Potter said he came home one night and found his wife eating a competitor's kettle chips. Kettle-cooked chips were a niche item back then, and nobody believed they could become a large commercial success, Potter said.

> *Meanwhile, the family learned every which way to cook a potato for meals during the lean years.*

Potter took one look at the scene and vowed that Martin's would make kettle chips and make them the best. He bought out a smaller company for its kettle operations and made them his own.

Today, the kettle-cooked potato chips are company's best-selling product, with general production of all Martin's products growing to an expected 10 million pounds this year.

Even more so, kettle chips are what Jackson Township-based Martin's is known for, and many others in the business have followed his lead into the lucrative business. Potter believes that, in a business sense, they are his legacy.

And it's all because of his wife, Potter said.

Stan Brown of Brown's Orchards and Farm Market helped the family business grow to include two York County market and garden centers. Photo/Amy Spangler

Click here to listen to Brown's story in his own words.

A family tree at Brown's Orchards

After years convincing his father, Stan Brown took a risk and grew his business

BY BRENT BURKEY

There was no one moment when Stan Brown decided to take the leap "up the hill" from his family's produce stand and open what today is the growing Brown's Orchards and Farm Market.

In the end, he needed his father's blessing. And bringing him around was years in the making.

In the late 1940s, Earl Brown moved his family out of York to a Loganville-area farm. They grew fruit and sold it from a little roadside stand, and his father would have been content to retire from that life, Stan Brown said.

But Stan Brown said he saw the writing on the wall: The business either had to grow or it wouldn't last.

Orchards play themselves out over the years and need to be pulled up, with new trees planted elsewhere, and equipment wears out. The renewal takes money, and money comes from growing.

Also, Stan Brown's son, Scott, said he was growing tired of dealing with the costly and inefficient setup at the old stand.

Most of the time, Stan Brown and his father were fine, with the two working next to each other to run the operations. But there were "heated" conversations about Stan Brown's plans.

Earl Brown had lived through the Great Depression and was extremely cautious about taking financial risks, Stan Brown said, such as using one's home to back a loan for a business venture that had no guarantee of success.

And that was exactly what Stan Brown wanted to do. He and his wife, Nona, spent years traveling the region, learning from others the art of direct marketing of farm products. They started their gift basket business and kept alive the dream of a bigger store.

Eventually, Earl Brown agreed.

In 1986, the business initially opened in 2,500 square feet of sales space at its current location with the Browns' house backing one loan and another low-interest loan from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

Most of the time, Stan Brown and his father were fine, with the two working next to each other to run the operations. But there were "heated" conversations about Stan Brown's plans.

That loan through the state helped ease Earl Brown's mind, his son recalled. And over the years, Earl Brown grew proud of what his family had built.

Years went by and the roles changed.

Scott Brown eventually took over running the orchard operations in consultation with his father as Stan Brown devoted time to making sure the expanded retail operations succeeded.

Then on a hunting trip, following some problems with numbing and fatigue, Scott Brown's arm gave out, and his rifle fell to the ground. Stan Brown said the MRI specialist's first question after a brain scan was, "Do you know a surgeon?"

Brain cancer. The kind that wraps itself into the brain lobes, Stan Brown recalled. Scott Brown battled the disease but died in 2005 at age 46.

But this was finding good help to fill the shoes of his own flesh and blood as lead man for the orchard.

Good help can be hard to come by, Stan Brown said. It's a common complaint from farmers in this day and time. But this was finding good help to fill the shoes of his own flesh and blood as lead man for the orchard.

Time went by in the search for a new lead man. And then Matt Etter came rapping on the door, Stan Brown said.

Etter comes from a fruit-growing family in Franklin County and was looking for work, Stan Brown said. He found a job, along with the admiration of Stan Brown, and he picked up where Scott Brown left off.

Dad and Scott are looking down with a smile, Stan Brown said.

Brother and sister team Bill Devore and Heather Zielonis joined forces to found Cumberland County-based Integra Print & Image. Photo/Amy Spangler

Click here to listen to Devore and Zielonis' story in their own words.

Embracing a colorful challenge

Love inspired Bill Devore and Heather Zielonis to start Integra Print & Image

BY JIM T. RYAN

What drives someone to open a printing business when they know nothing about printing, and all their friends think they're insane to try it?

Bill Devore and Heather Zielonis, the brother and sister team that started Cumberland County-based Integra Print & Image, will tell you love drove them. Both had other jobs before starting the company, but for a long time they wanted to be a part of something bigger.

He couldn't imagine working for someone else, punching a time clock or being told what to do.

Devore, who was a partner in a car polish distribution business with his father-in-law, was infatuated with manufacturing. That love began in the 1960s when his father, an engineer for electronics manufacturer Amp Inc., started a business making circuit boards.

When Devore sold the distribution business in 1994, he couldn't imagine working for someone else, punching a time clock or being told what to do. He was only 46 years old and saw an opportunity to revisit what turned his mental gears as a child, he said.

"Manufacturing was my first love, and printing is close enough to manufacturing that I could see a fit. You take raw materials in one door and provide finished goods out the other," he said.

Devore found a franchise opportunity in printing at a trade show. He and Zielonis incorporated the business in 1995 as a franchise of Texas-based Franklin's Printing, Digital Imaging and Copying.

For Zielonis, then 36 years old, it was an opportunity for a new chapter in her life.

"I worked for state government for 17 years, and I did administrative work," she said. "And I was very happy there. I loved my job. I loved the people, but it wasn't challenging at all."

Zielonis didn't jump at the opportunity immediately. She turned down her brother several times before coming to the conclusion that it would be the challenge she was looking for. And it appealed to Zielonis' love of art because printing is a visual medium, she reasoned.

Devore and Zielonis said

they had the franchise name but lacked excess capital. Their business plan estimated breaking even in 14 months, which meant they would lose money and be unable to draw salaries.

They lived on their savings for the first year, but the money was going fast.

"I put the pencil to it and said, 'I hope the (business plan is) right because in 14 months we'll be out of cash, we'll be out of money. We're a young business. I doubt if we can go to a bank and say lend us money based on the fact that we know nothing about what we're doing,' " Devore said. "So the first 14 months were — I'm going to use the word 'terrifying' because there were many, many sleepless nights when I rolled around in the bed wondering if I had made the right decision."

After 13 years under the Franklin's name, Devore and Zielonis said it was time to go it alone. The franchise helped get them started, but operating support was nonexistent, Devore said. In 2008, they changed the name to Integra Print & Image.

Devore and Zielonis grew Silver Spring Township-based Integra from four to 11 employees in 17 years, also adding services such as digital printing, CD burning, desktop design and mailing services.

Growing a business is like being a parent, they said. You help it mature, but at some point you send it into the world on its own. They'll still enjoy the memory of what they built and the people it helped, they said.

"Not everybody is a business owner," Zielonis said. "It's a beast of its own. I've had a good time, and I'm still having a good time. Just the opportunity to own a business and be your own boss was a dream."

Brothers John, left, and Chris Trogner started their microbrewery in a warehouse in Harrisburg in 1997. Tröegs is moving to a 90,000-square-foot facility near Hersheypark. Photo/Amy Spangler

Passion for beer sparks Tröegs

Chris and John Trogner knew they'd open brewery

BY ERIC VERONIKIS

Mechanicsburg natives Chris and John Trogner were heading toward careers in suits and ties, but the buzz surrounding the mid-1990s craft-brewing scene out West led them to found Harrisburg's popular Tröegs Brewing Co.

It was 1994, and John was about to graduate from LaSalle University when he fell in love with the beers that are not mass-produced and contain richer, more flavorful ingredients. Depending on the volume of beer a brewer produces, some small brew houses are referred to as microbreweries. Craft breweries are smaller than microbreweries, but both often take more chances than large brewers do with beer flavors, and their beers pack more of a punch.

During his last semester, John, now 39, interned for a financial real estate group in a downtown Philadelphia high-rise that had its own brewpub. It was there he tried his first craft beer and got the itch to start brewing.

His brother, Chris, 37, was a small business and entrepreneurship major at the University of Colorado, and the

They didn't know where, how or when, but both knew they were going start a brewery. Chris even geared his class assignments around marketing and brewing beer.

craft-brewing industry was growing in Boulder during his freshman year. The first restaurant he dined in there was a brewpub, and he was intrigued.

Before John took a full-time job with the company he interned with, he went to Boulder to live with his brother for two months. Two months turned into a few years as he took a job at a Boulder brewpub instead.

It was in Chris's apartment where they first made their own brew.

They didn't know where, how or when, but both knew they were going start a brewery.

Chris even geared his class assignments around marketing and brewing beer. He drew up business plans for microbreweries and presented them in class.

Chris also took a job at a restaurant in Boulder to learn the restaurant trade because they thought they were going to start a brewpub. They quickly learned restaurants never sleep, so they cut the food part out of the equation.

“We backed out of it. We were hoping to live a much more normal lifestyle rather than closing a restaurant at 2 a.m.,” Chris said. “Our initial idea was making beer anyway.”

Chris went to brewing school in England for a few months after graduating in 1996. John, who had taken a job at a beer packaging plant, kept learning the business as he attended brewing classes in Chicago and California.

The siblings decided to open their brewery in the midstate because the popularity of craft brewing on the East Coast had yet to catch up with the beer-making scene out West.

To get a bank to back the project, the Trogners got recommendation letters from restaurants, pubs and a local beer distributor that said they would serve and support their products.

A brewing-equipment manufacturer agreed to buy back the equipment for 70 cents on the dollar if the brewery went under. The agreement sealed the deal.

To get a bank to back the project, the Trogners got recommendation letters from restaurants, pubs and a local beer distributor that said they would serve and support their products.

The brothers said they were naïve and went into major debt, but they had nothing to lose.

"(The bank) took a chance on us, and that is the only way it could have happened," John said. "It never even dawned on us that it wouldn't work. Not once."

Chris and John settled on a warehouse at 800 Paxton St. and began brewing beer there in 1997.

After a few shaky years, Tröegs took off. The beers have won numerous national awards and have become synonymous in the region. Tröegs beers are found throughout most Mid-Atlantic states.

The first year, Tröegs produced 3,000 barrels. It now makes 30,000 barrels annually. After expanding in the warehouse, they have run out of space. This year, the company is moving to bigger digs in a former Hershey Co. building they leased at 200 E. Hersheypark Drive in Derry Township. Tröegs will be able to grow in the 90,000-square-foot space and brew up to 90,000 barrels per year.

The first year, Tröegs produced 3,000 barrels. It now makes 30,000 barrels annually.

As they prepare to grow, the business is exciting and intimidating, they said.

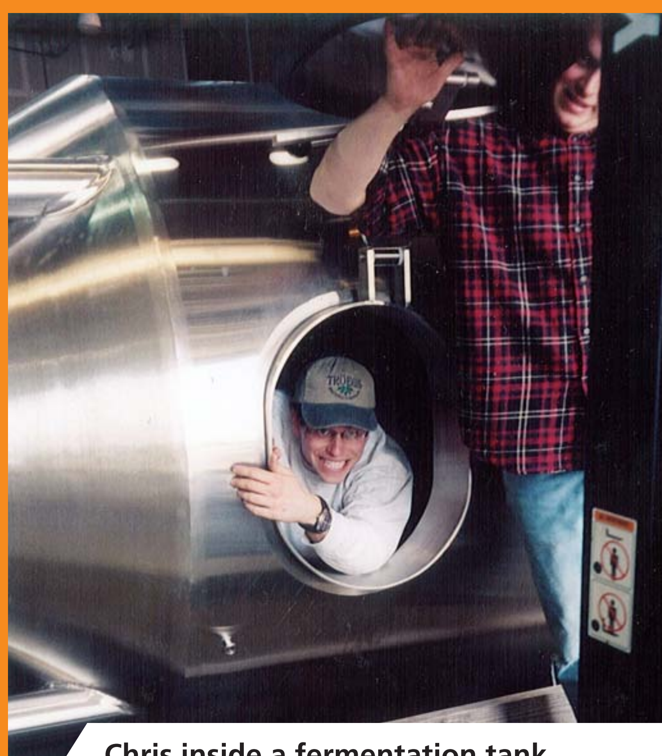
"This is exciting because we get to do a lot of new things that we couldn't do on our current system, but at the same time you are still leveraging everything. Now we own houses, now we are signing our houses to the bank. We are personally guaranteeing everything. John has two kids, I have one, so it can't fail."

At Tröegs' Harrisburg brewery in 1997

Brothers Chris, left, and John Trogner fill kegs for the first time. Photos/Submitted

Cousin Blair Trogner, left, helps Chris handpack cases during one of the first bottling runs.

Chris, left, and John with two new fermentation tanks.



Chris inside a fermentation tank. John is on the right.

Jim Deitch's latest venture is TeraVerde Financial, which he founded in February with longtime business partner Anna Ruth "A.R." Smith. Photo/Amy Spangler

Click here to listen to Deitch's story in his own words.

At home in the mortgage business

Jim Deitch continues 'expanding the funnel' of opportunities with TeraVerde Financial

BY TIM STUHLDREHER

Serial entrepreneur Jim Deitch has founded more than two dozen companies during his career. They include not one, but two mortgage lenders, and he's currently founding a third.

In February, Deitch and longtime business partner Anna Ruth "A.R." Smith announced the formation of TeraVerde Financial. While plans remain fluid, TeraVerde intends to partner with a bank and will offer some mix of mortgages and financial and technical consulting, Deitch said.

Trained as an accountant, Deitch said he was attracted to the mortgage business for two reasons: It offered the opportunity to apply his interest in innovative IT systems, and he relished the gratitude customers expressed when his company guided them through the time-consuming, often frustrating process of obtaining a mortgage.

"It just was really a very enjoyable experience to get a letter or a phone call saying 'Thank you for your help' or 'Your loan officer did a great job,' " he said.

Deitch and Smith collaborated on Keystone Financial Mortgage Corp., founded in 1993. They reorganized it in 1997 as Keystone National Bank, which M&T Bank bought in 2000.

The next year, Deitch and Smith re-entered the mortgage business with American Home Bank.

It rapidly grew into a multi-billion-dollar lender. But the 9/11 attacks almost derailed the company before it could get under way, Deitch said.

As Ground Zero smoldered and America reeled in shock, financial and real estate markets simply ground to a halt.

Deitch knew some of the victims in the Twin Towers and grieved for them and the country, but he also realized he had to focus on keeping his nascent bank in business, he said.

"We came out of the box thinking we were going to grow fairly quickly, (but) we literally had to stand still for what amounted to almost 120 days before both the economy and the real estate market got to the point that transactions were beginning to occur again," Deitch said.

Deitch said a key to American Home Bank's success was the company's mission statement: "To help customers buy, afford and enjoy the home of their dreams."

A mission that has clarity and integrity excites people and guides corporate policy in the right direction, he said. In American Home Bank's case, the mission's "enjoy" clause implied it should minimize customers' risk of foreclosure, so the bank stayed away from subprime lending, a decision that proved foresighted, he said.

Deitch and his wife have been married more than 30 years and have two grown children. Though they have known each other since kindergarten, she turned him down for dates in junior high, high school and college, then broke up with him shortly after they finally began dating as young professionals.

That's one of the experiences Deitch said taught him persistence in business and life.

"I think it's a key value. Anything worth having is not usually easy to get and you really can't give up," he said.

First Chester Corp. of West Chester bought American Home Bank in 2008. Deitch and Smith stayed on but left when Tower Bancorp completed its purchase of First Chester last year.

Graystone shut down American Home Bank this spring, saying a large mortgage bank was inconsistent with its business model, though it folded some operations into Graystone Mortgage.

Deitch now is focused on launching TeraVerde, a process he called tremendously exciting.

The financial crisis and Dodd-Frank reform law have wrought huge changes in the mortgage industry. The government-sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, though under federal conservatorship, guaranteed more than 90 percent of mortgages in 2010, due to the weakness and skittishness of private lenders, he said.

In preliminary meetings with potential TeraVerde partners, Deitch said, he's constantly "expanding the funnel" of opportunities under consideration.

"It's really delightful to be able to say, 'There are so many things that we could do. How do we focus down on the two or three that we really want to do?' I really enjoy that challenge."

The latest venture of entrepreneur Charlie Crystle, at Chestnut Hill Café in Lancaster, is Jawaya, a search engine that uses a social media approach to improve search results. Photo/Amy Spangler

Click here to listen to Crystle's story in his own words.

Looking for the next big thing

Charlie Crystle is driven by the passion to solve problems and improve lives

BY TIM STUHLDREHER

Charlie Crystle got his start in business selling snacks and sodas to his classmates in high school.

"My adviser would drive me down, I'd buy cases of Coke at 25 cents a can and sell them for 50 cents on the honor system," the Lancaster native recalled.

"I broke even," he added, "because the honor system was not really effective."

In 1994, following college and some time as a professional musician, Crystle founded a PC sales and service business. That evolved into ChiliSoft, the company Crystle sold for $70 million to Cobalt Networks in 2000.

Software is a "conduit," not an end in itself, Crystle said.

In the mid-1990s, the Internet was just beginning to evolve into the ubiquitous resource it is today. Netscape had gone public the year before. ChiliSoft realized desktop applications such as spreadsheets and databases would migrate to the Web and decided to develop the necessary underlying software.

"We saw it as an opportunity to play in that space," Crystle said.

Crystle hired a talented programmer, Dave Weaver, and they set to work. The result was hugely successful — Microsoft was "blown away" by ChiliSoft's work, Crystle said — leading to the Cobalt buyout.

Ultimately, the buyout ended up being somewhat less remunerative than the headline figure would indicate. Sun Microsystems acquired Cobalt five months later, Crystle said, but Sun's stock dropped more than 95 percent in value over the next year as the Internet bubble deflated.

Still, "It was a pretty amazing time," he said. "We were making it up as we went, and didn't really know what we knew or what we didn't know."

He knows much more now about tech entrepreneurship, but said he's still driven by the same passion to solve problems and improve lives.

"You lose some of the unbridled optimism," he said, but insisted: "My character is the same.

"I want to hit a home run. I still get very passionate about things, and energetic, and I'm very tenacious."

Since ChiliSoft, he's been involved in politics, social work and education. He's interested in economic development, and is mulling schemes for bringing manufacturing jobs back to Lancaster.

He's also been involved in more software startups. In 2004, he founded Mission Research, based in Lancaster. Its main product is GiftWorks, considered the leading fundraising and donor management program for nonprofits.

Software is a "conduit," not an end in itself, Crystle said.

"It's something I get jazzed up about, and I need to pay the bills like everybody else," he said. "So I'm trying to make the next big thing happen so I can pay the bills, and then maybe turn my sights toward something else."

That next big thing he's trying to make happen is Jawaya, a search engine that uses a social media approach to improve search results.

There are limits to how good Google's algorithm-driven search results can be, especially when companies spend so much time and effort trying to manipulate them to their own advantage, he said.

Jawaya adds human expertise to the mix, he said. It allows users to identify which search results they found most useful, giving the next person with the same search a head start.

"This is about making the haystack smaller," Crystle said.

Jawaya also will allow people with similar search histories to find each other, fostering the creation of online communities of like-minded individuals, he said.

Jawaya could become a $1 billion company, but that's not the main goal, he said. The main goal is making people's lives better — in this case, their lives online.

"The driving need for me is to reduce the amount of noise in digital life," he said.

"It's just a black hole, this Internet thing," he said, chuckling. "It needs an off switch."

Dave Metzler, CEO of Carlisle Carrier Corp., has grown the Cumberland County-based company to about 300 employees, 250 trucks and 1,000 trailers. Photo/Amy Spangler

Click here to listen to Metzler's story in his own words.

'Fire in my belly' drove trucking firm

Dave Metzler's journey led him to establish Carlisle Carrier Corp.

BY JIM T. RYAN

After 11 years at a Colorado trucking firm, Dave Metzler was fired in February 1978 following disagreements with company leadership.

It was a difficult split, considering the owner was like a father to Metzler, who today is president and CEO of Cumberland County-based Carlisle Carrier Corp.

From the day he was fired, Metzler said, he had a passion to run his own trucking company.

The journey was difficult, but perseverance paid off, he said. Today, Carlisle Carrier is a major hauler for companies including General Mills Inc., Kellogg Co. and The Gatorade Co. But to get there, owners sometimes need to step aside, re-center their mental capacities and then get back into the thick of the race, he said.

After Colorado, Metzler searched for a business to buy in Los Angeles, but that became fruitless when he realized he couldn't afford the target company and a house for his family.

In April 1978, Duane Acklie — founder of Nebraska-based Crete Carrier Corp. — asked Metzler to run Cumberland County-based Shaffer Trucking, a recently acquired subsidiary in Silver Spring Township.

"I ran it as if I owned it," Metzler said. "Good news for both of us: I made him a lot of money and made us a little bit of money. I had a very secure job, but I still had a fire in my belly to run my own business, write my own rules, despite the freedom I got from Duane."

In June 1989, he left Shaffer to again pursue the passion to have his own business.

"I'd rather be 45 (years old) and tried and failed than be 65 and always wonder whether or not I could've made something happen," he said.

That's when Metzler bought into the trucking business now known as Carlisle Carrier. Metzler invested all his money into the company, only to find out later it was an empty shell with insurance problems.

Even after resolving those issues, Metzler realized he needed working capital to get the business going. It didn't seem likely he'd be able to get financing from a bank, but one executive decided to take a risk on his fledgling trucking company, Metzler said.

Ray Wolfe, then president of Farmer's Trust in Carlisle, gave Carlisle Carrier a $500,000 line of credit despite limited collateral and assets and almost no track record of successfully owning a business, Metzler said.

"If it hadn't been for Ray giving us a half-million-dollar line of credit, probably nothing would've ever happened," he said.

In April of 1990, Metzler was

able to buy a building near Exit 44 of Interstate 81 outside Carlisle to be the company's first offices and brought on four independent owner-operator drivers with five trucks for a fleet.

Dauphin Distribution, a grocery warehousing and distribution company in Silver Spring Township, also agreed that year to be Carlisle Carrier's main client. That gave Metzler a solid product to carry that would sell in good times and bad. Consumers may pass on buying a car or luxury items in a recession, but they still have to buy groceries, Metzler said.

In 1994, Carlisle Carrier bought the property where its headquarters are located in Silver Spring Township. In 2000, the company built larger offices there. Today, it employs about 300 people, owns 250 trucks and 1,000 trailers, serves 125 clients and hauls 110,000 shipments annually.

"There's a particular rush that comes from worrying about making payroll, that comes from worrying about losing everything you've got, that is so different from running a business for someone else," he said.

On occasion, Metzler said, he had to remind himself that simply running the business wasn't good enough to succeed.

"What I found myself doing in the early months in our own business ... was not doing what I had done before. Not being bold, not marketing things, not agreeing to buy things. I was worrying about how I would pay them off or how I was going to make payroll," he said.

"And so I sort of took myself out to the wood shed and said, 'Look, buddy, if this continues you will fail. So you need to clean your head out, pull up your britches and get your ass out of that thing and go right back in there and run it just the way you know how. And all that other stuff will take care of itself. You'll work that out.' "

In the early 1980s, competitive archery expert Robert Kaufold created a business that would become the internationally known Lancaster Archery Supply. Photo/Amy Spangler

Click here to listen to Kaufold's story in his own words.

Staying on target, hitting it big

Robert Kaufold turned lifelong love into internationally known archery business

BY PAULA HOLZMAN

By age 16, Robert Kaufold knew what he didn't want to do with his life.

Kaufold's father owned a Lancaster County tool-and-die shop, where Robert would clean and help with light machine work.

"I was bored. It just wasn't for me," Kaufold said. "I was also a competitive archer from a young age, so luckily had a father who was willing to not have me follow in the same footsteps, but follow a passion."

Decades later, Kaufold has turned his passion for the sport into an internationally known business, Lancaster Archery Supply.

The son of an 11-time state champion archer, Kaufold said he first picked up a bow at the age of 18 months. He was the top high school archer in the U.S. by his senior year at Conestoga Valley High School.

The exposure garnered him four college scholarship offers, including the one he accepted from James Madison University.

While there, he studied business administration. During his senior year, one of the class projects was to create a plan for a fictitious company — at least the companies were fictitious for many of Kaufold's classmates.

"A week after I graduated (in May 1983), I had a nail bag on and was building out the interior of the place (that would become Lancaster Archery Supply)," he said.

Financing for business and 1,000-square-foot building was only possible with a $30,000 loan from Kaufold's father and a significant acceptance of responsibility.

"He co-signed the loan with the understanding that, if the business doesn't make it, it's back to work in the machine shop or get another job and pay the bank the loan back," Kaufold said.

So Kaufold lived with his parents for the business's first few years. He also kept his competitive skills sharp, becoming a contender for the U.S. Olympic team in 1984 — the year he was ranked fourth in the country — and 1988.

While shooting thousands of arrows a week took time, it also brought Kaufold into contact with peers in the archery field — men and women who, as they rose through the sport's ranks, would become major customers.

Five years into the business, things felt financially secure, Kaufold said. He took steps to expand, since his original business plan had six locations in the mid-Atlantic.

It would lead to the business's darkest days.

"I started a second store in the Downingtown area. Six months after we opened, Lukens Steel went out and put 5,500 people out of work down there in Chester County," Kaufold said.

"I sold that store two and a half years later … but that pretty much cured me of the multi-location. We were open seven days a week during that time, two different locations. It about killed me."

Catalog sales and the advent of the Internet have since replaced physical locations as an expansion plan; Kaufold said only about 15 percent of business now comes through the East Lampeter Township showroom.

"The vast majority of what we do is wholesale to sporting goods stores and sports federations, colleges, Olympic teams, schools, parks and recreation departments and camps. Anybody who has a reason to shoot a bow and arrow," he said.

At 38 years old, Kaufold married. The financial acumen of his wife, Carole, has made it possible to more than triple sales and expand the business from seven employees to more than 30 and growing, he said.

"I'm shake, rattle and roll, and she's plot, plan and diagram," he said.

Another self-described watershed moment happened in 2002, Kaufold said, when his father died. He started focusing on his legacy.

Kaufold and his wife have a 9-year-old son and 7-year-old daughter, both of whom are archers.

When they're older, Kaufold said, he and his wife will allow them to decide if they want to stay in the family business or, like Kaufold did, strike out on their own.

"If (my son) wants to dig ditches, we'll buy a used backhoe and go to town," he said. "As long as they have a passion for it."

Jonathan Byler, left, John Byler and Bob Tucci partnered with Penn Ketchum, right, to open Penn Cinema, a multiplex theater in Manheim Township, Lancaster County. Photo/Amy Spangler

Click here to listen to Ketchum's story in his own words.

Taking a reel chance on movies

Former county employee Penn Ketchum and his partners launched a multiplex theater

BY PAULA HOLZMAN

Penn Ketchum had nothing in particular against sheet cake — he just didn't want one for himself.

"I would go to a lot of retirement parties where guys got sheet cakes," said Ketchum, who has a master's degree in public administration and previously was head of Lancaster County's Mental Health/Mental Retardation program.

"I just sort of felt like I wanted something different than a sheet cake when it was done," he said. "I wanted to at least be able to tell my kids I took a shot at it. That I went out there and swung for the fences. Maybe I struck out, but at least I made a go for it."

In 2006, Ketchum took that swing. The result is Penn Cinema, a Manheim Township multiplex with roughly 1.5 acres under roof that now includes the county's only Imax theater.

Ketchum said the idea took root several years ago with his love of movies and concurrent dissatisfaction with local theater options.

He figured other people would feel the same, but it took years to get investors on board with his plan to turn 13 acres — which at the time was a cornfield that would have to be leased from the Lancaster Airport — into a theater.

Meanwhile, Ketchum was trying to lay the groundwork for the venture to make it more attractive for investors. That was not an easy task, even with the salary from his county job.

"I had two little kids at home. What (my wife) Amy and I kept doing was maxing out credit cards, rolling one credit card into another credit card, and then I borrowed money from my mom. And then it started to get into the really big numbers, and that's when (my father-in-law) Bob (Tucci) got involved."

Tucci had been in business with a partner for three decades as Olde Hickory Refinishing, which they recently shuttered due to the partner's health problems.

Ironically, one of Ketchum's future partners had been there all along — real estate investor Jonathan Byler's and Ketchum's sons played soccer together. Byler said he had

Leaving his job at the county to strike out on his own felt both liberating and frightening, Ketchum said. And opening the theater? "It was terrifying," Ketchum laughed.

contemplated approaching Ketchum at games and offering to throw in, but Penn always looked confident and serene.

"I had to keep a strong front for the township so that they would believe I was actually doing this. You've heard the expression 'fake it 'til you make it?' I took that to the extreme, to the point where I had this future partner sitting 10 feet away from me, but he didn't say anything," Ketchum said ruefully.

Ketchum was finally able to connect with Byler's father, real estate investor John Byler. Both Bylers came on board, and the project moved forward.

Leaving his job at the county to strike out on his own felt both liberating and frightening, Ketchum said. And opening the theater? "It was terrifying," Ketchum laughed.

The project hit some unexpected rock during construction, which upped costs and anxieties among the partners.

"Out of the gate, it was certainly a little bit scary," Jonathan Byler said. "They're big buildings, and they're expensive to build. It's not a couple-hundred-thousand dollars to make it work."

The partners said it took a while adjusting to the movie-theater business, learning the art of tasks such as movie scheduling and staffing.

But they also haven't looked back, expanding, becoming the county's first digital theater and building the next-door Imax, which opened in fall 2010.

And there are bigger things to come: The group is hoping to open a larger multiplex and Imax in Wilmington, Del., in November 2012.

"We knew the business on paper," Jonathan Byler said. "But we had to live though it."

Juan and Lisa Garcia put their house up as collateral to open El Sol restaurant in downtown Harrisburg in 2007. They opened El Sol Express in 2009 in Cumberland County. Photo/Amy Spangler

A flavorful leap of faith

Lisa and Juan Garcia turned risk and sacrifice into rewards at El Sol Mexican restaurant

BY ERIC VERONIKIS

Lisa and Juan Garcia put their courage and determination to the test when they opened a Mexican restaurant in Harrisburg in 2007.

A working couple with two children, the Garcias put their house up as collateral to open El Sol restaurant at 18 S. Third St.

"But I have a lot of faith in Juan," Lisa said. "He is a really good cook and has a good mindset for business."

Lisa worked full time at Tyco Electronics and Juan ran a pizza shop they owned. But they believed a Mexican restaurant done right could be a hit. Lisa quit Tyco, Juan later sold his half of the pizzeria he owned with his brother, and the Garcias took out two loans to open El Sol.

The Garcia's landlord and the Small Business Administration, which provided the Garcias with its primary loan, encouraged the couple to buy a liquor license to help make the restaurant work, Lisa said.

The couple had to take out an additional $100,000 loan to get the license, and the bank was willing to take a chance on the second loan because even if the restaurant failed, it would be able to sell the liquor license to make its money back, Juan said.

Juan said he wasn't afraid to strike out because if it didn't work, he would have moved forward and tried something else.

"It was a tough decision; but at the same time, I had in my mind different ideas. If one didn't work, we try to do something different," Juan said.

Lisa is a Central Pennsylvania native, and Juan is from a town in central Mexico called La Barca. The couple married in 2002, and Juan had to become a U.S. citizen before settling down in the midstate with his wife. Both realized that the Mexican food represented in the midstate did not accurately represent some of the regional flavors found in Mexico.

"It was a tough decision; but at the same time, I had in my mind different ideas. If one didn't work, we try to do something different," Juan said.

"Not being that much competition in Mexican food, I think it was going to be well in bringing something different to the area," Juan said.

Juan went to the El Sol site after closing the pizza shop at night and worked to prepare the restaurant. Being a Jack-of-all-trades, to save money he decided he would be the general contractor. He laid the tile in the dining room and did about half of the construction work to reconfigure the space that had previously housed a local magazine. Placing the tile himself saved the Garcias

$15,000, Juan said.

As the Garcias prepared to open, customers of Brico, a high-end restaurant across the street, took notice. Brico has a great clientele, Lisa said, and the two businesses wound up feeding off each other.

After El Sol opened, its popularity soared and many came to consider it one of the region's best Mexican restaurants. It was so successful that the Garcias decided to open a smaller version, El Sol Express, in 2009 in Lower Allen Township.

The Garcias didn't have to take out a loan to open the second restaurant; they used the money they made over the previous two years. But Lisa was worried that they had taken on too much. She was pregnant with their third child, and was concerned that opening another business could be more than they could handle. Luckily, it didn't tip them over. Lisa didn't have to get as intimately involved with opening the second restaurant because they already had a model to work from and it wasn't as big.

Two more years passed, and Juan's ambition took over again, so the Garcias teamed with another couple that owns restaurants in the area to open another Mexican eatery called Luna in Derry Township this year. The restaurant has been extremely busy during the first few months it has been open.

It has taken a lot of risk to open three restaurants, but Lisa and Juan said it was worth it. Juan said he wouldn't have given up even if it didn't work the first time.

"We were going to make it work no matter what," Lisa added. "It wasn't an option to fail. Unless you are independently wealthy, and you can just sink money into something and just say, 'Oh, well.' We were going to make it work no matter what."

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