

Frank and Patricia Vandehey

This week we are happy to name Frank and Patricia Vandehey as the 119th and 120th inductees in Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Frank and Pat Vandehey were nominated by their grandchildren.

Back on April 1, 1955, Frank Vandehey, who initially thought he would be a Veterinarian, was hired as an office manager for a farm equipment and truck dealer called International Harvester in Wausau. As an office manager, he knew the only way to advance within the company was to understand the truck business itself, and that is when his passion for trucks began.

On September 1, 1965, Frank and Patricia Vandehey; along with business partners Ruben Hilliker, Fritz Lau & Raymond Specht, officially became an authorized dealer for GMC and International Trucks in Marshfield, located on Fourth- Street. Shortly thereafter, one of Frank's first bold initiatives was to set up a truck leasing operation that today has become Idealease of Central Wisconsin. Another great initiative was when he acquired a school bus franchise to sell school buses throughout the state. Both initiatives would prove to be brilliant marketing strategies that continue to pay major dividends today. By the end of Frank's first year in business, he had 12 employees and \$1.4 million in sales.

In 1969, with the intention of expanding the business, Frank and his partners began researching the opportunity to buy land. Two years later they purchased land located within the current Marshfield Business Park, strategically located along a proposed highway bypass, currently WI-13 and US-10. In 1972, Mid-State Truck Service built a 29,000-square foot truck and bus dealership and a full-service and parts center. Shortly thereafter, to facilitate the new expansion, the staff was increased to over 28 employees.

Despite struggling during the recession of the 1980's, Mid-State was able to bounce back and continue regaining financial growth. In 1985, the company renovated and upgraded their facility. The entire floor plan was reorganized, allowing for more office space and an enclosed parts department. The upgraded facility then housed 59 employees comfortably. Then in 1986, Mid-State acquired Point Truck Sales and three years later built another new International Truck dealership and full-service center in Plover. In 1987, Mid-State once again expanded its footprint and opened a full-service and parts center in Wisconsin Rapids. By 1988, Frank was able to buy out his three partners and became sole owner. At this time, the Mid-State organization employed 84 people. The company's growth during this period was a direct result of staying true to the basic business values which had served the company well for the previous 20 years.



In 1990, Mid-State Truck Service earned the “Firm of the Year” honors from the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry for its good corporate citizenship and extensive community involvement.

Shortly thereafter, in 1993, Mid-State Truck was recognized nationally for the first time with Navistar’s “Circle of Excellence” award, an honor extended to only 45 of more than 700 such dealers in the U.S. and Canada. Mid-State has earned the same award 14 times since then. In addition to those recognized accomplishments, they have also received the Navistar and International Harvester “Dealer Service Awards” for 41 consecutive years. Idealease of Central Wisconsin received the prestigious “Idealgold” award for 13 years, a recognition for operating excellence.

In 1999, after 34 years as general manager and president of Mid-State Truck Service, Frank Vandehey retired, passing along his leadership and successful business skills, as well as company ownership to his three sons; Jon, Tom and Bill Vandehey, and son-in-law; Tim Federwitz. Throughout his tenure, Frank demonstrated great leadership, vision and innovation, expanding the company’s customer base by offering multiple truck and bus options, as well as continuously improving his service operations.

Frank and Pat valued being part of the Marshfield community and shared both their time and talents. Frank sponsored the city's elementary school crossing guards and donated the city's first Officer Friendly vehicle and the scoreboard at Arthur J. Reeths Baseball Field. He was a member the MACCI Red Coat Ambassadors’ Club and Marshfield baseball programs. In 1990 as the new YMCA was being planned, Frank and Pat added their financial support to the project.

While Frank and Pat’s children attended school, Pat served as a leader for both the Campfire Girls and Shady Lane 4-H, and as a Chapter Mother of Marshfield Junior High Chapter of Future Homemakers of America – Home Economic Related Occupations (FHA-HERO). About the same time the family hosted AFS students for short stays at the Vandehey home.

Pat participated in community events too. In 1972, as Marshfield observed its Centennial, Pat assisted with costume for the Centennial Pageant production. In 1983, along with Tom Kraus and Lawrence Thill she helped organize the Marshfield Chaparrals Baseball Association. Pat was also a member, officer and committee chairperson at various times for the Marshfield Business & Professional Women's Club and served as Gift Shop Chair for the St. Joseph Hospital Auxiliary.

In 2020, Vandehey Waters Outdoor Aquatic Center was made a reality by a generous donation in honor of Frank and Pat Vandehey. The water park opened in 2021 and is enjoyed by many families every summer making wonderful memories for kids of all ages.