

WOODY ANDERSON FORD

C.W. Woody Anderson is a travelin' man. And throughout his life's journey he has humbly amassed a fortune in success, admiration and respect of his employees, his colleagues and the citizens of north Alabama.

Born October 17, 1921 in Elkmont, Alabama, Anderson went directly from Elkmont High School to work for A&P Grocery Co. in Louisville, Kentucky. After being promoted to store manager, he found himself returning to Alabama in 1944 and opening his own grocery store in Athens. Three years later in 1947, Anderson traded carrot tops for hardtops, starting with a used car business in Decatur, and finally jumping into the new car business. On April 15, 1950 he took the helm of the Dodge and Plymouth dealership in Huntsville, and with the purchase of Huntsville's Ford dealership in 1961, the Woody Anderson engine was revved up to race him into becoming an auto dealer legend.

The dealership began modestly on a downtown site on Clinton Street and relocated to Washington Street in 1964. It established a high profile presence on 16-acres of land on the north side of town at its

Left to right: Fred Sanders, Tom Guthrie, C. W. Anderson, and a Chrysler executive.



Employees at the 1958 Christmas party.

current Jordon Lane site in 1984. While there, the dealership collected numerous awards, including the Ford Motor Company Distinguished Achievement Award and nomination for the prestigious Alabama Time Quality Dealer Award sponsored by *Time* magazine, ADAA and NADA. In addition, Mr. Anderson was continually honored by his industry peers. The former president of the Huntsville New Car Dealers Association, Anderson was also an outstanding member of Ford Motor Company's Dealer Affairs Committee, Advertising Council and the Ford Dealers Council.

As active as Anderson has been in the automotive industry, he has gained even more recognition for his many contributions to the local community and the state of Alabama. He was fondly saluted as the "Governor of North Alabama" for his achievements in the political arena, including his co-chairmanship of the

State of Alabama Personnel Board, membership on the State of Alabama ABC Board and his service to Governor George Wallace as a member of the governor's staff. His leadership skills have also made an indelible mark on his community, helping to organize the creation of numerous corporate and charitable entities, among them Peoples National Bank, Kings Inn Hotel, radio station WVOV, and the Century Club of the Boys Clubs of Alabama. Recipient of the Jaycees Distinguished Service Award and former chairman of the Madison County March of Dimes, Mr. Anderson has selflessly donated his time, talent and financial support to many deserving civic organizations including the Boy Scouts, Boys and Girls Ranch of Alabama and the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Lastly, as a sparkplug in Huntsville's real estate marketplace, he is the developer of the 130-acre Harrison Hills subdivision, owner of both the Holiday Inn/Madison Airport and

Hampton Inn of Huntsville and owner of many commercial properties including the AmSouth Bank, Goodwill of Alabama, Sizzler Restaurant, Dunkin Donuts and Green Hills Grille buildings.

The landscape and inventory of Woody Anderson Ford was dramatically different when the dealership began in 1961. At that time, roughly \$1,800 would put you in the driver's seat of Ford's most popular model of the day, the Falcon. The famed Mustang was introduced in 1964 for the sticker price of approximately \$3,500. To drive off Anderson's lot in a Mustang today will cost upward of \$25,000, and Ford's fastest selling SUVs—the Explorer and Expedition—are a world away from the modest little Falcon in both performance and price tag.

As Ford models have evolved in silhouette and performance, so has the dealership's daily operation. Margaret Hightower, the company's current comptroller, has been with the dealership since the beginning and recalls having to perform every duty, from inventory control to parts ordering, by hand and with the help of a cumbersome Burr-

Employees with 38–50 years of service. Left to right: James Clark (1952), Collier Bush (1963), Tom Guthrie (1947), Janie McCain (1963), Margaret Hightower (1961), and John Ballou (1956).



Aerial view of building on Jordan Lane in 1984.

oughs Bookkeeping Machine. In 1975 the company embraced computerization, updating to a comprehensive in-house system in 1984 when the dealership moved to Jordan Lane. Today the dealership has a strong online presence, where customers can search available new and used vehicle inventories, reserve rental cars, make service appointments and even AutoApply for credit from Ford Motor Credit Online directly from the Website www.woodyanderson.com.

Along with Ms. Hightower, there are several other loyal employees who have formed the core of Anderson's "People Fleet." Members of the original staff of 50 include sales professionals John Ballou and Tom Guthrie, both of whom are still active on the sales floor. Collier Bush, who began as a porter in 1963 and then served as wrecker driver, is one of the dealership's top sales people today; James Clark, who began as a crack mechanic more than three decades ago, can still be found taking care of business on a part-time basis; Jannie McCain has been at the telephone switchboard controls since 1963. And last but not least, is octogenarian Woody Anderson himself, who is still

drawn to his namesake dealership every morning to take account of the over 900 vehicles in stock.

Long recognized as one of the top 100 dealers in the country, Woody Anderson Ford naturally attracts the most dedicated and talented personnel. While new employees are always warmly welcomed into the Anderson Ford family, a now abandoned "tradition" is a humorous legend often shared with those coming on board. For many years, the Anderson's graciously hosted all employees and their partners at an annual Holiday Party held at the country club. The purported tradition fabricated by the tightly knit group was to inform all new employees that a ritual "dump" into the club's swimming pool was to be an expected rite of passage into the Anderson fraternity. Thinking himself clever, one year a new employee packed an extra suit in his car, drove to the country club and immediately threw himself into the water, bragging that he escaped being thrown in by jumping in himself. Amidst the shock that erupted into unrestrained laughter, the soggy young man was belatedly informed the truth. The dunking tradition was just a spoof. In the long history of Anderson parties, he was the only person ever to get wet!