

Brief history of Dalton Trucking:

Dalton Trucking was started in the early 1960's by Jerry Dalton. Jerry grew the business into a 10 truck operation by the early 70's. His main customer was Heckett Engineering in Fontana. Heckett specialized in recycling the slag by-product that was produced in the blast furnaces of the Kaiser Steel mill. Molten slag was loaded into special haul trucks and dumped next to Heckett's facility for recycling. I remember how the sky would glow when those haul trucks dumped. The lightweight rock that was produced was used for driveways, parking lots, leach lines, ect. It is still found all over the Inland Empire. Jerry had several high side truck and transfers to haul the slag. He did some for Heckett direct but as time went on he also bought and sold the slag direct to customers. Around 1970 Jerry bought our original 2.5 acre yard and built a shop and office. The property came with a small motel-looking building from the 1940's that he used for storage (it became my dad's, Josh's, then my office).

Jerry got sick around 1976. His sons and son in-law were working in the business, but he wanted to make sure his wife would be financially secure. He decided to sell the business and asked his Peterbilt salesman, Ralph Kennedy to help him find a buyer.

Enter Terry Klenske. My dad had been trucking since he was 16. He bought a Ford C-600 flatbed in 1959. Dad used it to haul his cows around Yucaipa. This developed into hauling hay and selling it directly to neighbors. That required a pull trailer and then he needed a bigger truck. Next thing you know, he is a trucker. My dad and uncle both have a bunch of nightmare stories about hauling hay. Dad and Uncle Larry learned how to drive by trial and error. Their survival stories are legendary. He and my Uncle Larry started Klenske Brother's Trucking in the early 60's. They worked through a couple of old trucks until they had a really nice 1958 Emoryville and a stunning 1958 KW conventional. Dad drove the cabover which had a 262 and was very dependable. Uncle Lar drove the KW which had a hot rod small bore Cummins (maybe a 380?). They hauled produce for Stacey Transportation in Redlands CA. A lot of their work was from Nogales AZ to the San Francisco market. For a number of reasons Klenske Bros. did not make it. My mom still blames my uncle's right foot, but the main reason was that they were pulling Stacey's trailers. There was just not enough money left over after Stacey got their cut (one of my early lessons: never pull another guy's trailer). Uncle Lar went on to become a highly successful owner operator and refrigerated freight broker. My dad drove a Tanker for V.B. Morgan for a while but stumbled upon an ad for a "traffic manager" at Fleetwood Enterprises (the R.V. and mobile home manufacturer). Fleetwood had a fleet of trucks that ran cross country, hauling their building materials. He was really a truck dispatcher and was good at it. My grandfather was happy and relieved that Terry finally had a "real" job. But this whole time he still loved trucks. He drove Uncle Lar's truck on weekends and stayed in touch with his trucking buddies.

One of these guys was Ralph Kennedy. Ralph turned my dad onto an opportunity at Kaiser Steel hauling steel to Long Beach for export. Ralph had a 1960 Freightliner cabover that he could sell him cheap. It was an ex-cattle truck so it had the right wheelbase for hauling beams. It had a NHRS 300 and a 5X3. I still remember all the teasing my dad took from the guys about trying to run an "antique" (this was 1975). Anyhow, he bought a flatbed and hired an old friend to drive the truck. He did very well with the truck, but the haul went away in late 1976. Meanwhile, he is moving up the ladder at Fleetwood. My parents sold the truck and are "out" again.

In early 1977 Ralph Kennedy brings his next opportunity to my dad. He was a good salesman and must have really believed in my dad. A little 3 & ½ truck operation in Fontana CA. My dad did not know much about the dump truck business but he loved truck and trailers and rarely saw an opportunity he did not like. Ralph helped finance the trucks and brokered a deal with the Dalton's for my parents to buy the yard with them carrying the paper. It all comes together and just like that my dad is back "in". His plan was to keep all of Dalton's people and let them run things while he counted the money in the evenings. That plan did not work out. Within a year there was only one guy left. That was A.J. Marchman who would be instrumental in our early success.

Dad started hiring old friends to drive and dispatch. There are too many to give their due respect here, but you all know who you are. The business became the focus of our family. Dad spent most evenings here doing what he could to make sure everything would run the next day. We spent most every weekend here with dad servicing trucks, mom running parts and cleaning, and Josh and I picking trash and weeds. Dad bought us a go cart that we terrorized the yard with after we were done with our chores. Several old hands lived to see the day when I would "lose it" when someone went by me raising dust as I was washing my truck. Pay back!

Here is a rough timeline:

4-1-77: My parents buy the trucks. Coincidence that it was April Fool's Day? The line up was:

#3 1970 359 10 wheeler. Dad shortly bought a pup for this one. I bent my first bumper with this truck at about 12 years old.

#4 1970 359 high side rear transfer

#7 1974 White Freightliner high side rear transfer

#8 1975 White Freightliner high side rear transfer. We believe Jerry spec'd this truck for himself. It was really nice with stainless steel boxes and an air shift 5 X4.

1978: A big year. Dad bought 8 trucks including 3 brand new Peterbilts. He partnered with AJ on #10 and financed the rest with "smoke and mirrors".

c.1979: We are hauling cinders and block for Angelus Block. They became a core customer. Also we buy 3 worn-out low-side transfers from Matich and become their asphalt truck broker. Around this time my parents purchased the neighbor's 2.5 acres. Looking back, the expansion of the fleet forced my dad to continue to buy adjoining properties as they became available. Today it is genius but back then it was a daily struggle to keep all of the creditors at bay!

c.1980: This little "hobby business" is out of control and dad decides he has to leave Fleetwood and run the business full time. This was a huge decision, leaving a great job with benefits, but by now he is "all in".

c.1983: Riverside Cement Company awards Dalton their plant transportation work. My dad was already growing the company at an "alarming rate". This work forced an exponential growth spurt. About this period, Time D.C. closed the doors and lots of cheap, low mile, Freightliners became available through the Fresno Freightliner dealer. My dad bought them as fast as they became available. Cabover bottom dump tractors looked a little funny but they were feather light, cheap,

and reliable. In later years Josh, myself, and several other young "hot shot" lowbed hands would call them "Penalty Boxes". We hated to be told we were driving bottoms the next day but the truth is, the bottom dumps had become the backbone of the fleet.

The RCC work led to my dad getting involved in their mining operations. This led to buying loaders, dozers, blades, ect. Of course, owning equipment requires having lowbeds to move the stuff. Dad bought our first lowbed in about 1985.

c. 1986: Dalton Trucking is rolling hard. The above mentioned segments are going well and we have 3 lowbeds including a 7 axle and a flat deck 16,8,8 Cozad 9 axle. Dad gets the opportunity to hire Larry Burdick from Cattrac and now we are in the lowbed business for real (this is a sanitized short version of the story). Larry starts buying equipment as fast as something came available. We purchase the assets of McDonald Transportation which came with Vaughn Goodfellow and his team. A book could be written about this time at Dalton. We had some real characters working here. We were hauling normal construction equipment but we were finding a niche in hauling big pipe and military equipment.

c. 1990: Dalton Trucking is hauling big pipe for both Ameron in Rancho Cucamonga and Hydro Conduit in Corona. There were several very large sewer jobs going during the '90s. We hauled most of the big pipe on these jobs. Looking back at all the "incidents" and based on how we run things today, it is amazing that we survived (another book)! We start hauling water transmission and smaller sewer pipe at the same time. This business gets us solidly in the flatbed/step deck market.

Josh and I are both driving by now. We both got our start on dad's '48 Autocar in the yard but we learned how drive on bottom dumps. Besides my dad, I owe most of my driving habits (the good ones) to Bill Plantz. I rode with Bill my sophomore summer of college and really learned how to work a truck with him. Josh and I both went straight to our lowbed operation as soon as we could. It was fun and exciting plus the money was good too. There was still some trial and error but none of our stories compare to Dad's! One evening I was mouthing off to the lowbed manager a little too much. I was complaining about something or other and he finally had had enough and told me I start in the office Monday! Wait,wait,... he cut me off: B.S. you are coming into the office and helping to fix it! This is a lesson that I like to share with my sons (both young lowbed hands) when they get a little too mouthy at the dinner table.

c. 1995: Dad gets presented with an opportunity to buy the assets of Harris Transportation. This is part of a re-occurring theme. He has never seen one of these deals that he did not try to make work. With the same grit and determination shown before, he developed a yard in Adelanto and it became the anchor of our high desert operations. At one point we ran upwards of 40 trucks out of that place. These were mostly light weight truck and pups, transfers, bottom dumps, and a few of my flatbeds. In this period Josh moves into the office and eventually becomes G.M. of our bulk division.

c. 2002: Dad has always been aggressive looking for ways to generate new trucking opportunities. In 1999 he bought a small rail to truck transloading operation named OB's. His plan was to control the transloading, freight, and storage. He bought and developed a 10-acre site off the main U.P. tracks in So. Fontana. The project was another example of our dad's determination to push forward. From securing the financing, dealing with permits, neighbors that fought it, a sand fly that was never found onsite, and finally building it, DLS was an exhibition of Dad's drive. DLS was a success but

never generated the volume of trucking that we were hoping for. It's biggest contribution was as a real estate venture.

c. 2010: A rough period for Dalton Trucking. We were still reeling from the effects of the recession. Our cement plant customers were closing their plants in the Inland Empire. CARB was in full implementation of their agenda. We were fighting a couple of B.S. wage and hour lawsuits. Not fun. It was a bad period for the business and Klenske family.

c.2015: Dad scores a home run and sells DLS to the Union Pacific. It was hard on him but the capital saves us. We are able to re-organize and look to the future again. Josh has been looking at other options and figures out that the land can generate a lot more income than trucking. This is another sanitized version of the story, but we start downsizing. We start selling dump trucks and by 2018 are out of the dump truck business. We decide to focus on our lowbed and flatbed operation and develop lease customers for the land that was freed-up.

Today: The current plan is working. We are still a successful heavy/specialized trucker in Southern California. Our dad's vision of investing in land has come to fruition. Josh focuses on our real estate operations, and I run the trucks. We make big decisions together. Of course we still run anything of importance past TK. Dad is still sharp and looking for the next big thing. I make sure I really think something is a good idea before I run it past him. Usually before I am done, he says buy it, do it, make it happen. I am not blessed with Dad's unbounding optimism but he has taught us if we treat people right, are honest, and show up, it will work out. My kid's interest in the business keeps me motivated. This stuff is still a little bit fun. Antique trucking is for-sure still fun. Josh and I have plans to add a few more to Dad's collection. Like all antique truckers we get asked why there are so many? Do we really need all these? I get a big kick out of listening to my kids explain to my wife why we need this one and why that one can't go. Again, Dad's plan is working.

The truck show was a great testament to Terry Klenske. It was a success because of everyone who participated. God smiled on us again and we were blessed with a beautiful day. Thank you to all who came.

Note: When Ken Lund asked me to write a brief history it sounded easy. Not so much. This is a short, clean version, based on my memory. It omits all the M Fers screamed and hurt feelings generated over 47 years of a family run operation.

Matt Klenske