



Allegheny Supports Our Vets

Shredding Industry

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REPORT

SPECIAL ISSUE IN HONOR OF JOHN WAGNER

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Remembering John: Father, Inventor, Man of Heart

BY ROBERT WAGNER

From my earliest memories growing up, my dad's work was always an integral part of who he was. Whether at dinner or on holiday, he'd find a way to weave in what he was building or some Allegheny news. In the evenings or on weekends, he'd sit at his drawing table downstairs, designing things... it was truly a passion for him, to come up with more efficient ways to destroy confidential information.

When you look at where John came from, this begins to make sense. As the youngest of four children, he grew up on a farm and learned firsthand the importance of hard work and persevering until a job was done right, and well. He milked cows twice a day (cows have no respect for holidays) until he was 21. Once he was running Allegheny, he respected energetic work, and keeping busy—"When in doubt, sweep the floor!" he'd say. He both expected and inspired his sons to be hard workers—he'd tell you what he wanted done, then leave you alone to do it. He gave you space, which was smart, because it allowed us to come up with some creative ideas of our own. If you could come up with a better way, he'd promise to be the first to steal it!

continued on page 2

INSIDE

| | |
|---|---|
| Interview with Jim Wagner - President..... | 2 |
| John Wagner: Passionate Inventor and Very Dear Friend by Evelyn Jefferson | 3 |
| A Rare Mentor by Judy Golock | 4 |
| John's Life - Stories from Leaders in the Shredding Industry | 5 |

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Allegheny

THE SHREDDING INDUSTRY ICON SINCE 1967

Interview with President Jim Wagner: Lessons from My Father

BY JIM WAGNER

My relationship with my dad was always through work. I started going to work with him at 9 years old, during summers – I think I started at \$5.00 a day, then gradually worked up to 65 cents an hour. The money wasn't anything to boast about (!), but the lessons I learned were priceless. My dad taught me how to work—how to do whatever needed to get done, how to work with employees, how to keep abreast of everything going on in the offices and on the floor.

Because that's what he did—whether it was sweep the floor or sign a check, my dad stepped right up. He wasn't afraid of work. His mother-in-law told her daughter, "This man will take care of you. I can see from his hands he's a worker—you'll never go hungry."

Everything my dad did was BIG. He never did anything small-scale. The playground in our yard was huge, with an asphalt basketball court—a gathering spot for the whole neighborhood! So my father building the first high capacity shredder in the industry didn't surprise me. He had the foresight to see where this industry was headed—and he filled that need with high-volume shredders and then auto-feed systems that revolutionized the way information destruction was done. By adding brains to brawn, we've come up with machines that today can destroy 20 pounds of paper an hour!

As the industry grew from in-house shredders to Mom & Pop



JIM WAGNER, Co-owner/President of Allegheny

"I learned from my dad not to stray from integrity. I have tremendous respect for him, and learned much more than manufacturing from walking alongside him for 30 years."

shredding services to large corporate players, what propelled the growth was equipment. The equipment helped make it possible, and my dad played a huge role in that. Today, there are Allegheny systems that can shred 7,000 tons of paper in one month—there's no one that can match that.

My father was also a great natural salesman. He was engaging, and he conveyed confidence. He was also sincere, fair and honest. He'd always give you more than you expected. That work ethic has trickled down to our employees—we really do go the extra mile in taking care of customers. It's a key part of his legacy.

I think my father's greatest quality was his "can-do" attitude. He was a positive guy, always happy, rarely upset. When he was, you wouldn't

know it, he kept it to himself. While he'll be remembered in the industry for his innovations, those who knew him personally will remember a good and honest man, a man of his word. In the family, we cherish him as a good father and husband. My parents enjoyed a truly blessed marriage for 57 years, one filled with raising many children, playing games of all kinds together, laughing, and genuinely enjoying each other. Do you know any other couple that'd spend an afternoon clearing land with 'his' and 'her' bulldozers?

I learned from my dad not to stray from integrity. I have tremendous respect for him, and learned much more than manufacturing from walking alongside him for 30 years. As the Allegheny team continues to meet the destruction needs of the future, my dad's vision and enthusiasm will be there to guide us. ■

REMEMBERING JOHN *continued from page 1*

Many of our product lines wouldn't have existed without John's vision. I see him as being the leader way out in front of us, with his machete, clearing the way into new territories. He could SEE solutions that the rest of us didn't. We became used to this penchant of his: if a tough problem arose at work, we would all think: "Dad will come up with a solution – he always does!"

Not that everything always worked – he had a scrap yard in back of the factory full of failures! But that didn't stop him, he'd just try something different.

What kind of a businessman was John? A natural, I'd say, because he enjoyed people so much, and understood how they worked. One of his former bosses at Whittaker Brothers once said, "John could sell confidence over the phone!" He would believe in his products so much his clients would

continued on page 3

John Wagner: Passionate Inventor and Very Dear Friend

BY SHREDDER MOM

When I joined Allegheny 25 years ago as a file clerk, my introduction to John was love at first sight. I knew I had joined a good team, led by a man I could admire. When I moved into sales later that year, John would come to my office and we began what became a daily chat whenever I was in town. I was his conduit to the industry, so he always wanted to catch up on whatever was going on. And then he'd tell me his stories..."Ev, did I tell you about..." and even though I may have heard it, I'd say, "No, John, tell me again, I forget..." partly because he so obviously enjoyed sharing his stories and I am now repeating those stories. And the jokes! He learned quickly which ones to save for when I wasn't in the room!

John's mind was a steel (yes, he loved steel) trap. I was always amazed that he remembered everything. His mind never stopped inventing things, even up to his death. He always wanted to have something new for the customers. Recently he designed a playing card and dice shredder for casinos, which will be marketed soon.

John was definitely the reason for my season at Allegheny. He loved for me to go on trips (I hadn't traveled much before this job, and now I've been all over the world!). Most trips would generate a sale and he'd be so excited. He trusted me to represent the company, which was an honor. Many of my clients never met John but they became acquainted with John through me.



EVELYN JEFFERSON Vice President Sales

John set a high bar, and left Allegheny in good hands to continue its success. He'll be remembered as the one who said: "Give the customer more than he or she wants, and they'll always be back."

I'm very fortunate to say that I can't even imagine anyone not loving their job, or respecting their employer, or hating to go to work. I absolutely love what I do and it is because of John and now "the boys".

John set a high bar, and left Allegheny in good hands to continue its success. He'll be remembered as the one who said: "Give the customer more than he or she wants, and they'll always be back." As well as building the world's greatest shredder, he'll be remembered for taking care of his customers. John's work ethic was as important as any shredder he ever built.

John always said he'd live to be 100 and that I'd have to stay at Allegheny as long as he did. When he turned 70, that didn't sound too bad, even 80 but when he turned 85, I said

to John, "Oh, no, we have to have a talk!" He was determined to live fully, whatever the age. As he got older, some advised him not to drive. John's reaction? He took two independent driving tests, and passed both of them! But he had some unusual driving habits...if he was driving down a highway and missed an exit, he'd just put it in reverse and head back to catch it! I joked with him about that, telling him, "John you couldn't drive 25 years ago, what makes them think you can drive any differently now at 85?"

Although I miss him and our chats dearly, I'm sure John is making himself busy in his new abode. In fact, I'm positive he's already changed the pearly gates to stainless steel. ■

REMEMBERING JOHN *continued from page 2*

start to believe in them too.

What was he like as a father? He was fair, with a clear sense of right and wrong. He was gregarious and social – we would have lively dinner conversations, punctuated with the jokes he loved to tell. He had a very young spirit – and an extremely generous one. He encouraged his children to pursue whatever they wanted in life. He and his wife, Barbara, took in ten children at different times as foster children, and donated regularly to Christian children's charities across the globe.

This expansive spirit spilled over to Allegheny—many employees have been with the company for over 20 years, and that's because he made sure to take good care of them. If an employee was going through a hard financial time, it wasn't unusual for John to help out. And customers were KING. They instantly felt like one of the family due to John's warm, embracing personality. "Always give them more than they expect, and

continued on page 8

John Wagner: A Rare Mentor

BY JUDY GOLOCK

When I first met John 38 years ago as a new Allegheny employee, there were only three of us in the office, and only six in the shop! John was doing all the selling as well as developing the shredders—the J-Series was just coming out. I realized right away that John was straightforward and that I could TRUST him. That's been proven numerous times over the years...he's one of the most honest and reliable businessmen I've ever known. I've learned a lot from John, not only about business but also about life.

He had integrity, which is a sound business policy, but not always an easy one. A vendor once called and asked if we had sent their check yet—we were late paying an invoice. I could have said "It's in the mail," but I couldn't. I told her we hadn't mailed it, and she thanked me for being honest. John's moral compass inspired me to act the same as he would.

He'd give you the shirt off his back, but in turn he expected you to do your job. Rumor had it some workers were clocking long hours but slouching off in the early morning before the rest of us came in. John got wind of it, came in early one morning and found the group chatting over coffee. He didn't say a word, and they froze—they knew they had disappointed him. Next day he said, "I'm going to cut out overtime until we learn how to work." I think the remorse they felt was punishment in itself. John instinctively knew blowing up at them at the time wasn't the best way to go.

And he knew how to take it, too. Once I told an upset customer that John would call him back. He called



JUDY GOLOCK
Corporate Vice President

John's style was not to micromanage...Once he hired salespeople, he trained them to understand the equipment and then took a back seat.

me the next day, saying he hadn't heard from anybody. So I marched into John's office. "I give you ONE thing to do, and you didn't do it!" I reamed him out royally, and he just sat there and never said a word. He went home and told his wife Barbara, "I had my ass chewed out today by Judy. She was right, and I wouldn't have expected anything less." How many employees can talk to their superiors that way? It was a special relationship.

John didn't give his family members any special treatment at work—a wise choice for employee morale. And he built character in his sons and grandson this way, holding them to the same standards as others. He held himself to the standard too—he didn't step back and let everyone else do the work. John's style was not to micromanage. At a former job, he'd endured a hovering boss and he never wanted to do that to an employee.

Once he hired salespeople, he trained them to understand the equipment and then took a back seat.

John had a true partner in his wife Barbara. She balanced the company checkbook for years, and he'd always discuss with her before making a significant purchase. They had genuine fun together—once I saw them dancing at an event and they were quite good dancers! They played off of each other very well, and that strong family foundation added to the stability of the company. A good marriage can do that.

John's key contribution was his work ethic. He put his whole heart into Allegheny. I would call John honest, reliable, fair, and full of faith.

As corporate vice-president, I've done a lot of the finance and legal work. My job has been different every day, and I've loved the variety. John and I spent a lot of time bouncing ideas off each other, and sharing Allegheny's growing pains!

My years here have been wonderful, and it's bittersweet to be leaving. I miss talking to John...with him the glass was always half full. But Allegheny is in good hands with the Wagner boys, because they've learned from him how to make Allegheny even more successful.

I plan to keep myself busy by traveling more to see my daughters, one in Virginia and one in Texas, who have given me a total of five grandchildren!

Now I can stay longer and spend more time watching my grandchildren grow up. I also plan to visit friends across the country and put some much needed work in my golf game. And I look forward to reading some of those great books I haven't had time for!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to everyone at Allegheny, for a most rewarding journey. ■

John's Life – Stories from Leaders in the Shredding Industry

John: A Legend and a Friend

BY RENEE KEENER

I have a story to tell about a leader, a father, and a successful businessman.

My story centers on when I went up to Allegheny Shredders to pick up the first shredder I bought from them, shortly after 9/11 and the launching of my shredding company.

In order to understand this story, I have to tell you a little about myself. I have always been extremely independent, and this company was the third company I had started from nothing. I've run an equestrian center at my farm, I drive an F350 pickup truck, and I own two farm tractors, can bale hay and mow pasture fields with the best of them. Along the way, I learned a lot about big trucks and diesel engines.

It was my interest in equipment that brought me to the Allegheny factory in Delmont, where I was met with overwhelming hospitality and had a successful first meeting with John. I was fascinated by his mind, which never seemed to stop creating! As he told me about his accomplishments in the industry, the light in his eyes was electric—I knew this was a man who was deeply passionate about building equipment. After a tour of the factory, I knew I had found my vendor.

I ordered my shredder in October 2011; the plan was to install it inside a box truck along with a generator to run it. When Evelyn called to let me know it was ready, I booked a one-way ticket to Pittsburgh. I noticed I was getting funny looks from everyone wondering where the “man” was who was going to “drive” me home, but of course I didn't pay a bit of attention to that.

The next morning, as I was warming up the 26' Freightliner box truck to drive it away, I saw a look of total



RENEE KEENER, *President of American Document Securities*

horror on John's face as if he had just realized that this lunatic woman was going to drive this truck back to Georgia by herself. We all froze for a minute and John quietly asked, “Renee did you bring a gun?” And I replied, “John, I flew up here—they don't let you carry a gun on the plane!” His face turned two more shades of red and he shook his finger at me and said “Wait right here.” John came back from the warehouse carrying a two-foot long steel rod that I could barely hold with one hand, and he said to me “You use this on anyone who bothers you, Renee!” With his eyes still full of disbelief, I drove away with no GPS, just a Rand McNally by my side.

On the way home, I was stopped by the police and told to wait for ten hours because I had no logbook. But I drove off, bought a sign for my window and seventeen hours later I was home. John never let me forget about being stopped by the police and driving on!

John was a member of the “greatest generation” that fought in the world wars and survived the Great Depression. He built his company and his equipment just like his personality—LARGE. I feel his

contribution to the shredding industry was building equipment that lasts above and beyond—the old American way. I remember when the motor on my shredder died and could not be fixed; he found out, and called me personally and was really mad that the motor that failed had been made in America for decades until recently and so he researched the market for one that was made in America and sent it to me. He definitely did things his way, and it worked.

John's legacy lives on in the company he created, and the wonderful children he raised to carry on the Allegheny tradition. I will never forget his generosity and kindness to me over all these years. He was a true friend and a genuine legend. ■

A Gracious Visionary—and Good Ole' Boy

BY DAVID CULBERTSON

I met John 25 years ago, in 1990. Right away I could tell he was a country boy, from the farm—he was warm, friendly, inviting. He wasn't trying to sell me, or upsell me. He preferred being behind the scenes, building or fixing things. John's forte: find out what people need, and build it!



DAVID CULBERTSON, *Executive Vice President of AmeriTex*

And boy was he good at it. John designed and manufactured the first high capacity industrial paper shredder, which essentially created the industry in the mid-80s. It was his design and concept. There needed to be a John before service customers could exist!

John was a pioneer, who leveraged his knowledge of engineering and materials to envision what he wanted to create. He could think outside the box and take an idea from one field and morph it into an application for another field. And he had the business acumen to see it to fruition. Other companies have mimicked what Allegheny has done.

John designed and manufactured the first high capacity industrial paper shredder, which essentially created the industry in the mid-80s. It was his design and concept.

He was a visionary: it was his foresight that recognized the industry needed high capacity equipment. Already there were high-speed, low-torque grinders used for agriculture. John switched that around—his design for paper destruction used low-speed, high-torque equipment to shear paper at much lower speeds with sharp blades and sheer force. I can attest to the results—I was a dealer for Allegheny equipment for about 14-15 years and it is extremely reliable, the standard very high.

John was a good ole' boy, in the best sense of the term: doing business fairly, taking extremely good care of his customers. He was reliable, honest, trustworthy. He instilled trust, and it came from his personality, his upbringing and work ethic. He had an intuitive sense of people, and was very down-to-earth. As a businessman, he got straight to the point.

In his family business, he instilled

those same values into his sons. He built the ship and taught them to run it, to steer it, to fix it, to expand it...a patriarch who passed on his vision to his sons. The Wagner boys have expanded Allegheny into the 21st century, improving on the business model that John developed.

One story I'd like to share. On the first shredder John sold to me, the team forgot to heat-treat the steel spur gears. When I reported the problem, they called back immediately. John knew exactly what the problem was, and how to fix it—and no expense was spared to correct it. Allegheny overnighted new gears, and Jim flew out right away and was there by the time the parts arrived! No questions, no delays, no excuses....they just MADE IT RIGHT.

Gracious, honest, and a visionary – that's how I would describe John Wagner. ■

John's Legacy of Excellent Equipment

BY VLAD VASAK

When I first came to visit the Allegheny factory in 1999, John Wagner reminded me of "Tim the Toolman" on the TV sitcom. "I'll beef it up, I'll make it better!" was John's attitude about equipment. Bigger, better, more efficient—that's what drove him, what fired him up.

John was not self-promoting, but more of a behind-the-scenes guy. As long as he could be building something in the factory, he was happy. He was very likable, and I think he could have been more prominent in the industry if he had wanted to. His company and the Allegheny equipment had a huge impact, and I think people would have enjoyed getting to know John better, too.

John was a good business manager. He picked excellent employees, like Evelyn Jefferson who has done so



VLAD VASAK – Partner at K-2 Partners,

much for the company. John was always good with people, fair to his employees and customers. What customers care about is getting good equipment and having it work for them, and Allegheny excels at that.

I would say John's key contribution was building very good, long-lasting shredders with ancillary equipment. He was innovative. "You can't go wrong choosing Allegheny" is a catchphrase that's completely accurate.

John took a simple concept that worked—and worked very well. Not revolutionary in itself, but he happened to come up with it first. This improved the standard of the industry as a whole, something John deeply cared about. Allegheny was a founding member of NAID, and helped set the bar for manufacturers and service companies.

I would describe John as friendly, honest (you could trust him with your life) and a man of his word. AND he loved steel and building things with it!

One final story: John went and bought several massive gearboxes to play with, and he was excited to show me. "I'm going to build a shredder to use these gear boxes," he said. I told him he needed to build a drive-through shredder with them. We both laughed and said, "Yeah, just make sure you jump out in time." ■

John Wagner: Direct, Honest, Passionate

BY JASON RADTKE

When I first met John in 1994-95, he reminded me of my father: a no-nonsense kind of guy. John never beat around the bush, and his opinion was not easily swayed—I liked that about working with him. He was very direct, and there was never a question about where you stood.

John took great pride in Allegheny's equipment. He never wanted anyone to build something bigger, better, faster, or longer lasting. It was always about the quality of



JASON RADTKE – Owner of Royal Paper Stock

the equipment—he was never one to cut corners. If he were to build something, he'd build it like a tank, to stand the test of time. The goal was: make it bigger, more automated, more efficient. Fortunately for the industry, John instilled this same commitment in his boys.

He was a joyful 'tinkerer.' "Let me show you what I'm building," he'd say. He was not necessarily building the thing for any client, but just because he COULD build it.

The corporate culture at Allegheny shines through everyone who works there—a focus on hard work, ethics, quality. They all treat customers with

great respect. In my opinion, this attitude comes from the top down: Allegheny has hired and trained employees to have the same respect for customers that John had. It consists of an uncompromising commitment to do the very best job they can.

I interacted with John in two different businesses: our paper shredding and also our paper recycling company. We buy paper from Allegheny, and this led to some good-natured haggling between John and me over prices. We respected one another as businessmen, and it always ended on a good note, with us agreeing and joking. But John was a good bargainer, always seeking a very good deal. When he'd want a higher price for his paper, I'd remind him, "I bought your equipment not because it was the cheapest, but because it was the best. Likewise, price aside, we're going to treat you right and be there for you." Every time I used that argument, he'd have to agree!

I'm grateful to John for the role Allegheny has placed in our success. When we were looking to upgrade our equipment, we traveled across the country looking at many different products from many manufacturers. We ended up spending significantly more money to buy from Allegheny once again, because we realized after a thorough search that they delivered the best investment over the long haul. Not only is the equipment excellent, but the service is impeccable. They would ALWAYS be there if something went wrong. And they recommended us as paper buyers to other customers, which helped us build our business.

Three qualities that most describe John to me are: direct, honest and passionate. He was the best kind of salesman—one whose wasn't driven by getting the most money from you, but driven by a genuine, enthusiastic belief in the quality of his product. ■



PAUL SWENSON – Owner of Citadel Information Management

The Pioneer who Overbuilt

BY PAUL SWENSON

I first met John in the place where he felt most at home—at the Delmont plant. It was around 1986, and I had come to purchase my first 5Hp Allegheny shredder.

I could tell right away he was a "hands-on" business owner. He gave me a personal tour of his operation, and I was impressed that he was so cordial and spent so much time with me, when he didn't know me from Adam! I believe that's where I learned how to give tours of my own operation.

I consider John a pioneer and an innovator. He revolutionized the shredding industry when he started producing the first large, high capacity shredders with ancillary equipment to create complete shredding systems. In fact, he was the only game in town for a long time. And he consistently overbuilt his equipment—making him one of a very few manufacturers whose equipment actually did what was promised and then surpassed expectations!

John treated Allegheny as a family, and I think that's very important. I always try to work with local small businesses so I can get to know my colleagues and meet face to face.

STORIES FROM LEADERS *continued from page 7*

It makes doing business much easier and more pleasurable, and John had a knack for making everyone—employees and customers alike—feel like part of the family.

I think John taught us business owners not to be afraid to get our hands dirty—and to know our companies from top to bottom. He kept tabs on every aspect of Allegheny Shredders with a watchful eye and fatherly concern, while allowing employees the space to make their own creative contributions.

An icon, pioneer, and man of integrity—that's how I'll remember John Wagner. ■

REMEMBERING JOHN *continued from page 3*

they'll come back," was one of his mantras.

One unwavering quality of John carried over into all that he accomplished: he was a man of faith, and his Catholic religion was important to him. His strong moral values and personal integrity wove their way into his dealings with family, employees and customers. He very quietly and without ostentation built a chapel next to the factory, where he'd lead rosaries for those who wanted to attend. It said volumes about how he conducted business—and for a number of our customers, it



ROBERT WAGNER, *past Director of Marketing*

He could SEE solutions that the rest of us didn't. We became used to this penchant of his: if a tough problem arose at work, we would all think: "Dad will come up with a solution – he always does!"

cemented their decision to buy equipment from us. He was a man of his word—if some piece of equipment wasn't working for any reason, he'd have the team on it immediately.

Now as Allegheny moves forward,

John's legacy is firmly planted and will continue to steer the ship. It's in our DNA, it has to! My brothers Jim and Tom are excellent at what they do, and they'll grow the company to another level with the same devotion to employees and customers, and with the same integrity, that my father had.

What wisdom would John have most wanted to pass on? Treat your customers well. Enjoy what you do, laugh and have a good time—there's more to life than work! Dedicate yourself to a power greater than you are. And don't take yourself too seriously.

Like the "Made in America" stamp on our equipment, John conveyed reliability, trust, caring, and insistence on excellent quality. As we remember him, let's also remember that each and every one of us have been instrumental in helping him realize his dream—by participating in his company, by growing this industry, by sharing our challenges, our victories, our humanity with John through the stream of days that comprised his amazing life. ■

Discover to me, O my God, the nothingness of this world, the greatness of heaven, the shortness of time, and the length of eternity.

