



“A Tire Dealer’s Tire Dealer” *TIA President Bob Malerba*

Independent tire dealers and retreaders have been the backbone of TIA membership for decades, and your new President is definitely one of them. Like many industry leaders, Bob Malerba was raised in a family business that did everything from passenger car tires to commercial retreads. In fact, his first job was to sweep floors and carry 75-pound boxes of camelback rubber up to the second floor retread shop, and by the time he reached 11 years old, he was riding with road service technicians to “help.” Industry veterans often refer to his father, G. William Malerba, a 1992 Tire Industry Hall of Fame Inductee, as a “tire dealer’s tire dealer,” and Bob is well on his way to continue that legacy.

After taking over the reigns of the Malerba’s Silver City Tire, Inc. in 1979, Bob put a plan in motion to make his company the dominant player in the state of Connecticut. He wanted to be known for having the best service and product quality, and he knew that it had to start with people. When asked about the reasons for his success in the tire business, two of his longtime managers, Blaise Pascale and Laddie Gray, are often near the top of the list as are other key employees. But there’s no question who occupies the number one spot, his wife of 35 years, Kitty. Bob and Kitty

have worked together in the family tire business for as long as either can remember, and that’s the partnership he treasures most.

Their desire to live life to the fullest led them to sell the company to Bob Berlin in May of 2004, so they would never have to return to the day-to-day responsibilities of operating three full-service tire facilities and a retread plant. When he learned that Kitty was experiencing kidney failure and in need of a transplant just a few months after the buyout, it enabled him to devote his time and energy to her

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illness. In Bob’s own words, their son Jeff gave his mother “the gift of life” by donating a kidney after it was determined that he was a better match than their daughter Kym, who also offered hers, and on September 30th, 2005, they celebrated the first anniversary of the operations. Considering that Jeff and his wife Sarah had just given birth to twins, Abby and Joey, three months prior to the surgery, it’s impossible to imagine the rollercoaster of emotions and the sacrifices that the Malerba family endured.

But endure they did, and with the support of Mr. Berlin, Bob has been able to aid his wife and son’s recovery, regularly visit his “89 years-young” mother, Helen, and still maintain an active role within the Tire Industry Association. His selflessness is reflected in one of his proudest professional moments when he was elected by the Board of Directors to serve as their Secretary and eventually, as their President. As he begins his one-year term at the helm of TIA, Bob inherits a powerful force in the industry and with his

experience, we are certain to provide even more value for independent tire dealers and retreaders.

Bob is also quick to point out that the diversity of TIA entails other segments of the industry, such as manufacturers, recyclers, suppliers and wholesalers. He cites a recent battle in his home state of Connecticut as an example of how TIA’s strength benefits everyone related to the business of selling tires. One can only imagine the ripple effect of having a judge classify scrap tires as “hazardous waste,” so TIA worked with the Connecticut Tire Dealers and Retreaders Association (CTDRA), where Bob is also President, the New England Tire and Service Association, where he has served as a Director, and the Rubber Manufacturers Association to defeat the ruling. As he has always done in the past, Bob gives much of the credit to someone else, CTDRA Secretary and resident scrap tire expert Anne Evans, who spearheaded the effort.

When the tire industry collectively responds to issues



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that could potentially harm us, it’s that type of strength in numbers that gets your voice heard at all levels of government. Bob has made strengthening the relationships between TIA and other industry organizations a top priority of his tenure, and he intends to visit as many meetings and conferences as he can to learn how he can make TIA an even stronger force for the independent tire dealer and retreader as well as the businesses that supply them with products and services.

Another area of strength that he is particularly proud of is related to training and education. Bob served as the chairman of the Training and Education Committee of TANA for four years and continued in that role after the merger for another three years. Under his leadership, TIA’s training and certification programs have reached more than 20,000 industry personnel. His passion for training goes back to his days in the United States Air Force where he was a flight instructor and continues to

this day as he oversees training efforts for Berlin Bandag and their commercial customers. Since retreading has played such a vital role in the success of his career, Bob plans to put specific emphasis on educational programs for that segment of the industry.

As President of TIA, Bob also takes his turn as guardian of the Association’s Strategic Plan. Like past-presidents Dick Gust, Larry Morgan, Tom Raben and Steve Disney, he is entrusted with continuing the momentum that has created such a strong and influential industry organization. With the Strategic Plan serving as the beacon for future growth, Bob will work closely with his colleagues on the Board of Directors to give something back to the industry that has given so much to his family. While it cannot compare to the “gift of life” that his children were willing to give their mother, it will definitely have a positive impact on the families of TIA members who depend on the tire business. ■

