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FROM THE
LEGEND
COMES THE
Legacy

INSPIRING BOTH LOYALTY AND LOVE
IN HIS TEAM, DOUG CAIN FOCUSES ON
HONOR AND INTEGRITY AT LAKE TRUCK
LINES, THE INCREASINGLY SUCCESSFUL
COMPANY HIS FATHER STARTED IN
1949.

By: [CORI SMELKER]
Photography: [ALEXANDER ALEMAN]

“I WANT MY EMPLOYEES TO REALIZE THAT THIS IS THEIR HOME. THEY ARE MORE THAN EMPLOYEES TO ME.”

Have you ever met someone for the first time and just instinctively known that person was someone special? Douglas Cain, owner of Lake Truck Lines, is just such a person. His penetrating, yet gentle brown eyes seem to bore into you as he talks frankly about himself as a man and as a business owner.

He is a rare person in that he inspires not only loyalty in his team, but also love. Talk to any of his office staff members, and their eyes soften and their voices take on a gentle tone as they talk about their boss, their mentor and their friend.

Terry Place, the official PR person at Lake Truck Lines, describes why she thinks he arouses such admiration from his staff. “He looks at the passion of a person. Not many can do that. They see what you show the world, but he looks beyond that. And he draws the best out of people.”

Cain is also one of those rarities in business. He is totally honest, open and unguarded. But after so many years in business, he has learned that integrity and honor are the No. 1 traits to display. “Honor and integrity are really expensive on Monday,” he says. “It isn’t until Friday that they pay off.”

When asked to expand on that, he explains, “There are times when I have made a promise to someone, and come Monday morning, a part of me thinks, ‘Do I really need to keep my word? If I wait a couple of days, is it really going to matter?’ But to me, it does matter. I have discovered that if I try to save a nickel by being less than honest, it costs me a dollar. I choose, therefore, to stay true to my word, regardless of the cost.”

And in the past, that decision has come at a financial cost, but Cain has revealed his true character during the tough times. His father, Joe Cain Sr., founded Lake Truck Lines back in 1949. At that time, he hauled fertilizer, and when Doug was 14 years old, Joe sent him to work.

“Never in the office – always out in the yard,” chuckles Doug. It was from four men who worked for Joe that Doug first internalized the concept of honor and doing things right.

“Being the boss’ son didn’t mean a darn thing, either,” he recalls. “I was the new junior member. I got all the crappy jobs. Personally, I think if the guys had tried to give me any of the cushy jobs, my dad would have reamed them out!”

Joe sold all of the assets except the corporate shell in 1977 and put the company in a filing cabinet. In 1983, Doug bought the company from his father, but by then, all of the old clients had moved on.

“But wouldn’t you know,” he says, “I

bought the company from my dad in September 1983, and in December 1983, the bottom fell out in the Texas economy.” He scrambled to find clients, and for the next 18 months, he called companies far and wide before Diversified Steel gave him a contract for his one truck.

Eighteen months seems like an awfully long time to be told “no.” A lesser man might have given up or thought, “Well, I guess that door is closed to me. Better look for something different to do.” But Cain is not just “any man.”

“It’s not in my DNA to quit,” he says, determination tingeing his voice. “I have given up twice in my life, and to this day, I regret quitting.” One was his choice to quit peewee football. The second was quitting his first marriage.

Even once Lake Truck Lines got their first contract, things were not easy. They took on a large client (one who provided 40 percent of their revenue), and in one fell swoop, lost them. But in the midst of the good times and the bad times, Cain never stopped hustling for clients. However, he firmly believes that it is when you are challenged that your greatness can shine.

In July 2011, Cain made a huge decision. He moved the trucking company from Houston to San Antonio. And simply put, that was the best decision he has ever made, both personally and from a business standpoint.

When he moved operations from Houston, the company had 12 trailers; today, they are up to 70 trucks, and conservative projections say they will double that by the end of 2013. Even as he and I were conducting the interview, a huge mobile trailer was being delivered because Lake Truck Lines was desperately short on office space.

Cain says that back in 2011, he realized that the oil-and-gas boom in the Eagle Ford Shale region was going to be big. “There have been so many changes in how we drill oil these days. The rigs are directional, and hydro-fracking has changed the industry.” Don’t be deceived by Hollywood’s depiction of fracking in Matt Damon’s latest movie, “Promised Land.” Fracking is safe, and it is good for the oil industry.

“Ultimately, it is good for the entire country,” Cain maintains. “We need to decrease our dependence on foreign oil. Oil companies in the United States project that by 2017, we will be producing oil at the same rate as Saudi Arabia. By 2020, we will be exporting oil. I work in the greatest industry. It is one that is growing exponentially. I fully expect to see a transformation of San Antonio’s south side.”

A contract with Halliburton cemented the decision to move to San Antonio. Cain was contracted by Halliburton’s Midland office,





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and within three weeks, he had the drivers and management in place to take over the Hobbs and the Midland district.

Another expansion that has come about since then is teaming up with Gallegos Group of Mexico to distribute Gallegos’ trailers in San Antonio. The creation of Lake Oilfield Services also expanded the company with the manufacturing and distribution of oilfield silos and frac tanks.

On a personal note, the move to San Antonio is the best thing the Cains could have done. Doug’s wife of 13 years, Lisa, pushed for the move. For a minute, he loses his composure as he talks about the love of his life. “She saved me.” His voice becomes husky for a moment, and he hurriedly wipes his eyes. “She believes in me, no matter what. And trust me: There have been some low points.”

One happened right after they got married. The

trucking company was barely breaking even, so Cain took a day job at a nonprofit, leaving the day-to-day operations of the company to a secretary. She ran it, all right – almost into the ground. Lisa quit her lucrative career to take over the company. In the meantime, Doug organized a very profitable fundraiser for his nonprofit, who then promptly left him go.

“I wonder sometimes if Lisa really knew what

she was getting into when she married me,” he laughs. But she is a remarkable woman who stuck with him in the valleys, and is now enjoying the mountain with him.

Many changes were in store for Cain in 2011. In many ways, he sees it as a year of rebirth. It was a year of introspection and rediscovering faith in God. Since he and Lisa have settled in San Antonio, they have found a local parish to call home, and

Cain says prayer has become a natural and constant part of his life.

Cain is also very quick to give props to his team. “They inspire me,” he claims. He places so much value on his employees that he has been working with an attorney to establish an employee stock ownership that will provide 50 percent ownership to its employees and contractors.

“This is not just a workplace,” Cain says. “I want my employees to realize that this is their home. They are more than employees to me. I want to be a visionary and see that this is more than just a trucking company. This is a legacy.”

Legacy is an important word to Cain. He admits that growing up, he always felt he lived in his father’s shadow. Even after he saw modest success, he believed he was never quite good enough. Then he felt guilt for surpassing his father’s great success. But he has come to terms with all of that. At Joe’s passing, friend and now Lake’s chief operating officer Bruce Booker told Doug that, “from the legend comes the legacy.”

“I acknowledged that what I have created is greater than what my father built, and that is perfectly OK,” he says. “Even better, I know my father is in heaven looking down, and he is proud of me and what I have achieved.”

Cain is a man of great passion, and he recently had the opportunity to share that passion with millions of viewers of “The Hard Question” debate TV show. He debated on a section titled, “The President’s Agenda: The Future of Traditional Energy vs. Alternatives.” After the show was taped, Cain realized just what an impact his company was beginning to have outside of Texas.

Robert Moran, vice president of government affairs for Halliburton, approached Cain and said, “I want you to know that we know all about your good work for Halliburton in Texas, and we deeply appreciate everything you do for us.” Not only that, but Henry Cisneros, former San Antonio mayor, has been singing the praises of Cain and Lake Truck Lines, calling Cain “my hero.”

Lake Truck Lines is an avenue for Cain – an avenue to impact lives. “Yes, the company is great, and I love my company and I work hard (he gets up at 4 a.m. every morning, and until just two years ago, you could find him at the office late at night and on weekends), but it is not the be-all and end-all of my life. People are.”

Many people say they want to make a difference, but words are cheap. Cain makes his words count. “How I live my life makes a difference – a difference to my employees, to my family, to my clients, to my community, to my city and to my country. I am honored that so many think so highly of me.”

The company was never about making Cain rich (he pays himself less than \$50,000 a year), but about enriching the lives of others. He wants to see the company succeed so it can help others. “Dad always taught me to live significantly beneath my means,” Cain says.

Place, Cain’s PR person, says he has one of the biggest, most compassionate hearts she has ever known. “He is a true humanitarian,” she says.

He is a proud supporter of the local chapter of

the Wounded Warrior Foundation, and he sponsored a homeless vet with terminal cancer last year. He also donates to St. P.J.’s Children’s Home in San Antonio.

There have been many instances where he has helped an employee or one of their family members. “He always maintains that it is not so much about the money as it is the time spent with them.” Cain also started the Joe P. Cain Memorial Excellence Scholarship. Its first recipient, Chadlee McNair, is now attending Texas A&M.

Another mantra Cain lives by, and one his employees are encouraging him to use as the title of the book they all say he must write, is: “not one day wasted.” Cain is driven to succeed, and he does not waste one day in frivolous activities. Although that’s not to say he doesn’t know how to have fun. Cain’s sense of humor and larger-than-life laugh soon dispel an image of a man too busy to enjoy life.

For 56 years, Cain has struggled with the “I’m not good enough” mentality. Instead of allowing it to define him, though, he has fought against it and proven that he is, indeed, good enough. And if 2012 is any indication of his tenacity, his great business acumen and his extraordinary people skills, 2013 will be a bumper year – and the first of many yet to come.

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