“I think that the strong desire to achieve a goal is critical to anyone’s success.”

— Tom Barron, CEO
It was 1968 and a young Tom Barron had a yearning to become an entrepreneur and desire to start his own business. He was working for an oil jobber in south Texas at the time (Valley Shamrock), where he was responsible for approving service and construction work performed at various fueling stations across the Rio Grande Valley.

Over the years Tom had learned the business and grown to know it well. After two years of working with a local company, he saw the potential for success in the service station equipment business (which would later become the petroleum equipment industry). Soon after, an opportunity arose that allowed Tom Barron to purchase a small petroleum equipment service company.

29 years old and a new business owner, Tom was determined to continue to learn the nuances of the trade, from operating the backhoe and dump truck to running service calls. The company serviced Tokheim dispensers and installed above and underground fueling systems. Tom understood that the core of his business was to always take care of the customer first and to do whatever it takes to provide a solution to their problems.

Of course, there are trials with any new business. 1970’s gas-rationing days, for example, made for a challenging business environment for the customer. However, there would be many more opportunities for new growth. The advent of self-service, the conversion from service station to convenience store, and the introduction of unleaded fuel created opportunities for Tom’s small service business. Once convenience stores became increasingly popular, customer’s needs changed.

The petroleum equipment industry is a volatile one, in its own industrial-style revolution. Technology was shifting to electronics, and steel tanks and piping were replaced with corrosion resistant fiberglass. Tom’s engagement with local trade associations and fuel jobbers helped him navigate through some of these changes.

With the Valley’s proximity to the border and the business connections made during his initial years, Tom was instrumental in providing the first electronic dispenser to sell fuel in Mexico.
This was the beginning of establishing strong equipment and product sales.

Around the 1980’s, Pay-at-the-pump was pioneered, featuring credit and debit card readers. This reinforced the evolution in skill set for petroleum service technicians, from hands-on mechanics, to highly-skilled electronic technicians. Now, EMV has changed the industry yet again with payment terminals that meet new PCI compliance standards. This shows how far the industry has come from the days of mechanical computers (with wheels!) that couldn’t handle a gas price of more than $1.00 a gallon.

WHAT BEGAN AS A SMALL SERVICE STATION EQUIPMENT COMPANY IN 1970 HAS GROWN TO HAVE THE LARGEST SERVICE AREA IN THE ENTIRE STATE OF TEXAS.

FOUNDATION OF SUPPORT

Behind the success of every small business, there’s a family, and like most businesses within this industry, PSI is no different. Drawing from his father’s experience, Mark Barron entered the business at a young age, doing a little bit of everything from supervising construction jobs to selling them. He even became the first in the company to become licensed when the industry became regulated in 1989.

In 1991, Mark would be named President, and the family owned and operated business would continue with the next generation. After 20 years of sustained business, the company had evolved to meet increasing customer needs; it was then that Tom’s company transitioned to become Petroleum Solutions, Inc.

Repair and installation had been PSI’s core business, until 1999 when they acquired Station Equipment & Maintenance (SE&M). The SE&M acquisition allowed PSI to expand their service area and grow equipment sales in Texas. John Keller was a big part of SE&M’s success having worked over 11 years in various roles including Vice-President. Shortly after the acquisition, John joined the PSI executive team.

1999 was also the year PSI became a Gilbarco Distributor adding to their already extensive list of offerings. Now with a network of over 100 trained and certified service technicians and 60 construction crew members, PSI’s growth has provided opportunities for over three hundred and fifty employees across Texas.

A lot of PSI’s growth has come through acquisition. Many of the companies acquired by PSI were also family owned businesses. Tom and Mark’s desire to keep the feel of a small family run business is what sets them apart, and the depth of combined employee experience is what enables PSI to provide a high level of expertise and service to its customers.

PSI has thrived as a family-run business for 47 years because they strive at surrounding themselves with people of character and talent. One of the keys to the success of Tom and Mark’s legacy has been in how they define family. Beyond blood relatives, they consider their employees and customers to be family too, as many of them
have grown up in this industry. All challenges aside, PSI has taken the traditional “family values” and given them a new meaning in today’s economy.

“I feel that coaching and setting expectations is extremely important in any leadership position, but I also believe in the importance of trust and standing behind your people.” — Tom Barron, CEO

A strong workforce has always been important to PSI, and the caliber of work performed would not be possible without the right team. In the petroleum equipment industry, the customer is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. Making material and manpower available to meet the demands of this kind of market in a world that raises its expectations every day does not come easy. PSI is grateful to have some very dedicated people who are committed to the task of managing this high demand and extremely important part of their business. It is a continuous process of collaboration, but by harnessing their collective intelligence and situational knowledge, there is no petroleum equipment problem out there that couldn’t be solved by this dynamic group.

CONTINUED —
// FRAMING FOR THE FUTURE

What began as a small service station equipment company in 1970 has grown to have the largest service coverage in the state of Texas. For Tom, a big installation used to be (2) 8,000 and (1) 4,000 gallon tanks. Now, PSI regularly installs tanks up to 30-40,000 gallons. Today, Petroleum Solutions has become a full service provider of 24-hour service, construction and electrical services, design consulting, compliance consulting, petroleum and automotive shop equipment sales, and service technician staff to meet any customer needs.

PSI serves many industries, from convenience stores and travel centers to government bodies and specialty facilities. Current customers include independent oil jobbers, major oil companies, convenience stores, local governments, general contractors, and commercial end users.

With such a broad customer base it is crucial to stay educated and up-to-date on industry trends. That is why PSI prides themselves on their participation and engagement with industry associations such as the Petroleum Equipment Institute (PEI), who is the national leading authority in fuel and fluid handling equipment. PSI also partners on a state level with the Texas Food & Fuel Association, not only as a sponsor but as an advocate of their work with government authorities and mission to educate and inform members of important matters.

Far expanding past the original equipment installation and service business, PSI employs a variety of other offerings including the only Gilbarco certified training department in Texas. Throughout the year, numerous technicians have obtained or maintained certifications through their extensive training program. Additionally, PSI now offers an internal apprenticeship program, designed to help meet the needs of a growing industry and a shrinking workforce. The demand for technicians is constantly growing, so PSI initiated the program to hire veterans and train them from the ground up.

Developing highly competent people who are ready and able to serve this industry “– John Keller, Vice-President.

The future holds both challenges and opportunities with the growing complexity of regulatory developments, renewable energies, dispensing equipment, fuel control systems, POS and forecourt innovations. Progress is impossible without change, as PSI and Tom Barron know all too well, but the core of PSI’s growth and success is not the ability to adapt but the willingness and drive to be better. PSI is constantly looking at how both its employees and customers can prosper in this world of continuous change. The fueling industry is just starting to see the next round of big changes and you can bet PSI will be there, ready to support and serve.

CERTIFIED.

- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Registered Underground Storage Tank Contractor
- TCEQ Registered Corrective Action Specialist
- 20+ TCEQ Licensed Supervisors
- Licensed State of Texas Industrialized Builder
- Licensed State of Texas Electrical Contractor.
- Licensed CNG/LNG Contractor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WWW.PETSOLINC.COM