

CELEBRATING 55 YEARS

An American Success Story

GERRY LANE ENTERPRISES



Family

Fairness

Legacy

(From left)
Eric Lane,
Ashton Lane Duhon,
Tyler Lane



Gerry Lane Enterprises

AN AMERICAN SUCCESS STORY BASED ON COURAGE AND CHARACTER

As the Gerry Lane Chevrolet sales team huddles for its morning sales meeting, company president Eric Lane can't help but think of his father.

A hardscrabble, principled businessman driven by integrity, the late Gerry Lane established a culture of earning his customers' repeat business through a simple commitment: to treat people fairly.

Now a third generation family-run company, Gerry Lane Enterprises is led by Eric, and his son, Tyler, and Cedric Patton. Cedric joined the company as a salesperson in 1983 and became a partner in 1994.

Eric's daughter, Ashton Lane Duhon, is Director of Human Resources for the Enterprises. Ashton's role enables her to connect with the company's most valuable asset: their employees.

She helps coordinate various events and

opportunities to recognize those who make the company so special. She firmly believes that everything in the business starts with the employees, and that their happiness is a vital component to the company's success.

By personally handing out company newsletters each month to employee, she is able to pour into the lives of her co-workers as they pour into hers. She says, "It's the little things that set us apart. We can't control every aspect of the business, but being a consistent presence in the lives of those that matter most is a great start."

Eric routinely stops by each of the company's dealerships to deliver a few words at their sales meetings, deploying the same down-to-earth values his dad espoused over the course of his 60-year career.

"When customers walk in," Eric says,

"they'll probably tell you they're looking for a specific kind of vehicle. But we drill down deeper, and ask them what they need the vehicle for. You might find that what they really need costs less than what they originally wanted. Our job is to help them find the right solution."

Close a sale with integrity, says Eric, and you'll have a customer for life.

Recognized locally and nationally for longstanding success in sales, professional ethics and community commitment, Gerry Lane Enterprises is rooted in the gutsy persistence of a small town Oklahoman who wouldn't quit.

The company, which includes Gerry Lane Chevrolet, Gerry Lane Cadillac and Gerry Lane Buick-GMC-Hummer, is one of the Capital Region's most recognizable and respected names in business.



DAVID WOOD

How It Began

Gerry Lane would see incredible success over his lifetime, selling more than \$10 billion in automotive sales, and owning multiple dealerships on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and in Baton Rouge, but he grew up in rural poverty.

Born to sharecropper parents in Oklahoma, Lane knew what it was to struggle. He left home at 22 to find work in San Diego, California. Cars were the rage in sunny, southern California in the early 1950s, and Lane wanted to try his hand at selling them.

Before he could begin, however, he had to sell himself.

"My dad was turned down three times by the Ford dealership before they finally gave him a chance," recalls Eric Lane. "The manager finally told him, 'Take this car downtown and try to sell it. If you can't, you're fired.'"

Lane had no choice but to succeed. By the end of his first week, he'd sold a total of five cars. Affable, confident and honest, he flourished in automotive sales, moving to Los Angeles, and becoming one of the city's most successful salesmen.

When the Los Angeles dealership where Gerry Lane worked went out of business, its parent organization recommended him for management positions in Houston, New Orleans, Kansas City, Baltimore and Baton Rouge. He visited Houston and New Orleans, passing on both, and drove through Baton Rouge as an afterthought. He was surprised at the community's potential, he would say later, and he accepted a position as sales manager at Capital City Ford in 1957. Six months later, Gerry Lane was hired by another local dealership, Herbert Polk Chevrolet.

He flourished at Polk Chevrolet, managing operations there from 1958 to 1966. During that time he told his wife and confidante, Faye, that he craved owning his own dealership.

No one in his family had ever owned anything, and he knew he had the right instincts to succeed. Polk rejected Lane's offer to buy into the dealership, so he kept looking for opportunities, mentioning his intention to anyone who would listen.



“I watched my father make many business decisions over the years that were based on doing the right thing for other people.”

—Eric Lane

Gulf Coast Growth

In 1966, an opportunity emerged to buy the Gulf Chevrolet dealership in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Gerry Lane jumped at the chance. Now a dealer, he did things his way, holding motivational sales meetings and hiring the most talented service department mechanics he could find.

His strategies helped transform what had been a languishing operation. Under his leadership, sales increased by 487%, the largest for any General Motors dealership in the country that year.

Less than two years later, Lane parlayed that success into the first of many business wins. He became the majority partner in what would

become Harvey-Lane Chevrolet in Pascagoula, at which point the Lanes moved their family, which also included children Sandra and Eric, from Baton Rouge to Pascagoula.

Eager to grow his holdings, Lane later bought Pascagoula Pontiac, Lucedale Chevrolet and Jacobs Chevrolet in Gonzalez with Lamar Smith. Predicting America's move to smaller, fuel-efficient cars, Lane purchased his first import dealership, Burnham-Lane Pontiac Toyota, in 1969. In 1972, he joined Mid-South Diversified and invested in banking, life insurance, auto parts and supplies. In 1977, Lane also added a Nissan dealership to his Gulf Coast holdings.

Words to Live By

In a sales meeting over 30 years ago, Gerry Lane shared these words to live by:

This is the beginning of a new day. God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good. What I do today is important because I'm exchanging a day of my life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever, leaving in its place something I have traded for it. I want it to be gain, not loss; good, not evil; success, not failure—in order that I shall not regret the price I paid for it.

A Life Well Lived

“Anyone from anywhere can be a success at any time. It just takes courage to leave the past behind, take action on your dreams, and make friends out of strangers. But it’s not as hard as you think. Simply be the servant and one day you’ll be the master.”

1953

At age 22, Gerry Lane moved from Oklahoma to California and began his career as a car salesman in San Diego.

1966

Lane bought his first car dealership in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

1957

Lane moved to Baton Rouge to work for Capital City Ford.

1987

Lane bought Polk Chevrolet and began to focus on the Baton Rouge market.

Through the Years

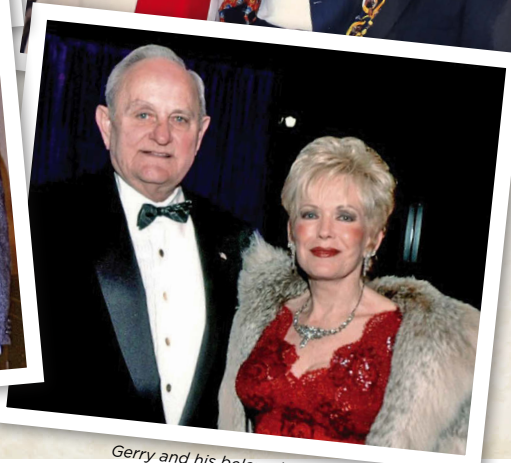
Faye Lane (front center) with her children and grandchildren.



Gerry met many celebrities during his lifetime. Here, he and Eric pose with bluesman and Baton Rouge native Percy Sledge.



Eric, Sandra, Faye and Gerry Lane



Gerry and his beloved wife Faye shortly before his death in 2013.



Tyler Lane with Josh Teekel, Gerry Lane Chevrolet General Manager.

Life Lessons

Along the way, Gerry Lane shared his business acumen with his children. Eric Lane would follow in his footsteps in automotive sales, and Sandra Lane would start the company's own advertising arm, The Lane Agency. Gerry Lane TV commercials won hundreds of awards and thousands flocked to their events. "It was an exciting time," says Sandra, who retired in 2018.

Working in the family business was earned, not assumed, Eric recalls. "I started at 14, and worked every Saturday from 7 a.m. to noon as a janitor. He started me out at the very bottom to understand the company. Every summer, he would move me around to different departments. I've done every single job in a dealership."

That awareness, says Eric, helped him become a stronger leader when he joined his father in the company in 1987. "I can tell somebody how to do their job better because I've done the job before," says Eric, who raised his son Tyler similarly. Like his dad, Tyler's first job in the business was working as a janitor.

Ride 'em, Cowboy

GERRY LANE'S LONGTIME support of the Angola Prison Rodeo wasn't just about writing a check. It was about a belief in basic kindness.

For many years, Gerry and Faye Lane attended the rodeo, with Faye, the former International Oil Queen of Tallulah, Louisiana, opening the event on horseback while carrying the American flag. Today, Eric and Tyler Lane carry on this tradition by riding in the rodeo's grand entrance. Eric also still fulfills one of his father's favorite personal traditions during the rodeo weekend. He buys 100 bags of fried pork cracklins from the rodeo's cracklin' vendor and distributes them to sequestered inmates who are waiting to ride.

"My dad would go over and talk to them, and hand out the cracklins," says Eric. "He'd tell them good luck today, and God bless you."

Lane's involvement with the Angola Prison Rodeo helped the event return significant funding to the prison, at no cost to taxpayers. The rodeo funds 18 churches on the property, as well as educational programs that help inmates master skills and trades. Forty percent of the inmates at Angola will be released, and Lane knew that such programs are essential for a successful transition back into society.



Before he passed away in 2013, Gerry Lane routinely participated in the grand entrance at the Angola Prison Rodeo. Mrs. Lane carried the American flag at the rodeo for more than 25 years.



Calling Baton Rouge

In 1987, one of Gerry Lane's earliest dreams became a reality. He purchased the Polk Chevrolet dealership, and began expanding his business interests and community involvement in Baton Rouge. By 1994, the company had sold all of its Mississippi dealerships and was solely focused on the Capital Region.

The Lane family's involvement in Baton Rouge has been significant, and includes serving on dozens of nonprofit boards and supporting a wide range of groups, including Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, the YMCA, the Angola Prison Rodeo, 13th Gate, the LSU Ag Center, School of Veterinary Medicine, E. J. Ourso College of Business and others.



Cedric Patton with Faye, Eric and Lisa Lane present a gift to the LSU Foundation Gerry Lane Scholars Fund.

Eric Lane recalls his father's deep personal commitment to the causes he supported. As a cancer survivor, Gerry Lane was compelled to help raise significant funds to support Mary Bird Perkins. Millions of dollars have been raised in conjunction with Carnival Krewe of Louisiana, which raises funds for Mary Bird Perkins, as well as Our Lady of the Lake Medical Center.

As a faithful member of the YMCA, Lane said yes when the organization asked him to sponsor the Y's youth sports league T-shirts. The tradition started in the summer of 1989 with a \$1,200 contribution for summer camp shirts for children who otherwise couldn't afford them. But the Lanes didn't stop there. The tradition grew to include the organization's many youth sports and now tallies more than \$2 million in T-shirts donated.

The 13th Gate, the top-rated haunted house in the nation, has been sponsored by the Lane Family since the attraction opened in the old LSU pig barn. Its growth has been amazing and visitors arrive from all over the country. Many movies have been filmed there as well.

And as a member of the Louisiana State Penitentiary board, Lane applied his business smarts to help the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola become self-sustaining by making the bi-annual Prison Rodeo a financial success.

Outta the Park

Baseball and business are part of the Lane family legacy

TENS OF THOUSANDS of Baton Rouge children have played baseball through the Capital Area YMCA, and when they hit the diamond on Saturday mornings, they wear T-shirts provided by Gerry Lane Enterprises. Under sunny skies and amid cool spring breezes, kids enjoy the crack of the bat, the thrill of a hit and the joy of a clutch catch.

Like many of the family's philanthropic endeavors, the T-shirt contribution carries personal meaning. Baseball was an important part of Gerry, Eric and Tyler Lanes' lives. Before he moved to California to pursue car sales, Gerry Lane played for a New York Yankees farm team. He intended to pursue the Major League, but had to return home to Oklahoma to care for his ailing father. Eric Lane played baseball at Tulane University and spent four years playing for the San Francisco Giants and the Cleveland Indians farm teams. And Tyler Lane played college baseball at LSU Shreveport, the University of Central Arkansas and Millsaps College until a recurring shoulder injury forced him to hang up his cleats.

Baseball, says Eric Lane, is the perfect training ground for the car business.

"You experience lots of failure and disappointment, but you don't let it get you down," Lane says. "It's all about learning to not quit. If you fail 70% of your times at bat, you're still a .300 hitter."



Gerry, Eric and Tyler Lane all played baseball at the collegiate or professional level, and the family is a big supporter of LSU's program.



Every member of the dealership's team is considered a critical part of the Gerry Lane family.

Family Tradition

Gerry Lane was driven both by a desire to succeed personally, and to help make life better for others, says Eric.

"He enjoyed other people having a good life because his parents were dirt poor," says Eric. "I watched him make many business decisions over the years that were based on doing the right thing for other people."

For example, says Eric Lane, when his father bought a dealership, he would allow salespeople to keep their seniority instead of saving money on benefits by starting the clock anew.

In fact, Lane was a pioneer in providing benefits to employees, offering retirement and hospitalization before his peers nationwide. And he constantly found ways to treat customers fairly, believing that inspiring loyalty would increase profitability in the long run.

That commitment is something shared by Eric, who first joined the business in Pascagoula in 1987. Eric and Cedric Patton, an invested owner in the company, ran the dealership there and then moved to the Gulfport store. After the sale of the Gulfport dealership in 1991, Eric and his wife Lisa

moved their family to Baton Rouge. By 1994, Eric and Cedric were running the Gerry Lane Buick-GMC Saturn, Hummer and Chevrolet dealerships.

But Eric, like his father, believed in doing the right thing. When the economy plummeted in 2009, and General Motors went bankrupt, many dealerships refused to honor warranties and rebates.

Gerry Lane dealerships took the bold move of fulfilling warranties and rebates when other dealers didn't, accruing about \$500,000 in costs that GM would finally pay back three months later.

Fortunately, a federal bailout came through. Eric had stuck to his commitment to do the right thing, and by doing so, had likely gained customers for life.

Now, Tyler Lane is poised to lead the company, bringing new energy, skills and awareness to the role. He follows the same work ethic and integrity of his father and grandfather—to treat everyone fairly and to inspire people to believe that any goal, no matter how grand, is achievable with the right mindset.