



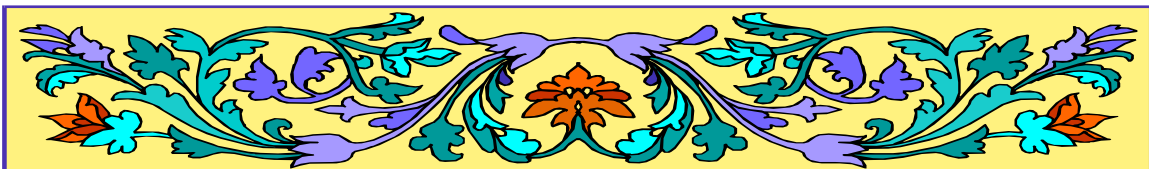
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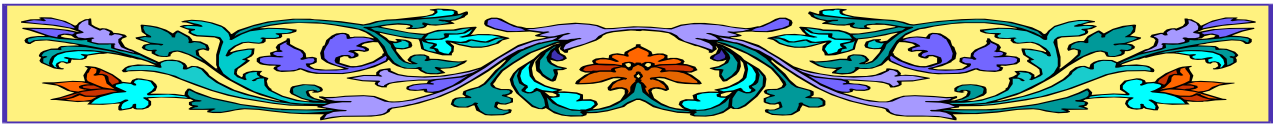


# Historical Memoir

(1959 thru 2009)

First Edition





# *Dedication*

*For past and present  
Dalco employees,  
their children,  
grandchildren,  
and future generations of  
Dalco employees to come*

*- Ted Stark Jr.  
Dalco CEO*



## A Salute to all Dalco Employees

Dalco's Historical Memoir covers the company's first fifty years in business, from (1959 through 2009). Even though we've had to delay the actual publication until now, 2012, any Dalco employees, who have been on board these past few years, knows the company has had an awful lot on its plate, to say the least.

The Memoir singles out many former employees and events that many of you may not be familiar with. Nonetheless, keep in mind that Dalco's past is directly linked to its present. You and your many colleagues today have played significant roles in helping Dalco continue to maintain its position as the leading janitorial cleaning supply distributor in the Upper Midwest. Your name might not appear in this Memoir, but your invaluable, ongoing daily contributions cannot and is not underestimated by Dalco Management and its Owners.

You Make Us **SHINE**.

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## *The Introduction*

Fifty years have evolved since Dalco took its first baby steps in the Janitorial Supply Industry. In April of 1959, Dalco initially opened its doors near downtown Minneapolis at 601 Chicago Avenue.

*But, first things first ...*

Over the decades, customers and colleagues alike have posed the same question, **“How did Dalco get its Name?”** When Dalco started in business, it had three partners: **Dale** (Norgren), **Al** (McCurty), and **Lloyd** (Bergren). By tying **DAL** (to the first two letters in **CO**mpany) the name **DALCO** was officially formed.

*Although the name Dalco denotes its original partners, what defines Dalco as a leader in the janitorial supply industry? What characteristics make Dalco what it is today?*

When it comes to building a successful cleaning supply company like Dalco, one can point to certain key factors. The most obvious ones entail premium grade product lines, a solid core of experienced sales representatives, highly competent inside operational personnel, and a reliable day-to-day order delivery system throughout the company’s four regional branches.

*To the untrained eye though, these salient points would only tell half the story ...*

### *Enter Ted Stark Jr.*

Ted Stark Jr. was Dalco’s outside financial consultant in 1959, working for his father’s accounting firm. However, in 1961, pursuant to Ted’s close relationship with Dalco’s three original owners and his desire to strike out on his own, he accepted a full-time position with Dalco as their company Controller. Over the next eight years Ted became a principal stockholder at Dalco and eventually bought the company outright in 1969.

Ted Stark Jr. was Dalco’s President from 1969 until 1990, before becoming its current CEO. In spite of Ted’s perpetual low profile and casual management style, Ted Jr. still had his finger tips on Dalco’s pulse every step of the way. He practiced temperate leadership with a defined purpose, ala the legendary Vikings football coach Bud Grant.

Ted Stark Jr., a native Minnesotan, grew up in South Minneapolis during the 1940’s. He attended Washburn High School where sports dominated his young life. Ted lettered in football, basketball and baseball. His senior year as a first

baseman in baseball he made All-City after leading the conference in hitting. His college years were spent at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA., graduating in 1953 with a Business Degree. Bucknell is also where Ted started devoting more time to golf and before his college days ended, established himself as a fine competitive golfer with serious potential. Several years later, in the early 60's Ted's golf game came full circle when on two separate occasions he was an early rounds leader in Minnesota's Annual State Amateur Golf Tournament. For golf purists, no one at Dalco has ever possessed a smoother, more efficient golf swing than Ted Stark Jr. (Only the late Sam Snead would be a fair comparison.)

After college and a three year hitch in the Marine Corp as a Financial Officer, Ted, as we've already mentioned, came home to work for his father's accounting firm, before he decided to join ranks with his previous janitorial cleaning supply client, Dalco.

Many years later, Ted Jr.'s son, Ted Stark III came to work at Dalco full-time. To alleviate the confusion of having to page two Ted Stark's in the building, some "Deep Thinker" in the company solved this maddening problem by suggesting that Ted Jr. be called T2 and Ted Stark III be tagged T3. Dalco's front desk receptionist especially, was internally grateful to the "Deep Thinker" and gave him a most touching Valentine card the following month.

*And thus unfolds the historical memoir of Dalco ...*

### ***The Beginning***

For the past forty years Dalco has been owned and operated by the Stark family. And over the last ten years approximately, Dalco has become the largest janitorial supply distributor in the Upper Midwest. With only five employees in 1959, Dalco began knocking on doors, vying for business. Dalco's main equipment/cleaning products lines in '59 were Multi-Clean machines and Essential Chemical.

Supply inventories and a limited number of floor and carpet care machines were stored in the basement of their modest 3,500 sq. ft. Chicago Avenue location. Customer orders came upstairs on a rope-pulley elevator. (Fortunately, the sale of 55 gallon drums in those early years was a rarity!)

In 1959 Dalco had 20 vendors and some 800 cleaning related items. Now, fifty years later, Dalco currently represents 325 vendors and over 12,000 janitorial maintenance products, accessories, and various equipment lines. Dalco's present national brand lines include: Diversey (formally Johnson Wax, followed by Johnson Diversey), 3M, Spartan Chemical, Multi-Clean Products, Rubbermaid, Kimberly-Clarke and Georgia Pacific Paper Companies, and TENNANT floor and

carpet care equipment.

Among the company's earliest employees in the 60's, Carl Bordeaux, Dalco's "eccentric" order delivery driver warrants special mention. Mostly known for his fashion sense, or more aptly put "non-sense", Carl wore a sleeveless T-shirt in the summer time and a regular T-shirt in the winter without any other outer wear. Just the same, Carl's total lack of cold weather attire actually helped stimulate business at Dalco. During one January sub-zero spell, the Minneapolis Star & Tribune ran a photo/ story about Carl and his "polar bear DNA."

Conversely, an ironic twist with Dalco's original store front on Chicago Avenue is also worth noting. Eighteen years after Dalco had relocated two more times, their maiden address, in 1983, became the popular "sports lounge" of Hubert's Bar & Grill, directly across the street from the Metrodome, the second season the Twins and the Vikings had begun playing under the Big Tent.

Dalco's business motto has always been based on a "service first, product second" selling philosophy. To measure how Dalco's growth has underscored this motto over time, in 1960, their first full fiscal year in business, Dalco generated \$ 87,000 in gross sales. Today, five decades later, that first year gross sales figure represents less than one day's company billing.

### *The Early Years*

In 1961, Dalco became a member of Standardized Sanitation Systems, Inc., better known as Triple S. Triple S was a relatively new network of supply distributors like Dalco. Collectively, Triple S members expedited purchasing ties with buying incentives to top manufacturers, which in turn provided varied quality cleaning product lines to Triple S distributors in their exclusive sales market areas. After Ted Stark Jr. acquired the ownership rights to Dalco in ' 69, he became ardently involved nationally in the further development and growth of Triple S. He served on the Board of Directors with Triple S for over 30 years and was Chairman of the Board from 1978-1980. Triple S's product lines played an important part in Dalco's early business success.

In 1962, a welcomed bump in Dalco's early growth occurred when a newly established local retail chain, consisting of 4 store locations, began using Dalco's services. Target Stores, Inc., with a keen appreciation for sound housekeeping practices implemented in-store programs using Dalco's products, proven cleaning methods and procedures. During those start-up years with Target, Dalco also developed a step-by-step housekeeping manual providing a labor-saving, quality control blue print designed to achieve and maintain Target's day-to-day high standard cleaning objectives. The Target housekeeping manual was a uniquely

innovative working tool, distinguishing Dalco's National-Chain-Accounts Division from its competitors in the janitorial supply field.

Today, almost fifty years later, Dalco's National Chain Accounts Division (eventually renamed Corporate Accounts) is as progressive as ever under the veteran and inspirational leadership of Chuck Panzer, Vice-President of Corporate Accounts. Chuck has personally been "quarter-backing" this dynamic division for over thirty-five years.

Don Kennedy, Dalco's only field sales rep with the Target account in 1971, was instrumental in discovering and hiring Chuck Panzer. At the time, the strikingly introverted young Mr. Panzer, barely old enough to vote, with hair longer than your average biblical figure, and who shook hands with less vigor than a wet noodle, didn't impress Dalco management much when Don K auditioned him before the top brass. And in particular, Dalco's sales manager at the time. But when push came to shove, Kennedy, who was in desperate need of a "good floor man" due to Target's sudden growth surge, finally won his case.

Two years hence, however, Kennedy, a Navy veteran from the late 50's, expanded his own sea of opportunity. Aided by the reinstated GI Education Bill, Don left Dalco to attend the University of Minnesota full-time. During Don's departure, Chuck really came into his own: making true believers out of everyone --including the dubious sales manager. Some six years later when Don returned to Dalco in another job capacity, he too found Chuck's personality transformation quite remarkable: "from Gunga Din to Lawrence of Arabia."

In spite of Corporate Accounts' soaring sales numbers over the years, Mr. Panzer has not been a Lone Ranger. Not by a long shot! His exceptional support team includes veteran sales reps, Scott Callahan and Jeff Marschinke, and the recent positive addition of Doug Howe., along with Chuck's two stellar, long serving inside Customer Service Reps: Laurie Vevle (Admin Manager) and her highly able assistant, Deb McCloskey.

Returning to 1965, out of the blue, Dalco made the local competitors "blink" when they formed a partnership with one of their largest customers, Lindstrom Contract Cleaners. The company's name was changed to Lindstrom-Dalco. The two complementary businesses moved into a renovated 10,000 sq. ft. supermarket at Central and Hennepin Avenues in Minneapolis. Regardless, because of unexpected managerial differences, the Lindstrom-Dalco merger didn't pan out and the partnership was dissolved in late 1966.



Also in 1965, Jim Pardello (Dalco's forthcoming sales icon/manager) came to work for the company. Two years later, Dalco obtained Jim Pardello's former cleaning supply employer, the R. A. Myers Company of St. Paul.

In 1967, Dalco again sought to broaden its sales horizons by gaining the exclusive national brand Johnson Wax Commercial Chemical Line for the Twin Cities market area. At the time, the Johnson Wax move was far more risky than meets the eye. Local competitors did everything in their power to persuade Dalco end-users that the Johnson Wax Commercial Line was no more than a glorified label manipulation of Johnson's widely advertised and accepted household cleaning items. Contrarily, Johnson's commercial line soon proved its own superior merits and within two years Dalco was one of J-Wax's leading distributors in the country. Now, some forty-five years later, the high water mark with Johnson (currently called Diversey) still prevails at Dalco and throughout its Upper Midwest sales market territories.

A year before Ted Stark Jr. acquired the company; Dalco, in 1968, rattled the competition in the metro area by constructing an 18,000 sq. ft. building at 3010 Broadway Street N.E. in Minneapolis, less than 9 years after they had started in business. Within the next few years, the facility was expanded to 30,000 sq. ft., where Dalco's corporate office and central warehouse remained in place for thirty plus years.

### *The Decade of Developments*

In 1970, Dalco retained the exclusive Twin Cities distributor rights to Clarke Floor Machine of Muskegon, Michigan (arguably the top commercial floor/carpet care cleaning equipment line in the country, at that time.) With the Clarke transaction coupled with the Johnson Wax line, Dalco had unequivocally reached the pinnacle of distribution excellence in the janitorial supply field.

Dalco's Sales Manager through the 1970's was Maurice Dixon. Even though Dix's hard charging style sometimes got in his way, no employee in the old days expended more heart and drive in the direction the company was going. Dix was all about the customer and his expertise as a "seminar speaker and hands on cleaning trainer" played a major role in propelling Dalco forward during those early, hugely productive years.

When Dixon left Dalco in 1981; first, Big Ted for 2 years, then Panzer for a much shorter time period, assumed the vacated Sales Manager position. Other noted Dalco Sales Managers following Dixon, included Jeff Wright (the former Vikings football defensive back who joined the cleaning supply industry after his NFL playing days), along with the well rounded, always eloquent Ed Lynch, and lastly,

in due time, the managerial rise of Rod Dummer.

The 70's were an epic decade for Dalco in more ways than one. In January of 1974, Dalco opened its first branch in Duluth. Unlike all other branch facilities to follow, Dalco Duluth to this day remains the only company branch started from scratch contrary to acquiring a local competitor in the given area. Dalco Duluth was the direct result of the territory being developed by Minneapolis sales rep, Bob Sanford. Bob had spent the better part of three years alone in that part of the state paving the way.

Even though Bob Sanford continued to make end-user trips to Duluth almost weekly, a newly hired salesman in Duluth and eventual Branch Manager, Ed Lynch, channeled Bob's momentum by making significant inroads virtually overnight under the Dalco banner. The late Bob Sanford (whom Dalco lost in January of 2009 to stomach cancer at age 63) was among Dalco's "All-Time Great" sales reps and a true master on the telephone. Moreover, behind the scenes when situations warranted it, Bob's unbelievable pranks and sardonic wit was second only to Don Rickles. And Bob was the only rep. who truly had the "chutzpah" to question and even challenge management's position, including Big Ted himself, on certain contentious sales matters. Yet T2, always willing to listen and more than fair minded, invariably would concede that Bob was right more than wrong.

Currently the Duluth branch, since 1995, has been managed by Trace Mershon. Trace has been hailed by corporate management as having always run the Duluth branch like it was his own business. Dalco Duluth's top sales producers over the years have been Lee Johnson, along with Brad Davis and Gary Van Reese. Their key inside staff person for the past twelve years has been Wanda Bolf.

### *The First Out-State Acquisition*

In 1976, Dalco completed its first ever out-state acquisition when it purchased Chappelwood Cleaning Products in Houghton, Michigan. It was a move designed to expand the territorial reach of the Duluth Branch. Through the mid-90's, Joel Hochstein and Gordy West were Dalco's veteran sales reps on the UP ., over the past fifteen years, Dan Hochstein, Joel's son, has continued to live up to the Hochstein's honorable sales name.

### *A Legacy Lost*

In spite of the company clicking on all cylinders in the early 70's, a devastating blow hit Dalco. On July 2, 1974, after finally being diagnosed correctly some

seven months earlier, Jim Pardello, second in command at the time under Ted Stark Jr., tragically succumbed to pancreatic cancer. Jim Pardello was only 39 years old.

Thirty-five years ago, job titles and responsibilities were equated differently than today. Back then as Dalco's Vice-President, Jim Pardello was not only Dalco's leading Sales Rep, he was also the "Go to Guy" regarding any serious employee issues within the company, including the boys in the warehouse and even the delivery drivers. Simply put, Jim was a "Man for All Seasons." He related to everyone in the company and everyone related to him. Survived by his wife, Audrey (who in time would make her own mark at Dalco) and his three young daughters, the number of countless friends and loyal customers throughout the Twin Cities was overwhelmingly self-evident at the *celebrity size* turnout for Jim's wake and funeral --- the largest gathering of mourners anyone had ever seen for a lay person. In our opinion, if Dalco's fifty year history was symbolized in the form of a pyramid, Jim Pardello with his tremendous sales numbers and comparable managerial skills would be perched alone atop the zenith.

Other key sales colleagues during the Jim Pardello Golden Era not previously mentioned included Purchasing Agent, Dwight Jotblad, and other leading sales reps: Mike Callas, Paul Murry, Dick Gabbert, Dewey Peterson, Don Hagen, and Terry Romundstad.

*Somehow, some way Dalco had to move forward without Jim Pardello and ever so slowly, it did.*

### ***Joy from Pain***

Three months after Jim Pardello's passing, Ted Stark Jr. encouraged Jim's wife, Audrey, to come to work for Dalco. Initially, it was only on a part-time basis. But eventually, Ted convinced Audrey that the company could use her services full-time; plus she still had three young daughters to raise.

Even before Audrey started working for Dalco, she was by no means a total novice to all the inner workings of the company. For the almost nine years that her husband, Jim, had been rolling up record sales numbers at Dalco, Audrey had essentially been his "Gal Friday" at home. Audrey spent long hours organizing and keeping abreast of Jim's endless sales paperwork. She also had become acquainted with many of Jim's customers via night-time business calls when Jim wasn't at home. In addition, on the average of two or three times a month, Jim and Audrey would meet prominent customers with their spouses for dinner at a posh restaurant in town.

In the fall of 1975, Audrey spearheaded Dalco's first computer system. It was a daunting undertaking and Audrey will never forget the glib speaking IBM salesman who insisted to Big Ted in front of her that, "The system was so simple, even a housewife could install it."

For the next fifteen years, Audrey continued to win the professional approval of her colleagues. From 1977 through the mid 80's, Audrey Pardello Petersen (now married to Harlan "Pete" Petersen) was Dalco's Vice-President of Administration. And from 1985-1989 she served as Dalco's Executive Vice-President. "Audrey's tenacity," Ted conveyed, "to get the job done was always unbending. She had outstanding organizational skills. Upon Audrey becoming President in 1990, Ted said, "In spite of the tight economy, she provided great stability and spirited leadership during that tough uneven sales time."

Falling back to 1977, Mary Sue "Mimi" Anderson came to work for Dalco. Mimi, with a Computer Science Degree, soon made a noticeable difference in meeting Dalco's pressing requirements in this new high tech area. By 1982, with two assistants, Mimi became Dalco's Computer Manager, serving the company in that role for the next 25 years. Mimi's principal assistant for over ten of those years was Kathy Manley, who, after 27 years at Dalco, is now the Inventory Control Manager at our corporate offices in New Brighton.

### *The Moving Ladder of Success*

Roger Collins was another Dalco employee who came into his own in the post Jim Pardello era. Roger played a central part in restructuring and fine-tuning Dalco's less than seamless warehouse inventory system. For nearly a year, Roger, in addition to maintaining his own sales accounts during the day, spent countless evenings and weekends refining the Minneapolis warehouse inventory system, ultimately resulting in Roger becoming Dalco's Vice-President of Operations. And soon down the road, Roger was instrumental in grooming a relatively "new warehouse hire" in Minneapolis by the name of Larry Tranberg.

Larry had a background in insurance underwriting, but wanted a major job change. Quickly demonstrating a strong work ethic, with obvious organizational skills, within a year, Larry was promoted to Warehouse Manager.

In 1990, Chuck Panzer was named Vice-President of Corporate Accounts, along with the likewise promotion of Larry Tranberg, Dalco Minneapolis' outstanding and highly respected warehouse manager during the previous ten plus years. Larry succeeded Roger Collins as V.P. of Operations, while Roger in turn became the company's Vice-President of Marketing. But Larry Tranberg as Dalco's new V.P. of Operations, became even more involved with the company's four ( by that

time ) branch warehouses. Larry's reputation among his diverse colleagues was he was a "true professional." And to a man, the sales force proclaimed: Larry never gave anyone a "song and dance or passed the buck." He would directly and sincerely address any business concern and promptly take care of it. Dealing with Larry was like money in the bank.

Contrarily, no Dalco colleague ever questioned the notion that Larry Tranberg's most charismatic Minneapolis warehouse journeyman was Larry Johnson, who started working at Dalco in 1973, until his untimely cancer death in 2006 at age 57. Aside from Larry Johnson being the anchor of the Twin Cities warehouse staff for many years, he may have missed his true calling in life. Most members of Dalco's old guard felt if Dame Fortune had exercised a little tighter rein on the free-spirited Larry Johnson during his younger days, he very well may have ended up in show business. Larry Johnson, you see, was a gifted impersonator masterfully mimicking the likes of: Jack Nicholson, Kirk Douglas, Jimmy Stewart, Paul Lynn, Gregory Peck, Peter Falk, John Wayne, Festus, Dean Martin, Burl Ives, and other show biz personalities. Over the years, Larry left co-workers in awe and splitting a gut at different Dalco social gigs (mostly impromptu, some formal). The company consensus was that Larry had the potential to be another Rich Little or Dana Carvey.

### *A Customer Service Saga*

*Dalco's undeterred penchant for meeting the service needs of our customers can perhaps best be summed up by one memorable weekend in the early 90's.*

At the time, Hartley "Ace" Rossom, a solid producer on the Twin Cities sales force, had a relatively new hospital account. The hospital wanted to place a large rush order exceeding 100 cases of assorted sizes of wet/dust mops. But Dalco only had a limited number of the said sizes in stock. Yet time was in the essence because of certain pressing matters. 1. The hospital's purchasing department had inadvertently failed to process the order some thirty days earlier when Housekeeping originally requested it. 2. The hospital was requiring that its facility I.D. be stamped on each new wet/dust mop.

Normally speaking, the Housekeeping Department could have dealt with such a delay for a week or two; but, the Thursday morning Hartley Rossom got wind of the order, there was a "game changer" at bay that put the hospital and Dalco squarely behind the eight ball. The hospital was currently tied to a quarterly mop rental program -- a situation which they had become totally unhappy with, and extremely anxious to terminate. Nevertheless, the quarterly rental cancellation date, much to Ace's dismay, was the following Tuesday. To avoid the continuation of the rental program for another three months, the hospital needed to

receive at least a sizeable quantity of their own mops by the upcoming Monday.

After engaging Dalco's purchasing department again, Hartley himself called Golden Star, our mop vendor in Atchison, Kansas, some 450 miles south of the Twin Cities. Golden Star's V. P. of Sales, Steve Lewis, reaffirmed with Ace that due to their tight production schedule and the added request to I.D. each mop, there just wasn't time on Friday to finalize and air freight the order. However, Steve Lewis had an option that could save the day for all parties. Golden Star could have a crew come in on Saturday morning to monogram and box 1,308 assorted mops, if Dalco could dispatch a truck to Atchison by mid-afternoon to retrieve the order. Hanging up the phone, Ace promptly tracked down Larry Tranberg. Besides providing Harley with a mid-size Dalco van, typical of Larry, he also offered to make the weekend run with Ace.

In spite of the long drive down and back and staying Saturday night at a motel in Des Moines, everything came off without a hitch. When Hartley and Larry returned Sunday afternoon, Ace left his car at Dalco, driving the mop-loaded van home for the night. True to his word, by 7: 30 Monday morning he was dropping off the hefty mop order at the hospital Receiving Dock. Once again Dalco had gone the extra mile to meet a customer's need -- except in this case it was a good 900 miles: a marathon example of Dalco's customer service philosophy.

### *Equipment Repair Departments*

A vital component to Dalco's success has been our branch Equipment Repair Departments. As much as customers rely on quality floor, carpet and restroom cleaning products, efficient and timely machine repair service can make or break the on-going growth of a distributor. Dalco recognized this essential point early in its start-up years. Moreover, the day-to-day pressures of running a cleaning equipment repair department is not that much different than running any typical automotive service garage. Whether it's your own car or a labor saving piece of cleaning equipment that you depend on within your Housekeeping Program, mechanical breakdowns are a fact of life and require fast, reliable repair service.

Over the years, expert Repair Service Managers have included the likes of Jim Green, Gordy Thole, and Kevin Campeau in the Twin Cities (along with Rod Dummer -- whose fairly brief but storied time in this job we'll fill you in on later.) Other outstanding repair individuals at our Twin Cities branch have included long serving Parts Manager, Bob Moore, and accomplished mechanics like Keith Noggle, Paul Tupy, and Jeff McCloskey, and inside customer service coordinator, Bob Erickson.

Dalco's branches have also been blessed with highly qualified repair personnel

such as Brett Lisiecki in Duluth, David Hanson and Gene Mehling in Rochester and Jim Dawson in LaCrosse.

Additionally, one former bench mechanic for sixteen years, Dean Crockett, eventually became an Equipment Sales Specialist at Dalco. Dean has made unparalleled strides in that position with our four branches over the past thirteen years. Countless customers have interconnected with Dean's always energetic, up-beat manner through his on-site machine demos or his periodic seminar related presentations. It was suggested by one of his close equipment repair cronies, "When Deano ultimately goes to the Big Machine Roundup in the sky, his epitaph will read: *A Clean Machine is a Happy Machine.*" This wry little metaphor of course, has been Dean's signature retort whenever and wherever he has had customers at his beck and call.

### *Employees that Made a Difference*

Collectively over the last fifty years, the numbers of employees that have come and gone at Dalco's four branches for various reasons including retirement are narrowly recorded. Dalco's Computer Employee Database only goes back to 1990. Nevertheless, certain employees left lasting impressions relative to the major contributions they made while working for the company. The following are capsule looks of several former memorable employees.

**Ben Norgren**, the wily and conscientious father of Dale Norgren (one of Dalco's original owners) was Dalco Minneapolis' first actual warehouse manager. Around the age of 60 at the time, Ben worked like a plow horse every day running the warehouse and seeing to it that all the pending orders were filled properly and out the door. Even though Dale Norgren and Ted Stark Jr. split in 1969, T2 did something highly unusual under the circumstances out of respect and appreciation for Ben's work loyalty to Dalco. He retained Ben's services for the next couple years until Ben, of his own accord, took leave of Dalco.

**Smokey Wilson**, Big Ben's successor, a onetime Golden Glove boxer with a "flattened nose" to prove it, was one of the most colorful characters to ever work at Dalco. Smokey was an extremely fun-loving colleague who kept everyone in the company loose as a goose. By contrast though, we'll never forget Smokey's meltdown at Jim Pardello's wake when he became totally crestfallen over the staggering loss of Big Jim -- that was a punch to the gut that Smokey could hardly endure.

**Elizabeth Barrett**, Dalco's Office Staff Supervisor in Minneapolis from the mid 60's to well into the 70's is remembered for her extreme intelligence and warm personality. She was "old school" but Elizabeth was always ahead of the curve.

She had the total respect and admiration of everyone in the company. And to underscore her first name, she carried herself with the same dignity and class of a Queen Elizabeth.

**Ted Elly** from the late 60's through the 70's ran Dalco's Customer Service Desk with virtually a photographic memory. When it came to major accounts, without looking things up in the customer invoice files, he could instantly recall what products they had bought in the past, complete with specific sizes and quantities, and even the percentage discount they received. The sales force in Minneapolis called Ted the "Great Oz."

Among the shrinking numbers of old timers still at Dalco New Brighton, one will never forget **Muriel Arbrogast** and how T2 demonstrated a sensitivity towards an employee that many companies, past or present, wouldn't have had the patience and compassion to accept her unusual ways. Regardless, Muriel was qualified and then some to meet her collective office duties. And she had a special talent for writing extremely articulate and professional business letters. But Muriel suffered from dramatic mood swings -- possibly a medical condition or illness. Yet, she had a heart of gold, anonymously giving different colleagues presents -- many times of significant value. Gifts pertaining to a co-worker's special personal interest would just show up one morning on their desk, with never any acknowledgement of whom it was from. Although everyone knew. But if the recipient tried to express their appreciation and thank Muriel, she'd blow them off faster than an Olympic dash champion...

**Peggy White**, whose multi-tasking abilities and glowing personality were indispensable in the years she worked for the company. Her always positive attitude had a contagious effect on everyone in the office including the Twin Cities sales force.

**Rebecca Bosh**, Dalco's Corporate Purchasing Manager for some ten years from 1995 to 2005 will also never be forgotten. Born and raised in Sisseton, South Dakota, Rebecca was the youngest of fourteen children. Maybe that's why reaching out to others, seemed so natural to her. She intensely recognized that filling the customer's product needs was what kept us in business; therefore back orders under her watch were always minimal.

**Laura Mozis Rennie** was another former employee who left a lasting impression at Dalco. Laura started working for Dalco Minneapolis in the late 70's as our front office receptionist. But within a year, with her upbeat attitude and excellent communication skills, management felt she would be an ideal fit in our Customer Service Department. Management was right. Under the expert tutelage of Ted Elly, upon his retirement, Laura took over the supervisory reins and efficiently ran



the Customer Service Department for the next ten years.

**Jean Kittleson** for ten some years, into the early 90's, was a Computer Graphic Designer at Dalco. Working with Don Kennedy, Jean contributed greatly to our marketing program in many ways. They produced product flyers and brochures, seminar and trade shows invitations, display presentations, as well as the designing and printing of Dalco's first in-house Product & Equipment catalog. Eventually, Jean decided to become a nurse. Today, she is the Director of Nursing at the New Brighton Care Center, three blocks from Dalco New Brighton.

**Sue Schroeder** and **Cindy Schriener**, at different intervals over the years, were inside Customer Service Reps in the National Accounts Division. Their strong willed personalities and sheer moxie made a significant difference in making the Division that much stronger, while helping to neutralize Mr. Panzer's double edged work witticisms.

**Debbie Lane...** even though Debbie still works for Dalco, as our Branch Manager in LaCrosse, corporate management insisted that she be cited in this "special section." Debbie is the only employee in Dalco's history who has worked for extended periods of time at three of our four branches: Rochester, Duluth and LaCrosse. Now if we could only get Debbie to relocate to New Brighton for maybe a year, rumor has it that the company would then erect a full size bronze statue of her, notably inscribed, right in the middle of the main parking lot at our corporate headquarters.

### *The Acquisitions Continue...*

Dalco's third branch acquisition was in February of 1977, when they acquired the Rochester Maintenance and Supply Company in the Mayo City. As a family-owned distributorship like Dalco, RMSC's leading product line in Southern Minnesota was nationally touted: Spartan Chemical of Toledo, Ohio. RMSC had a relatively small but solid customer base, with veteran sales maker, Jerry Graf, and a dynamic young Sales Rep by the name of Gary Schoenfelder.

Over the past thirty plus years, Dalco Rochester has also grown with two other gifted Sales Reps, Jim Sinn and Kurt West. In 1999, Jim Sinn and Gary Schoenfelder made Dalco history by forming the company's first ever straight commissioned sales team. Gary and Jim's sales numbers the past ten years have been nothing short of spectacular, prompting Dalco to establish two more sales teams elsewhere within the company.

Besides Rochester's three stellar Sales Reps, two long-time inside employees: the late Frank Simmons, Rochester's Branch Manager from 1990 through 2008, and

Lisa Nelson since 1992 (A Jill of All Trades in the Office) kept their Mayo selling machine consistently lubricated. After Frank Simmons' premature cancer death at age 50 in January 2009, Lisa Nelson became Rochester's Branch Coordinator.

In 1982, Dalco wound its way east to LaCrosse, WI, purchasing locally owned LaCrosse Sanitary Supply Company. By 1984, Dalco procured a second LaCrosse distributor, the LaCrosse Paper and Box Company. Before the year was out, Dalco moved their initial acquisition in LaCrosse into the much larger building that had facilitated LaCrosse Paper and Box. At the same time, Jerry Graf with Dalco's Rochester Branch, born and raised in the LaCrosse area, returned to his original roots. An ex-marine, Jerry Graf's gusto and grit in the sales trenches, played a major role in helping spring board Dalco's name in the LaCrosse area. Furthermore, in due time, Jerry recommended the hiring of Mark Neuville, who; without question, eventually became Dalco's most unexpected, surprising sales achiever in the company's fifty year history. Firstly, out of the shoot, Mark, in his early twenties, with a "Clarke Kent" demeanor, was viewed by management and his company wide sales colleagues as simply too shy and introverted to tackle the day-to-day rigors of the highly competitive janitorial cleaning supply market. But as that old saying goes, "never judge a book by its cover." For almost thirty years now, even though Mark covers a rural territory with no sizeable population bases, the highly motivated, detail oriented Mr. Neuville annually finishes near the top of the pack among Dalco's nearly fifty company wide Sales Reps.

There's one other laudable regional contribution by Jerry Graf that should also be recognized. Twenty years ago, Jerry, another Dalco golfing zealot, was the architect behind LaCrosse and Rochester's first customer oriented invitational golf tournament. The first year, LaCrosse and Rochester struggled mightily to get merely a handful of customers, vendors, and Dalco sales reps to participate. Within a few years though, thanks to Jerry and his deeply engrained Marine Corp Ooh Rah, LaCrosse started drawing 150 to 175 annual participants.

Also LaCrosse related, besides Debbie Lane, the branch has two more cracker-jack inside employees that keep LaCrosse rolling full steam ahead : Jackie Stavlo in Purchasing and Chris Olson in Customer Service. Debbie, Jackie, and Chris will do whatever it takes to get the job done. There's even times when, in a pinch, these ladies will unload vendor delivery trucks.

## *The Corporate Move*

After doing business for over 32 years under the same roof in Northeast Minneapolis, Dalco started making plans to construct new corporate offices and a central warehouse in suburban New Brighton, just north of the Twin Cities. On

the morning of October 25, 2000, some seventy-five Dalco personnel with City Council representatives from New Brighton and key Ryan Construction staff members braved the prematurely harsh fall weather to take part in the groundbreaking ceremony of Dalco's future 77, 428 sq. ft. site.

Upon concluding the ceremonial proceedings, inside the confines of a wind protected tent with welcomed refreshments, both Big Ted and T3 addressed the thawing-out attendees about the next major step in Dalco's 41 year history. The new facility would include a 44,750 sq. ft. warehouse with six loading docks, 21,288 sq. ft. of office space on two levels, a 2,200 sq. ft. Training Center, a Will Call/Retail Store, and a significantly larger and more sophisticated Service Repair Department.

For the majority of long-standing employees at Dalco Minneapolis, the third weekend in May, 2001, was a bittersweet passage in time. By Sunday night when the last moving truck was on its way to Dalco's new corporate offices and central warehouse, the past thirty-three years became history. The old building with dilapidated partitions scattered throughout the empty offices and the skeletal remains of the warehouse racking systems stood eerily empty. Strangely quiet. Only memories lingered...mostly positive, some sadly reminiscent.

### *New Brighton, Here We Come...*

On Monday morning, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001, at 300 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, New Brighton MN, the mood swing was strikingly different. A new Dalco era was here, reflected in a rush of bustling activity. Inside personnel and sales reps were in their respective new cubicles, unpacking boxes, setting up work stations, solving minor installation issues – all while continuing to answer customer telephone calls.

With the monumental challenge of transferring Dalco's staggering product and equipment inventory, from two separate warehouses, Larry Tranberg and his entire warehouse staff richly deserve special recognition for their daunting task. Between 4 AM on Friday morning, May 18<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday evening, May 20<sup>th</sup>, Larry and his staff transferred 97 tractor trailer loads to the new facility. Even though Dalco Minneapolis was officially closed on Friday, Dalco's customer delivery trucks made every last one of their normal Friday and Monday stops. Dalco Minneapolis' exhausted warehouse personnel that weekend included: Warehouse Manager Cary Tranberg, 2<sup>nd</sup> Shift Supervisor Eric Cress, and Warehouse Workers Larry Johnson, Adam Blocher, Patrick Boggs, Steve Martinson, Rick Arneson, Alan Martinson, Ben Leslie, Joe Schmidt, Darin Tranberg, and Brian Bushey.

## *Continual Growth*

Aside from the previous acquisitions mentioned, in 1999, Dalco acquired Upper Midwest Sales of Minneapolis. UMS was owned and operated by Bob Diercks, who ironically over the prior three decades (besides being UMS's "Head Cheese"), distinguished himself on the street as one of the Twin Cities most prolific janitorial supply salesmen. Generally speaking, distributor owners in the cleaning supply field have essentially operated behind the scenes. How Bob juggled so many balls with Upper Midwest, which employed some 25 people, was quite extraordinary. Of course, Bob obviously had a strong support staff at UMS, but personally selling their product lines was in his blood, inherited from his father who had started UMS back in 1946. By the time young Bob was in junior high school in the late 50's, he was working after school in his dad's warehouse learning the basics of the cleaning supply business. When Dalco bought UMS, Bob Diercks had a buyout agreement with Dalco to remain in the fold for at least two years. Virtually everyone felt those two years would be Bob's "last hurrah." It turned out, virtually everyone was wrong.

Ten years after the UMS acquisition, Bob Diercks and his talented young sidekick, Greg Hamstad, have been a Dalco sales team for approximately eight years. Over this time, with Greg's previous strong experience selling cleaning equipment lines, this mighty duo has produced yearly sales numbers (divided by two) unequaled in the history of the company. The President's Club Award, Dalco's most prestigious annual sales achievement honor was captured by Bob and Greg for eight straight years between 2000 and 2008. No wonder many of their sales cronies started calling them "Batman and Robin."

In December of 2002, Dalco acquired another Minneapolis-based supply company, United Maintenance Products, Inc. The company was formerly owned by Tom Fischer and Jack Loughery, bolstered by the selling genius of Don Stelli. Tom retired a few years back, but Jack Loughery and Don Stelli (semi-retired), along with Jeff Madsen, have essentially formed a three man selling team out of our New Brighton Branch. During 2009, they started knocking the cover off the ball by landing a major contract cleaning account in addition to various other new business. The team selling concept at Dalco, which technically started as far back as the National Chain-Accounts Division in the 70's, was initiated into the commissioned sales force, first by Gary Schoenfelder and Jim Sinn (Rochester), then Bob Diercks and Greg Hamstad (New Brighton), and now Jack Loughery, Don Stelli, and Jeff Madsen (New Brighton).

In 2008, for the eighth time in its fifty year history, Dalco acquired another competitor, Merit Supply, Inc. based in Edina, MN. Although Merit was only a

two-man sales team, don't let that fool you. Bill Lord and Allen "Augie" Agustsson, life-long friends and Merit Supply partners since 1978, primarily provided cleaning products and equipment to industrial, municipal and food manufacturing accounts. Bill (a standout hockey player at Edina High in the mid 60's and All-American Defenseman for two years at the University of Michigan) and his warm, personal, product-savvy side-kick, Augie, have been a welcomed addition to the Dalco New Brighton branch. Nevertheless, as Augie expressed, "When we first came on board at Dalco, the alarming difference in our and Dalco's physical environment was a bit shocking – to say nothing of the various new technological tools at our disposal." "Thirty years ago," Augie stated, "Bill and I started our business in a virtual broom closet. I kid you not – a 7 by 14 foot hole in the wall. And over the years, even though we increased our space needs per our sales growth, now in terms of our last location, to be part of Dalco New Brighton's present 138,000 sq. ft. facility, seemed like moving from our 5000 sq. ft. hen house in Edina into the IDS Tower." Today at Dalco New Brighton, because of territorial considerations, Augie and Bill sell independently of one another.

## *Sales and Marketing Management*

Mark Miller came to Dalco in 1999, part and parcel to Dalco acquiring Upper-Midwest Sales. At the time of that acquisition, Mark had been working for UMS as an Equipment Specialist as well as a Key Account Manager. Prior to his employment at UMS, Mark had been in the janitorial supply field for eight years representing various vendor lines such as Rubbermaid, Windsor Equipment and Butcher Chemical. His broad experience and strong, outgoing personality readily caught the attention of Dalco management, and Rod Dummer, Vice President of Sales, who was in real need of a fine-tuned second fiddle. In a very short time, that second fiddle became Mark Miller: filling the position of Dalco's company-wide Sales Manager.

With close to fifty Sales Reps under his wing today, Mark has contributed significantly to Dalco's continual growth over the past decade, in spite of the current deep recession. As Rod so succinctly said, "Mark is totally professional and is broadly versed in every aspect of our business, and relates especially well to our extensive customer base."

Joni Miklya, Dalco's company-wide Marketing Director since the late 90's is one in a million. As F. Scott Fitzgerald, the American novelist suggested in The Great Gatsby, "Personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures." Joni fits this assessment to the letter. Her broad, creative talents reinforced by her ceaseless amount of energy and enthusiasm complements everything she has done in her marketing role at Dalco.

## *Out of the Box Special Memories*

### **The First Day on the Job, 1973**

For virtually anyone, 28 years after the fact, details of their first day on a new job is not something they would ever remember. That is, unless your name was Larry Johnson and the first day of your new job, while being indoctrinated into the warehouse system in Dalco Minneapolis, became a total calamity. As Larry told the story it was like something that happened yesterday.

Dalco's warehouse boss at the time was the unforgettable Smokey Wilson. Shortly after the lunch hour, Smokey was navigating a fork lift, 20 feet up in the racking system, one aisle over from where Larry was standing, clipboard in hand, getting acquainted with various product names. Suddenly, like a bolt of lightning, Smokey incredibly lost control of two full pallets (96, 5-gallon pails of floor wax) unbelievably crashing the load to the floor – busting the lids open on over three-fourths of the metal containers! “What a disaster!” Larry wailed, “I couldn't believe my eyes!”

“My first day on the job at Dalco,” Larry continued, “and like something out of a Stephen King novel, we were up to our keisters in a river of sticky, stinking, floor wax. Three of us worked like crazy, well past midnight, with tank vacs and floor squeegees, followed by wet mops and buckets of hot soapy water to recover the seemingly endless goo. Then finally, they let us go home,” Larry said, “but, we had to be back by eight in the morning. To tell you the truth,” Larry recalled, “I never wanted to come back.”

Lucky for Dalco, Larry Johnson did come back – eventually becoming the Senior Warehouseman in Minneapolis over the next thirty years.

### **Commandeering Dalco**

To this day, probably the most memorable and hilarious prank in Dalco's long and illustrious history was engineered by Bob Sanford, some fifteen years ago or so. Bob, like Larry Johnson, may have also missed his true calling in life. Besides being a great salesman, Bob was a natural born actor –reminiscent of Orson Wells or Ernest Borgnine. Bob's never-to-be- forgotten “theatrical performance” came about while T2 was on his annual winter hiatus in Arizona when Bob along with two technical cohorts, Dean Crockett and Rod Dummer, videotaped Mr. Sanford in Big Ted's rather spacious, well-appointed office.

In front of the camera without any script or prep time, Bob appeared perfectly “at home” leaning back in the Big Guy’s cushy executive chair, legs defiantly crossed atop the highly polished mahogany desk, arrogantly swigging from a quart bottle of Jim Beam (later found to be pure apple juice), while smoking up a mushroom cloud of Marlboro Lights. And scattered haphazardly across T2’s usually neat-as-a-pin desk were scads of product literature, countless old Sanitary Maintenance magazines; the pictures on the walls were all noticeably crooked. Big Ted’s office had suddenly taken on the likeness of Sanford’s proverbial “junk yard” cubicle.

Even so, Sue Schroeder (National Accounts inside Customer Service Rep) sat next to T2’s desk while taking phony shorthand, intently listening to Mr. Sanford’s pontification of commandeering Dalco. Bob freely rambled on like Fidel Castro, enthusiastically telling T2 we didn’t need him anymore and he should maybe bribe his way onto the Senior Golf Circuit. Stressing every major flaw at Dalco, Bob emphatically proclaimed to Big Ted that only Bob could save the company from certain ruin. Bob’s discourse was more heated than the Nuremberg Trials.

Dean and Rod, and one other anonymous male eye-witness in T2’s office were all holding on, desperately trying to suppress their laughter. Even so, Bob never broke stride or fumbled a line. His scam was an Oscar winning performance. Bob did however, assure T2 that he would spare his two sons and keep them in the fold. In spite of T3’s CPA credentials, Bob conveyed to the Big Guy that his oldest son could coordinate and secure all the stationary needs as well as product literature at Dalco Minneapolis; Peter, Ted’s youngest son, would be in charge of cranking up the coffee machines every morning and keeping the office plants watered.

Once Dean and Rod finished their handiwork, they sent T2 the VCR tape. Big Ted, the recipient of Sanford’s sardonic ways for so many years, played right along with the charade, following suit with a “pink slip” to Bob stating his unconditional release back to the Savoie Brothers, where Bob first got his selling spurs in the cleaning supply industry.

Still, there’s one other side to this tale that has never been resolved, unfortunately. To this day most of the company employees have never actually seen Sanford’s masterpiece, depriving them of arguably the funniest, most outrageous film footage in Dalco’s fifty year history. When T2 eventually returned from his winter break, he gave the VCR tape back to Rod for future viewing. However, Rod somehow misplaced the tape, never to be found. Rod has performed with great distinction during his twenty some years at Dalco. However, losing the Sanford tape has left a "glaring blemish" on his work record that will always be considered much more than a simple misdemeanor.

## The Great Softball Caper

George “Buzzy” Connor was a highly successful member of the Minneapolis sales force for some twenty-five years. Before and during his Dalco career, in addition to his sales skills, Buzzy had also developed into an exceptional fast-pitch softball pitcher. Over time, he became one of the premier “Open League” softball pitchers in the metro area.

Even so, “the Buzzer” was always evasive about his games every summer, never wanting anyone at Dalco to see him pitch. When various colleagues would ask him when and where his next game was, he would invariably reply, “Saturday night at 10 o’clock in International Falls” or maybe “Sunday morning at 8 AM in New Ulm.” Finally, enough was enough. Minneapolis Dalco’s kangaroo court decided that George had jerked its chain for the last time. But first, they had to somehow get their hands on a schedule of Buzzy’s remaining games that season.

The next afternoon on Thursday, when Buzz came in the office to catch up on paperwork, etc., the kangaroo court’s “best telephone schmoozer” (Mr. Sanford) made a covert telephone call to Buzzy’s wife, Jeanne. Fortunately, she was home. (The court’s leading schmoozer was so persuasive, he could have made the Mona Lisa reveal her legendary secret coy smile.) The following Monday morning in the mail, with Jeanne’s solemn promise not to tell George, the *court* received his remaining summer softball schedule.

Buzzy’s games were on Wednesday nights in Lake Elmo near Stillwater. Since sufficient time was needed to get everything organized, it was quickly determined George couldn’t be hoodwinked until the week after next. The word was quietly circulated around the branch when something came to light that no one anticipated. Virtually everyone at Dalco Minneapolis wanted to see Buzzy pitch. Among forty branch employees at the time, thirty-four people committed to going. To avoid a fiasco of cars prematurely announcing our arrival at the game, the *court* needed to come up with a better transportation option. And they did...renting a chauffeured driven bus, with lots of cold beverages and snacks. The fix was on and now it was just a matter of maintaining a code of silence.

When the evening finally arrived, as fate would have it, the packed bus, in a state of bedlam, got to the game a little late. Ironically, the timing couldn’t have been better. The game was already in the second inning with the bases loaded and Buzzy was on the rubber, facing the next hitter. The chartered bus, per our uproarious directions, pulled up right behind the open backstop, the driver blasting his horn to high heavens. Both teams, including our boy Buzzy and the limited number of spectators were totally bewildered by the sudden chaos. Even more so



when, in precise military fashion, each Minneapolis Dalco employee came off the bus in single file, wearing large eye slotted paper bags over their heads, with heavy bold red letters denoting: Buzzy's Fan Club. George was completely flabbergasted. He hadn't had a clue. He looked like he didn't know whether to start laughing or to have someone call the psych ward. It took a good fifteen minutes to restore calm and a semblance of civility.

Buzzy's team won the game with a dramatic comeback, thanks in large part to the incessant and maniacal cheering of Buzzy's Fan Club. After the game, the Dalco crazies, along with Buzz and most of his teammates, made the haul back to Northeast Minneapolis. In the rather secluded backside parking lot at Dalco's corporate office, under the stars with plenty of brats and cold refreshments, everyone relived Dalco's "Great Softball Caper."

A Special Note: When George "Buzzy" Connor completed high school in 1951, the hard throwing left-handed baseball pitcher was a highly touted pro prospect. After first serving two years in the Navy, in 1954 Buzzy went to Spring Training for three weeks with the old Brooklyn Dodgers in Vero Beach, Florida, before incurring a serious elbow injury. The injury never responded to rehab, subsequently ending his more than likely professional baseball career. At age thirty however, Buzzy started throwing fast-pitch softball, culminating in 1995 by being inducted into the St. Paul's Fast-Pitch Hall of Fame.

## **A St. Croix Beach Party**

On August 12, 2007, the Upper Midwest janitorial supply industry lost one of its most highly respected vendors at the age of 63, to colon cancer. Former Dalco purchasing agent, Dwight David Jotblad was the sole owner of Kaiser-Jotblad Associates, an independent manufacturing rep firm. He was survived by his wife, Patty, and their daughter, Jennifer. He was laid to rest on August 16, 2007. In the final analysis, however, saying farewell to Dwight was made much easier because of his positive ways and his unconventional individuality. This narrative wishes to pay special tribute to Dwight's "Lesson in Living" that he so courageously demonstrated to us before his passing.

Just over a month before Dwight's demise, Joni Miklya, Dalco's Marketing Director, received word from Dwight's two assistants, Dean Gatzmer and Steve Skytte that Dwight, fully aware of his limited time, flatly refused to throw in the towel when he still had things to do. Aside from drawing on the closeness of his large extended family, Dwight wanted to see one more time, in a collective setting, as many of his long-time business clients & friends.

On Sunday, July 15, 2007, via Joni Miklya, email invitations were hastily dispatched. A “Beach Party” at Dwight’s home on the St. Croix River was being organized and pulled together for that upcoming Wednesday afternoon July 18, from 1 PM to 4 PM. Moreover, Dwight made it perfectly clear to Dean and Steve to let everyone know that “long faces” did not blend in well on the scenic St. Croix. The “Beach Party” Dwight said, was going to be a celebration of long-time business ties and friendships, not a wake.

And what a celebration it was, with an estimated 175 people in attendance. Individuals from numerous competing distributors who, in many cases, hadn’t seen each other in years were reunited. Broad smiles, firm handshakes, and warm embraces made the rounds. Everyone, as Dwight had encouraged, was upbeat and connected. There wasn’t a hint of “shop talk” anywhere. Comments like “absolutely amazing” and “truly incredible” reflected everyone’s heart-felt feelings for Dwight and his extraordinary event. Dwight, secure in a wheel chair and attached to a breathing apparatus, was brought down the steep hill in his back yard on the tram, where he held court at a circular patio table under an expansive sun umbrella. In spite of the blistering heat, Dwight rose to the occasion, eagerly chatting with one sit-down person after another, while intermittently puffing on a Havana cigar and sipping on the straw of his favorite summer drink.

Dwight’s remarkable determination that afternoon – to grasp the moment – touched the very essence of everyone’s common humanity. Dwight Jotblad was his own person to the very end and is fondly remembered for many things. His passion for golf and his creative license with computers were legendary. Dwight also loved traveling and fine dining, but most of all he loved people. Although Dwight’s life was cut short, his unbelievable inspiring “Beach Party” was a “Lesson in Living” for those of us who were there, producing an immeasurable sense of intimacy that none of us will ever forget.

## ***The Stark Family Legacy***

Ted Stark Jr., Dalco’s President for 21 years and CEO since 1990, and his always warm and personable wife, Pat, have two sons and one son-in-law in prominent positions at Dalco. Big Ted’s two sons are Ted Stark III, Dalco’s current President, and Peter Stark, Dalco’s Director of Operations. Also, Big Ted’s son-in-law, Rod Dummer (who is married to Karen, Ted Jr.’s only daughter) is the Executive Vice-President of Sales.

### ***Ted Stark III***

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Like his father, T3, from the time he became Dalco's President on February 20, 1998, has led by example - never from the bully pulpit. Representing the second generation of the Stark family at Dalco, T3 was indoctrinated into the janitorial supply field the old-fashioned way, similar to Bob Diercks. Throughout the better parts of Teddy's high school summer breaks back in the 70's and subsequent college years, young T3 worked in the Dalco Minneapolis warehouse. According to Larry Tranberg, warehouse manager at the time, "Even as a teenager, T3 always gave 100% and never took advantage of his surname." All his warehouse co-workers soon found out that T3 was a team player and would go out of his way to assist anyone who needed an extra hand. He was just one of the guys and everyone had great respect for him because of it.

T3 graduated from Edina High School in 1975. He then attended Monmouth College in Illinois where he achieved a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Religious Studies. In 1983, he earned his CPA license for the state of Minnesota. By 1985, T3 started working for Dalco full-time as the company Controller.

Since becoming President, besides his solid leadership qualities, Ted has also developed into a gifted public speaker and is an active member on several National Advisory Boards in the industry such as the ISSA (International Sanitary Supply Association). Currently, Ted, a member of the ISSA Board of Directors, is also the ISSA's North Central District Director. The North Central District includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri. Ted's primary duties include acting as a communication link between ISSA members in his district, the Board of Directors and the Executive Directors in promoting and supporting ISSA programs and services. (The ISSA holds the largest annual trade show in our world-wide industry entailing educational tools, legislative/regulatory services, and periodicals specifically focusing on cleaning techniques and preventive maintenance procedures.)

Ted married his high school sweetheart, Amy, who works as a Children's Ministry Associate at the Colonial Church in Edina. Ted and Amy have three adult children: Phillip, Marissa, and Allison. In terms of hobbies, when Ted can find the time he too will hit the golf links. From time to time, like back in his college days, T3 still enjoys wilderness hiking and canoeing - which gets his juices going again.

### ***Rod Dummer***

In 1988, contrary to the typical new Dalco employee, as the son-in-law to Big Ted, Rod was subjected to a whole new level of personal scrutiny. Rod had a CPA

background like his brother-in-law T3, a similarity that was not lost on Dalco's veteran sales force.

A Minnesota transplant, Rod was born and raised in Newcastle, Wyoming (population roughly 3000) on the western edge of the Black Hills, some 80 miles from Rapid City, SD and approximately 650 miles from the Twin Cities. "Around Newcastle at night," Rod once told us, "the only things generally moving are prairie dogs, antelope and sage brush."

After graduating from the University of Wyoming in the mid 80's, Rod, while in his first real accounting job in Gillette, WY (75 miles from Newcastle), met Karen Stark at a fitness center. Karen was also in her first real job as a Special Education teacher in the Gillette Public School System. The rest was destiny.

Soon after Rod and Karen tied the knot, Rod, under no pressure from Karen, had a yearning to see the Land of 10,000 Lakes. Lo and behold, as an added incentive, his father-in-law offered him a job. Once the initial curiosity over Rod at Dalco Minneapolis subsided, he pretty much faded into the woodwork. The next two years, while assisting T3, the sales force hardly noticed he was even around. Then one day, things suddenly turned upside down in the management ranks when our Equipment Repair Manager resigned, leaving behind a less than harmonious staff.

What Big Ted did next though, far exceeded the current repair department unrest. Three days after the fact, T2 announced that Rod Dummer would be the new Repair Manager. The Minneapolis sales force was rendered speechless. The consensus among the sales troops was that T2 (son-in-law or no son-in-law) had lost his marbles – putting an obvious rookie, with an accounting degree, into the crucial Repair Manager position. Nonetheless, no one knew it at the time, but the "real" Rod Dummer had actually been incognito during his first two years at Dalco.

Within the next two months, the Twin Cities sales force was questioning its collective IQ. From day one, Rod Dummer became a mechanic! Well...not quite. However, it was commonplace to enter the Repair Dept. and find Rod dressed like a grease monkey, flat on his backside, observing or assisting one of Dalco's bench mechanics beneath a disabled auto-scrubber, sweeper, or various other cleaning machines. In due time, Rod would acquire a working knowledge of every piece of commercial cleaning equipment that Dalco distributed. Although he inherited a disenchanted Repair Staff, he soon pulled everyone out of the doldrums. Rod demonstrated a special knack in relating to his Repair colleagues in a positive and constructive manner.

In the meantime, during Rod's first real test under fire, Big Ted and the rest of management were taking serious notice. Subsequently, once Repair was running like clockwork again, it was decided the Twin Cities sales force could use more managerial support. Once again, Rod was given the ball, and without a misstep, he showed the RIGHT STUFF.

As in Repair, for the next several months he worked extensively in the field with as many Sales Reps that needed or wanted assistance. Rod did it all – making end-user calls day or night, scrubbing floors, extracting carpet, and becoming totally versed with the many chemical lines and their specific applications. As in Repair, everyone was duly impressed by Rod's tireless work ethic, level-headedness, positive enthusiasm and skillful communication style.

In 1992, Rod Dummer was named Vice-President of Sales for Dalco's four branches; the once skeptical Twin Cities sales force unanimously supported the decision. Based on Dalco's unprecedented growth the past eighteen years under Rod Dummer's leadership, along with Sales Manager Mark Miller, the company wide sales force has never been in better managerial hands in its fifty year history.

Family-wise, Rod and Karen have two daughters: Kylie and Sara. Karen Stark Dummer has been with the Edina Public School System for 26 years where she's continued her inspiring life's work in Special Education. Rod's hobbies and special interests include just about anything outdoors including coaching his daughter Sara's athletic teams, hunting with his daughters and their dogs, motorcycle riding, hitting the ski slopes in the winter and running. Rod has run seven marathons over the years.

### *Peter Stark*

Peter Stark is Big Ted's youngest son. Contrary to his older brother, T3, Peter's trek up Dalco's business ladder has taken a few more twists and turns. Upon graduating from Edina High School in 1984, Peter went to Arizona State University for four years, earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Purchasing Management in 1988.

After college, wanting to get his feet wet first on his own, Pete secured a job as an Inventory Quality Control Manager with the Burlington Northern Railroad in St. Paul, MN. However by early fall, within the same job parameters and the added incentive of no winter blahs, Peter accepted a transfer with the Railroad to Columbus, Mississippi. In spite of some preconceived hesitation of living in the Deep South, Peter found Columbus, MS, with a population of approximately 30,000, to be an especially positive experience in both his job and the close friendships he developed.

During his free-time in Columbus, like his father, Peter's great affection for golf provided the catalyst to his social life. After two plus years, as much as Peter liked his job and the Columbus area, he decided it was time to head home and join the family business. Peter returned to the Twin Cities in the spring of 1990, right around when the Minnesota golf season was teeing up.

With Peter's Purchasing Degree and his Burlington job experiences, his first position at Dalco was, of course, in Purchasing. Yet over the past nineteen years, besides a 2-year reprieve in 2005 to attend Hennepin Technical College in Anoka where he earned an Associates Degree in IT, Peter has contributed to Dalco in several different ways. Two shining examples are as follows:

In 1993, the janitorial supply field in the U.S. (as well as abroad ) started seeing a changing marketing philosophy by the manufacturers of sanitary paper products and disposable can liners--primarily favorable to larger supply distributors like Dalco. After almost thirty-five years of selling only limited cases of "low margin" sanitary paper products and can liners, Dalco, presently, with better profit margins at hand, based on volume buying, started realizing steady sales increases with these specific commodities.

But it wasn't until 1995, that Dalco suddenly found itself at the doorstep of a "circumstantial golden opportunity" when it was approached by Network Services, a national organization of member distributors, similar in nature to Dalco's long-time affiliate, Triple S. Except for one major distinction. Network Services had strong business relationships with leading Dalco suppliers which Triple S did not. With those brand name supplier relationships comes greater purchasing power and better pricing incentives. Additionally, Network Services had extensive National Account Programs (like hospitals for example) where Network pricing was the same around the country and Network distributor members like Dalco would service connected health care facilities in their given market areas. Dalco's Upper Midwest territorial reach had many current and potential customers that fit the required parameters of a Network Services national account format.

In 1995, Dalco was one of the largest Triple S distributors in the country. Nevertheless, it was a hard, emotional decision for Big Ted to give up Triple S, an organization he had given so much towards in helping to shape and grow. But T2 knew, along with the rest of Dalco's top management, Network Services offered much more opportunity for growth. So, in 1996, Dalco cut ties with Triple S and became a distributor member with Network Services. When Big Ted attended his first National Network Member Meeting, he was convinced Dalco had made the right move. "For Dalco," he said "leaving Triple S for Network Services was like going from the minor leagues to the majors."

Upon becoming a member of Network Services, Dalco started to get involved with vendor deviated cost contracts. This was a new marketing technique that was evolving in the jan-san industry, where manufacturers would provide lower than into-stock pricing (a deviated cost) to distributors for specific customers or customer segments. Peter Stark learned this process thoroughly and became Dalco's contract/rebate expert, supported by his most able assistant, Laura Manley. Both had to learn and stay abreast of the complicated financial complexities of stocking turn-overs and contract and rebate management of sanitary paper products and can liners.

A second example of Peter Stark's management contributions at Dalco took place in 2007 when Peter lead a major process implementation program modeled after ISO 9000 (International Standards Organization), designed to evaluate, document, and improve step by step, each critical job process at Dalco. ISO 9000 focuses on eight discernible points applicable to organizational improvement: 1) Customer Focus 2) Leadership 3) Involvement of People 4) Process Approach 5) System Approach to Management 6) Continual Improvement 7) Factual Approach to Decision-Making and, 8) Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships. Presently, Peter is Dalco's Director of Operations whose principal objective is to better manage and reduce costs wherever possible per Dalco's overall support systems behind the company's ongoing service and sales efforts.

## *Other Family Ties*

### *New Brighton:*

Besides the Stark family connections at Dalco, over the years there have been other family ties within the company. Leading the biological hit parade has been Larry Tranberg, Dalco's V.P. of Operations and his three sons: Derek (Customer Service Rep for almost fifteen years), Cary and Woody (Warehouse and Matting employees for several years). Bridget Quinehan Tranberg (Customer Service Rep married to Cary); Lonna McKenzie (outstanding Customer Service Manager) married to Jason McKenzie (Matting Installer). Former employee Mimi Anderson's daughter Laura Manly (Rebate National Contracts Manager), Laura's sister-in-law, Kathy Manley (Inventory Control); Former company President Audrey Pardello Petersen and Jim Pardello's oldest daughter, Susan Pardello El-Hakeem (Human Resource Manager)

### *Rochester:*

Gary Schoenfelder and his son, Chad Schoenfelder, both Dalco Sales Reps, were also related to the late Frank Simmons. Branch Coordinator Lisa Nelson's brother Dave Hanson Jr. (Repair Technician) assisted by part-timer Dave Hanson Sr. (Repair Tech and Warehouse worker).

## *Distinctive Leaders in Sales*

### **The Million Dollar Plus Sales Club**

In 2004, Dalco's management initiated the Million Dollar Plus Sales Club. Since its inception, the collective membership has grown each year. Relative to 2008, twenty Dalco Sales Representatives were honored for their respective, outstanding sales numbers at Dalco's annual awards dinner in Roseville, MN. Dalco's high rollers included reps from the following branches:

New Brighton- Chuck Panzer, Scott Callahan, Jeff Marschinke, Jack Loughery, Jeff Madsen, Don Stelli, Bob Diercks, Greg Hamstad, Augie Agustsson, Ken Jacobs, Steve Butler, Steve Breitenfeldt, Paul Mohs

Rochester- Gary Schoenfelder, Jim Sinn, Kurt West

La Crosse- Mark Neuville, Carl Happel, Deone Johnson  
(Historical Fact: Jerry Graf with La Crosse, now retired, was the first Dalco Sales Rep to achieve a million dollar sales year in the late 1990's)

Duluth- Lee Johnson

### **Dalco Sales Personnel who were former Vendor Reps**

Over the decades, Dalco has had a modest number of former vendor reps join the Dalco Sales Force. One specific colleague, in terms of what he originally did for Dalco, was Don Hagen back in the 1960's, when Dalco retained the exclusive distributor rights to the Johnson Wax line in the Twin Cities market area. As a Johnson Wax vendor rep at the time, Don Hagen, who hailed from a Minneapolis suburb, crossed over to Dalco, providing invaluable assistance to his Dalco sales cohorts by knowing the Johnson Wax line inside and out. Don Hagen retired from Dalco Minneapolis in the late 90's, after having served the sales force for thirty plus years.

Other former vendor reps that became members of the Dalco Sales Force included Terry Romundstad, 3M; Jim Rennie, Johnson Wax; Jeff Madsen, Flo-Pac; Augie Agustsson, Advance Floor Machine; Bill Lord, Advance Floor Machine; Don Cunningham, Econ-Lab; Jim Sinn, Multi-Clean Products; Paul Wright, Advance Floor Machine; Jeff Wright, Advance Floor Machine; John Mulder, K.E.W.



Pressure Washers; Mark Miller, Rubbermaid and Windsor Equipment, and Butcher Chemical.

## *Dalco Today*

It is unknown how many Dalco employees have come and gone over the past fifty years. As mentioned earlier in this memoir, the computer database regarding such information doesn't go back that far. Whatever the actual number is, by and large it represents a whole lot of hardworking, competent individuals that, in their own special ways, helped Dalco over the years to become the leading janitorial cleaning supply distributor in the Upper Midwest.

Multi-generational family owned businesses have long been a part of the American dream, and many have been very successful. However, successful generational family businesses are no simple feat. According to the Small Business Administration, 90% of U.S. businesses today are family owned, but only 30% of such companies succeed in the second generation, and just 15% make it to the third. The principal reason is that most business owners fail to plan seriously for their own succession. Ongoing transitions need to be carefully planned and executed to be successful.

The Stark family, starting with Big Ted and followed by his two sons and son-in-law, has done a remarkable job in overcoming the generational hurdles and all they entail. Dalco, since T2 bought the company in 1969 has never let much "grass grow" under its feet. Through thick and thin, Dalco has always continued to move forward, generally making prudent decisions along the way. Big Ted, Dalco's owner for close to forty years, has not been directly involved in the day to day operations of the company for the past several years. However, during the warm weather months in Minnesota, he still maintains an office at our corporate facilities in New Brighton. But don't kid yourself - when it comes to the business, Ted still knows "who's who in the zoo" and still routinely shoots his age on the golf course. "Rounds of 47" are hard to believe, but who would ever question Big Ted.

Where Dalco will be in another fifty years is anyone's guess. But considering what the company has achieved in its first fifty years with their uncanny ability to attract highly qualified and productive employees, one wouldn't bet against the Big D still being the janitorial supply leader in the Upper Midwest, or beyond, in the year 2059. That's assuming, of course, the Stark family is still behind the wheel and the third and fourth generations have as much imagination and grit as the first and second family generations have demonstrated in Dalco's first 50 years in business.

*A Note from the Editor: Kathy Olson*

When I was first asked by the author to edit this work, I was quite honored. Don Kennedy, a former Dalco employee himself, has written numerous newsletters and articles surrounding Dalco and its staff for many, many years. Through interviews and research paired with persistence and determination, Don has always produced literary works deserving of praise. One may add this work to the top of the list of his notable writing accomplishments.

Direct to you, Don, as Bob Hope's signature tune says it all for the readers of this memoir,

**“Thanks for the Memories.”**

It is now time to lay the pencil down and remove the hands from the keyboard. No more edits - the memoir is perfect – *the reason lies below*.

There will always be imperfections in every action, every work, and every one. It is our imperfections which make our actions, works and selves perfect – perfectly human.

Written by Don Kennedy, 2009-2010  
Editing, Design & Layout, Compilation by Kathy Olson, Marissa Stark, and Ted Stark III



