



Service Specialists Association

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SPRING
2022

President's Letter

Dear SSA Family,

Spring is just around the corner and I cannot say I am unhappy about it! The snow in NYS will soon begin to disappear and be slowly replaced with April rain showers and May muddy boots. I hope you have all had a pleasant winter, staying healthy and prospering with your businesses!

This past season may also have been tough for many of us. There is little doubt that we were all faced with more Covid challenges such as sick or at-home employees, state mandates, a lack of help, etc. For us at Allied Spring, recruitment has continued to be a challenge. We have been understaffed with technicians at our primary location and it is not only hard on us financially, it is hard for those working extra hours in the shop. The pressure is always on. Our hope is that the Spring will prove to be a period of renewal and improvements in all areas.

The SSA Board of Directors is continuing to work hard for you! There are currently several ongoing projects keeping us busy! Those include future Web-site updates, new marketing materials, member recruitment, technical training programs and so much more. We are also excited to be planning for our 2022 convention in Coral Gables, Florida! It certainly gives us all something nice to look forward to!



Jodie Cresswell
President

Lastly, I would like to take a moment and ask you all to stop what you are doing and pray or give a moment of silence to the people of the European nations who are suffering by war. I pray for an end to this tragic ongoing conflict and pray it does not spread beyond.

"If you don't know the guy on the other side of the world, love him anyway because he's just like you. He has the same dreams, the same hopes, and fears. It's one world, pal. We're all neighbors."

- Frank Sinatra.

Most sincerely,
Jodie Cresswell

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

2022
SSA CONVENTION

CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
October 11th - 13th

Block Rates Available: Oct.10th to Oct 15th

SHOP PROFILE

Tell us about your repair shop!

What is the name of your Shop?

Tampa Spring Company

Who are the owners and can you tell us a little bit about them?

John Messina, Jr. & Barbara A. Messina

John was born in Tampa FL, and has worked at Tampa Spring Company for 49 years.

Starting work part time at TSC in 1973, while pursuing a degree from the University of South Florida in Microbiology (the idea was to become a Dentist). I decided that I really liked the spring and suspension business because of its uniqueness, better than working on people's teeth, so when my position became full time job, I took it and never looked back.

My wife Barbara was born in Kankakee, IL and moved to Tampa in the early sixties. Barbara attended school in Tampa and was employed by several Companies in Tampa and the State of Florida as office manager. After the birth of our Son John III, Barbara took time off to raise him and when he started attending pre-school she joined me in running the business as Office Manager. In 1984 we started purchasing shares in the company and by 2001 we completed the purchase of all the outstanding shares in the Company.

Where is your shop located?

Tampa Spring Company is located at 8820 N Brooks Street, Tampa, FL 33604

Do you have more than one location? Yes we have 3 branches which are located in Ocala, Lakeland and Bradenton Florida.

How many employees do you have? 67

How many mechanics? 50

How many sales staff? 13 inside and outside sales staff.

How long has your shop been in business?

The Company has been in business since 1927.

Do you have a unique history? The business was started by John Eckard and his brother in 1927 as Tampa Spring & Wheel Company, in the early years Tampa Spring was the preferred vendor to Moonshiners building up the springs on their cars so that the Police could not tell that they were loaded with Moonshine. During the depression the company prospered by rebuilding truck springs using scrap material as new material was too expensive and people could not afford it.

In the early 50's Mr. Eckard and his brother purchase land in Louisiana, that had Oil and Gas reserves on it, at this point Mr. Eckard and his brother retired and left the business to be run by a Nephew. By 1967 Mr. Eckard and his brother decided that they did not want to continue supplementing the business because the crew of Tampa Spring Company would spend most of the day at Bakers Pool Hall instead of working. It was at this point upon learning that Tampa Spring was going to close and needing it to continue to fix the springs on their Company Trucks (Azzarelli Construction) that Bart Azzarelli and his brother Pete and a family friend Edmund R. Regnier purchased the company from the Eckards. In 1969 Tampa Spring Company moved from Downtown Tampa to our Brooks Street Location, which has been expanded to its 24,000 sq foot facility. In 1989 we opened a branch location in Ocala Florida and in 2007 we opened a new Location in Lakeland



Florida. In 2009 we opened a branch in Sarasota FL which we outgrew and moved to Bradenton FL. During the years we became more than a Spring Shop, by transitioning to a provider of services from the frame down.

What services do you provide (what repair services, outside sales, specialty services, etc.)?

We specialize in repairing on and off road vehicles from the frame down.

Tampa Spring Company provides full spring and suspension repairs and parts sales. We use state of the art Beeline Computerized equipment, for our alignment business as well as Frame Straightening and repairs, utilizing the Beeline Computerized frame gauging system. Utilizing Axle Surgeon equipment and training we replace spindles on Trucks and Trailers and sleeve axle eyes and knuckle eyes. We also work on wheel end systems i.e. Brake repairs. We also repair & balance driveline, systems. Along with these services we replace clutches, transmissions and third member components. Another specialty is the replacement of Mack Trunnion Bars and Stands.

What makes you the most proud when you think of your business? I am the most proud of the fact Tampa Spring Company has been able to provide a good living for our employees and their families for all these years, and we have grown from one shop to multiple locations.

Have you had any obstacles that you have been able to overcome regarding your business?

Like everyone else in business, overcoming economic downturns during recessions and the pandemic with all the supply chain disruptions and inflation.

What is your vision for the future?

As time goes on, I foresee companies joining forces through organizations like SSA to be able to compete with the OEM network of repair facilities and all the new innovations that are coming down the road.

What would be your best advice for a newer shop owner?

Work hard, embrace new technology and don't be scared of the future for our industry, because at the end of the day **TRUCKS ARE WHAT MOVES AMERICA!**



SSA members John Messina and David Washbish were recently interviewed by TPS. Here is an excerpt from that article. To read the full article, visit www.truckpartsandservice.com.

When parts shortages affect repairs

Bill Grabarek (TPS Online Editor)

The parts shortage affecting aftermarket service providers has been well documented. Not only is the shortage impacting the sale of parts, but it's also hindering the services they can perform. Service providers have had to get creative to get the parts they need. John Messina Jr., president, Tampa Spring, has several examples of how the ongoing supply chain crisis has hampered Tampa Spring's ability to service customers' trucks in a manner the business and its customers are accustomed.

"A good example is a problem we had completing a garbage truck repair for a municipality. The truck came in needing two front springs for a Peterbilt. It just so happened that we had a run on the front springs and because they were not available from our normal supplier, they had to be purchased from a backup source. But the bottom line is it took a week to get the parts and the truck could not be completed as promised," Messina says.

He adds the bearing shortage has held up repairs to trucks and trailers requiring spindles. In addition, "shocks are critical for the correct operation of air ride suspensions and the lack of product has caused some customers to forgo their replacement, causing failure of other parts on the suspension, such as bushings," he says.

David Washbish, president, LASCO Heavy Duty, has similar service issues.

The parts shortage has "gotten better but oil filters are still a major issue so that hurts our PM service," he says. Other difficult to find parts include turbos, water pumps, engine kits and electrical modules.

Recently "a customer needed a turbo. It was original equipment and there were only two of them in the United States and we got one. It's a popular, high-dollar turbo," Washbish says. OE manufacturers are having a difficult time keeping up with demand because of their own supply chain issues, he adds.

Duty Additionally, suspension jobs are being made more difficult because of a lack of U-bolt rods. "U-bolt rods are tough because there aren't as many rod manufacturers because the product is too light so there's no money in it," he says.

Messina agrees U-bolt rods and U-bolts have been extremely hard to get.

"It's also been a challenge to stay on top of brake drums, brake shoes, leaf springs,

shocks and, to a certain extent, some driveline parts have been hard to get," he says.

"When this all started, we were having trouble getting frame rail because the manufacturer we use couldn't get steel. It's been one thing after another, but we've survived."

Tampa Spring has four locations, Tampa, Ocala, Lakeland and Bradenton, Fla., and compounding the company's parts problems is "in Florida, we don't run through vehicles like they do up north where they rot because of the salt [on winter roads]. So, we have older vehicles here. Traditionally, my company has stocked a lot of parts that people would consider obsolete. But they're not obsolete because we use them," Messina says.

Parts and service providers have had to hunt down parts wherever they can find them.

"We'll shop around so we're not tying up a customer. We'll go to our competitors; we'll go to the dealers; we'll go wherever the hell we have to go get the part," Washbish says.

An example goes back to LASCO Heavy Duty's aforementioned issues with stocking oil filters. "My brother is in the automotive business, and he has a warehouse here in town and he's a WIX distributor, so if we can't get them from [our distributor], we shop through him," he says.

Wherever LASCO gets its parts, Washbish says his customers understand the prices likely will be a little higher, but all they want is their truck and that price isn't an issue. "It's just, 'I need my truck and I need it repaired.' They need it on time, and they need it done correctly."

Washbish says on the scale of 1 to 10, with 10 least important, having the truck ready on time is No. 1 for his customers. Quality of service is No. 2; quality of parts is No. 3; and price is 10th.

Messina says to get parts, Tampa Spring is casting far and wide to get parts from all different sources.

"I've been in the industry for 49 years. I have a lot of friends out there and I've dealt with a lot of different companies. Some companies we dealt with for supplies we haven't used as much but we've started using now. I also belong to organizations like the Service Specialists Association so I have friends there I can call. I am with Power Heavy Duty, so I can always call them, and they'll search around for people who might have the parts," he says.

Messina adds he's maintained good relationships with his suppliers. "When this all started, I have been in contact with Dayton Parts and the other manufacturers and suppliers we use, such as Automann, Triangle and APM and they've been [informing me] if they have the product and when they expect to get the product."



Universal Group announces helpful video series for its eCommerce site

Universal Group has recently released a series of helpful videos that step through their new eCommerce website. The seven videos in the series explain and demonstrate the many useful features and tools that The Universal Group has built into their new website to make customers' visits to the website more efficient and productive.

One video released includes a demonstration of The Universal Group's schematic parts search feature, which lets a user view a schematic diagram of all of the parts in a suspension assembly. Programmed for interactivity, as a user rolls their mouse over the visual representation of the parts in the schematic diagram, details about the part are revealed in real time with pricing and part numbers and the user can simply add the parts to their shopping cart. Said customer Jeannie Lay, Vice President at Allied Spring and Suspension in New York, "I think my favorite part is being able to order from the schematics page itself. It is great to be able to identify the part that you need on the actual schematic and not have to get out of that page to order the items. It definitely saves a lot of time!" A customer using the schematic search to find a certain replacement part to do a repair job will also see all the other attaching components in the suspension assembly, and these may easily be ordered as well.

Another helpful feature that is documented via video demonstration is the Quick Order Pad. This little but powerful tool allows customers to enter a part number or a partial number, or even a competitor's part number or part description, and submit items and quantities quickly and efficiently cutting down ordering times significantly. The Quick Order Pad is something that is unique for this market, and one of The Universal Group's innovations for their eCommerce site that they feel will be most helpful for their customers.

Annik Smith, President of The Universal Group said, "with this group of videos, we're hoping to help our customers get on with their day and get the parts they need fast. If we can help them succeed, we'll be successful too."

Another customer, Billy Burkholder, owner of Ace Spring Service in San Antonio, Texas says "They have thought of everything! Even a 62 year old baby boomer like myself found the site extremely user friendly and easy to navigate! It is chock full of features that I found easy to use and extremely helpful whether building an order or just researching for new items to stock."

These new videos can be seen at The Universal Group website and on YouTube at:

<https://www.theuniversalgroup.com/need-help>

Marketing overview video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57YemNg-Elo>

The SSA and iTRG have been working to put together a combination package for the two organizations. Here are two of the iTRG offerings...

Advanced Electrical 3-Day Class instructed by Keith Littleton provided through iTRG Class Description (Train the Trainer)

This three-day class covers advanced diagnostic techniques of computer controlled systems and is intended for experienced technicians. This high level class will provide the technician with the skills to identify between mechanical and electrical failures and isolate circuit faults. The class will cover waveform analysis and system diagnostics using an oscilloscope, DVOM and a scan tool for retrieving and interpreting data to look at all aspects of the circuit.

Tools and Equipment: Classroom, Digital Projector, Tool cart/Shop Table, Vehicles/Equipment, Basic Hand-tools, Digital Multimeters, Service Information and PPE

Expected Outcomes: Upon completion of the class, the technician should be able to: Read and Interpret electrical wiring diagrams for troubleshooting Identify between electrical and mechanical faults using an oscilloscope Interpret Scan tool/Oscilloscope Data to determine necessary action Demonstrate advanced diagnostic techniques using sensor simulation Use various test equipment to gather raw data to determine root cause Diagnose and repair all signals and component concerns using an oscilloscope Diagnose and repair communication(J1939)/computer-controlled circuitry using an Scan Tool/oscilloscope data.

Visit iTRG at indtrg.com for more information.

iTRG has partnered with an insurance company to create a national insurance program for iTRG members.

At iTRG, we are able to leverage our national clout and negotiate aggressively with carriers to get the very best rates available for our members.

Insurance premiums are one of your biggest recurring expenses, let us show you how to save money on your policies and add that savings directly to your bottom line.

- **Workers' Comp & Claims**

Aggressive investigation and claims handling, and 24/7 access to medical professionals, we do everything necessary to keep costs down.

- **All Inclusive Health Plan**

Designed with both Employers and Employees in mind.

- **Benefit Offerings**

Compete in tough hiring pools with customized benefits offerings.

- **Payroll Services**

Fast, easy and accurate way to execute your payroll on time, every time.

- **Hiring and Onboarding**

Find qualified candidates, assess skills, and streamline communication so you can quickly and efficiently hire and onboard the right talent.

- **Safety & Loss Control**

Committed to helping clients analyze existing safety practices and implementing changes to reduce injury and risk.