

TODD MILLER

Taking the 'Long Way Home'

Todd Miller grew up in the small town of Twelve Mile in Cass County. Ironically, it's about 12 miles from Logansport, where Miller resides and runs his family's business, Myers Spring Company.

Miller's journey, however, is anything but a short drive. In fact, at one point, he wasn't even sure he wanted to be involved with the company that his grandfather started in a garage in 1946.

When Miller attended Purdue University to pursue a degree in engineering, he followed his musical passion and joined the school's glee club. Traveling throughout the state and country with the group opened Miller's eyes to the possibility of meeting new people and experiencing new cultures. As manager of the glee club, he met fascinating people and at one event dined with astronauts Gene Cernan and Neil Armstrong.

Those were pivotal moments for Miller.

His grandfather passed away in 1985, and Miller's father took over the company. Miller's intention was to join the business after he finished school.

"I was cruising along like I've got a cushy seat for me at the family business," he recalls. "I don't know exactly when it was, but sometime in my sophomore year, I woke up and thought, 'Man, what if I hate Myers Spring Company?'"

The desire to travel and live abroad was strong, and reinforced his doubts about staying in Indiana.

"(Traveling with the glee club) helped open up my mind. ... I wanted to live overseas," he notes.

Birth, death and life

After graduating from Purdue, Miller joined Honda of America Manufacturing in Ohio for two years, before moving to Japan as part of the new North American Task Group. Miller worked for Honda for six years, before eventually returning home in the mid-1990s.

More pivotal life moments led to the family's return to Indiana: just one week after the birth of his daughter, Miller's college roommate was involved in a plane crash and passed away. The family company was struggling, and it felt like the time to come home.

"What was happening at the family business, and my daughter, and life looking you square in the eyes; we thought, if we were going to give the family business thing a shot, we probably ought to do it now. We moved back to Indiana," he recalls.

"Once our daughter was born, we decided we needed a parent at home and (my wife) was going to be that person. There was a massive financial change, a massive personal change in coming back to Indiana that it represented. But that set us up at Myers Spring Company."

Miller took the helm in 2000. Fast forward to today: Myers Spring has flourished. And despite a dip in the agricultural economy (about half the company's business is in that industry), Miller asserts that the business – which employs about 47 people – is adding customers and capabilities, and focusing on continual improvement.

"I'm optimistic about the future. I have a great management team; we're adding some overhead during this slow period," he adds.

Miller highlights his employees as the reason the company has been fruitful.

"Every successful company is really, truly a reflection of how much people care about other people," he says. "But you have to get the right person. A reliable person that shows up to work every day, that cares about you and your product, that suffers when you suffer and is happy when you're happy, and is there. It's the human component."

Obligation and satisfaction

Living in a small town, Miller had the opportunity to watch up close as others fulfilled their civic duties. Patrons were involved in



Todd Miller devotes time and insights to planning the annual Indiana Conference on Energy Management, where he also serves as a moderator.



Miller returned to Logansport from Japan in the late 1990s – where he worked for Honda – and in 2000 took over the spring company founded by his grandfather.

For the home turf

Before joining the Chamber’s board of directors, Miller was a board member and former chairman of the Logansport Municipal Utility board, and that experience encouraged him to get involved with the Chamber’s energy and environmental committees.

Through his experience and knowledge in complicated utility and regulation matters, Miller has been essential in developing the Chamber’s annual Indiana Conference on Energy Management. He is a past chair of the planning committee, has brought speakers to the conference and emceed the event.

Jennifer George, Indiana Chamber director of conferences and conference center management, explains that Miller’s advice in the planning process is invaluable. Last year, George recalls, as chair of the planning committee, Miller stressed keeping a balance by encouraging healthy debate.

“This particular conference has been contentious in the past. Whether you support coal, wind, or another energy alternative, balancing the agenda can sometimes be a challenge,” she admits. “If people submitted a topic that was one-sided, he would ask that somebody else also speak at that session that held an opposing viewpoint. And every time it was the original submitter that would recommend that person. It really offers a fair and balanced conference.”

Miller’s civic involvements are vast. Another passion is politics – one more family link passed down through the generations. He is a previous Republican precinct committeeman and remains involved in a variety of ways. His other current focus is regional economic development, through his involvement with the Wabash Heartland Innovation Network.

Miller acknowledges that his family, in particular his wife Gretchen, is instrumental in his success. And does he think his grandfather, whose legacy he is now undertaking, would be proud of him?

“My dad said he would be proud, and that’s what meant the most to me. I’d like to think he’d be proud, but a third person’s opinion is important.”



local government, the Lions Club, churches and more, and always had a job for him when he needed one.

“Growing up in a little town in Twelve Mile, there were important men there that were great for keeping an ornery kid out of trouble,” he notes.

He was inspired, as well, by those community leaders to give back.

“The term ‘obligation’ has taken on a negative connotation, but we really do have obligations and I think people forget on the backside that fulfilling an obligation is a satisfaction,” Miller offers. “You have obligations when you have resources. It comes down to

the (Biblical) parable of the three servants (Matthew 25:14-30). We shouldn’t bury our talents. I have those days too. But we should be out risking and stewarding.”

For Miller, everything is a reflection on, or impacts, Logansport. He has kept that in mind since joining the Indiana Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors in 2010.

“My involvement in the Indiana Chamber is primarily motivated out of trying to help Logansport. The whole state is obviously important to me, and we can have an influence,” he states. “But I do think that each board member can have an influence (on their hometowns).”