

Geil Enterprises

Company rolls the dice, learns secrets of success

Tainese Arceneaux – STAFF WRITER

Steve Geil is a born entrepreneur, creating Geil Enterprises Inc. with his wife Eileen out of necessity.

“We had to pay the bills and feed the family, and it was something we thought we could do,” he said. “I think a lot of companies start like that with not a lot of research and founders who just believe they can do it and roll the dice and see what happens.”

That is what Steve and Eileen did when they pulled their savings together and started the business in 1986, working hard to procure contracts and steadily build their business.

With many successes as well as flops, Geil Enterprises is now the umbrella for five companies: CIS Security, Janitorial Inc., Valley Sanitary Supply, Valley Security Alarm and A-MAZ. The enterprise has about 500 employees.

The structured Eileen was in charge of finance. Steve, with his creative leanings, headed sales.

Both applied the same strong work ethic they learned from their parents. Eileen’s father worked as a hospital administrator. Steve said he took cues from his single mother, who worked multiple jobs.

The business grew by Steve and Eileen listening to their



Sam Geil (left) and his nephews Jason (middle) and Ryan Geil stand outside the enterprise founded by Steve and Eileen Geil.

customers.

“We started in janitorial supply and when customers saw that we did that well, they suggested other avenues of business,” Steve said.

Some ideas worked and some didn’t, he said.

“We had eight or nine startups along the way, so we’ve had some that didn’t work for the five that did,” Steve said. “We would expand and shrink and expand and shrink and we grew with the organization. We were risk takers in that we tried something new and, though it didn’t always work, we tried and put what we learned into the next idea.”

One of the many ideas Steve learned is the secret to keeping a company in good health, is knowing when to pass the reins.

About five years ago Steve, sensing the company needed more structure than he could give it, asked his younger brother Sam to become president of Geil Enterprises.

“The company had grown to a size that was beyond my strengths,” Steve said, now serving as president and chief executive officer of the Economic Development Corporation serving Fresno County.

Working as a vice president for Grundfos Pumps Corporation’s

local division for 17 years, Sam came from the corporate world.

“Sam brought stability, organization and accountability to the company,” Steve said. “And he’s Jason and Ryan’s uncle, so they tend to listen to him.”

Steve’s adult sons, Jason and Ryan Geil, work as the general sales manager for Geil Enterprises and the general manager for Janitorial Inc., respectively.

Steve said he hopes Jason and Ryan will blend both his and Sam’s business approach together as they eventually take over the company.

Jason said he and his brother have different strengths.

“Ryan is more detailed-oriented, with strengths in organization structure and holding people accountable,” he said. “My strength lies in sales and marketing, promoting the company.”

Jason started with the company working part-time as a janitor and worked his way up the ladder. He enjoyed the challenge so much his parents had to force him to finish his bachelor’s degree in archeology.

“I moved up the management ladder,” he said. “I was learning on the job and I am happy my dad gave that to me.”

The company is involved in community organizations such as Hinds Hospice, Tree Fresno and the Downtown Association.



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