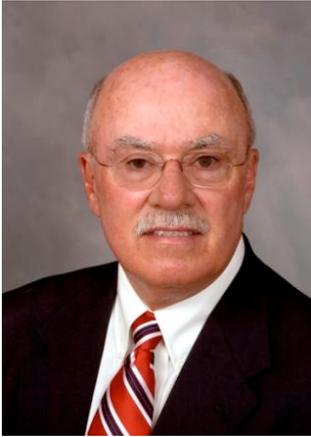


John Tippmann, Sr.



John Tippmann Sr. grew up with 15 siblings and a family business next door. It was that combination that taught him about people, business and what it takes to be successful.

“I grew up in Fort Wayne, working with my family in Tippmann Engineering, the family business next to our home,” says John Tippmann. “In addition to our focus on industrial refrigeration, we built ice skating rinks and manufactured, sold and installed ice making equipment.”

Tippmann’s father Lawrence was a refrigeration engineer and started the business in a shop next to their home. In addition to their main business projects, the family invented and developed an ice making machine. That invention was patented and later sold to a large Chicago company.

Owning a company and raising a large family kept everyone busy. Tippmann grew up working in the family business, cleaning and painting equipment when he was younger and later helping his older brothers install equipment.

“In high school I then worked for a year in the appliance repair department of a local business,” Tippmann says. “When I got my driver’s license I did appliance delivery and set up. But I returned to the family business, moving into refrigeration service work.”

After high school graduation, instead of going to college, Tippmann kept working at the family business. He says he always liked the refrigeration business.

“I understood how it worked, and while it was complicated to design the systems, I had the resources and books to make it possible,” Tippmann says.

As he got more experience in the business, Tippmann began running the company’s contracting efforts.

“In 1968, when our family decided the business should not compete with its own contractors who were selling our products, I decided to start my own contracting company,” Tippmann says. “That’s when my brother Vince and I opened Tippmann Refrigeration Construction and began doing refrigeration contracting.”

Through that first company, the Tippmann brothers were installing refrigeration systems in large facilities, such as food processing companies, ice cream manufacturers and poultry processing plants. Then, the business expanded into general contracting to build facilities for companies like Beatrice Foods and Sara Lee.

“By 1972, I realized that the frozen food industry was growing and there was a need for refrigerated warehousing. We opened Interstate Cold Storage,” Tippmann says. “I convinced the bank to give us a loan and built a 40,000-square-foot refrigerated warehouse in Fort Wayne.”

“When we started, Vince and I were doing the physical work, like erecting steel and pouring concrete,” Tippmann says. “As the company grew, we hired more employees and we were able to spend our time doing design work and project supervision, hiring contractors for the labor.”

The company grew as the industry did, increasing to 40 employees.

That first warehouse was expanded two years later, and in 1975, Tippmann built another in Ohio near the Campbell’s Soup Company. The company continued to build warehouses, and today, Interstate Warehousing owns 12 refrigerated warehouses. The facilities handle product inventory for large companies such as General Mills, Sara Lee and General Foods, and subsequent distribution to companies such as Kroger and Super Valu.

“The business grew so large that in 1984 we split the company into two,” Tippmann says, “Vince now owns the two Fort Wayne warehouses, and I continue to develop warehouses in other parts of the state and across the country.”

Over the years, Tippmann acknowledges that the two companies, Interstate Warehousing and Tippmann Construction, experienced significant changes as a result of tremendous growth.

“As I moved from contracting into warehousing, my company had to redefine its customer – where originally we were responsible to third-party customers, then we were our own customers when we began owning and operating warehouses,” Tippmann says.

Tippmann says the company also had to put its tremendous growth on hold in the 1990s. The warehousing business was simply growing too fast.

“I learned that it takes time to become operationally efficient,” Tippmann says. “The warehousing business was growing fast, but I was losing money. I had to take time to focus on sales, marketing and customer development.”

To operate efficiently, Tippmann also created the Partnership Program, an inventory management system that allows his warehouse customers to increase their efficiency.

“Our Partnership Program created successful growth for us, because we could offer our customers a way to monitor and manage inventory levels. That increased our customers’ cash flow by reducing inventory time,” Tippmann says.

Today, Tippmann owns Tippmann Group, which is composed of three companies: Interstate Warehousing, Tippmann Construction and Tippmann Properties. Interstate Warehousing owns more than 50 million cubic feet of refrigerated/frozen space and is the second largest privately owned company of its kind in the United States. The combined companies do \$160 million a year in business and employ 700 people around the country.

Through Tippmann Properties, I own and manage real estate, including 43 office and warehouse buildings,” Tippmann says. “Thirteen of them are in Fort Wayne, 20-some are in Indianapolis and the remainder are around the country. While some are office buildings like The Lincoln Tower in Fort Wayne, most are industrial spaces.”

Tippmann says that over the years, he has learned a great deal from others.

“While I couldn’t afford to go to college, I learned the aspects of business at an early age, and I learned the ups and downs of mechanics,” he says. “Our home atmosphere was one of day-to-day business, and because of that inspiration and my work in the family business, it was natural to become a business owner myself.”

Yes, there was competition among the siblings, Tippmann agrees with a laugh.

“We have always competed, but some of my best friends are in the business, too, so we find it easy to get along,” Tippmann says. “We work in capital-intense buildings as competitors, so we understand what’s involved and we’re similarly committed to the industry. As a result, we have so much in common that it is natural to be friends, too.”

With the dedicated support and positive influence of his wife, Jackie, this father of three boys and three girls has involved them in the family businesses. Over the years he taught them business skills that have enabled them to take leadership positions in Tippmann Group businesses and to start their own companies.

“My son John Jr. manages Tippmann Properties and is involved in some aspects of the warehousing business, while my son Pat is active in real estate, working mostly with retail properties,” Tippmann says. “My son-in-law Jeff Carteaux, married to my daughter Joanne, is an expert in inventory management and works with customers on inventory control.”

Tippmann’s son Chris and his son-in-law Brian Backstrom, married to daughter Jennifer, have gone into business for themselves. They own a construction business that often subcontracts to Tippmann Construction. Another son-in-law, Chris Pelkington married to his daughter Molly, owns a concrete business that also often subcontracts to Tippmann Construction.

Tippmann says he learned a great deal about food chain systems through his involvement with the World Food Logistics Organization. That involvement has also given him a great deal of satisfaction.

“I served on the board of World Food Logistics and traveled throughout the world helping less developed countries create food distribution and storage systems,” Tippmann says. “I have been in 59 countries, and I’ve seen how things go on in the rest of the world.”

In addition to his work with World Food Logistics, Tippmann was also active on the board of the International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses.

Working in the service business, Tippmann says, gave him the opportunity to get to know many other business owners.

“Over the years, by getting to know other business owners, I had many mentors,” Tippmann says. “Those connections helped me evaluate how successful people do business and why some didn’t make it.”

In his own businesses, Tippmann has found successful employees who are today able to run the companies with his oversight. Chuck Tippmann, a cousin, is President of Tippmann Group, and Jeff Hastings is its Chief Financial Officer. Steve Tippmann, a nephew, is Executive Vice President, overseeing sales and marketing, and Dale Budzon manages Tippmann Construction.

“With this strong team and the successful involvement of other family members, I got to the point where I didn’t need to be involved in the everyday aspects of the business,” Tippmann says. “That enabled me to become active in the Fort Wayne community.”

Those involvements have included service through Vincent House, a homeless shelter for those in need.

“Bishop D’Arcy approached me about the need for Vincent House, and I have been involved for more than 15 years, including 8 years as board president,” Tippmann says. “It has been rewarding to help Vincent House grow, including the addition of 33 transitional homes in the neighborhood today.”

Tippmann has also been active in the leadership of Matthew 25 Health & Dental Clinic, serving on its board. He says he truly enjoyed that service, “because of the commitment of the staff and physicians who are helping others in the community.”

When St. Joseph Hospital was sold, the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation was founded; Tippmann served on that board. One of the board’s efforts was selling the Foundation’s property around Dupont Hospital in northern Allen County.

“It is important to be involved in the community, and I have time to do it now,” Tippmann says. “I have children and grandchildren, as well as family members throughout the area, including 135 nieces and nephews and their more than 300 children. That means that whatever is done in Fort Wayne benefits that extended family.”

To support not-for-profit organizations in the community, Tippmann started the Mary Cross Tippmann Foundation, named in honor of his mother. The Foundation distributes annually to selected organizations in and around Fort Wayne.

“The Mary Cross Tippmann Foundation is a way to give back to the community through specific beneficiary organizations,” Tippmann says. “We’ve made money here and it’s more than I can spend, so we want to support others in the community.”