

SFI History

Originally written in October 2000

-by former SFI President

It occurred to me, some of you might be interested in our roots. We have come a long way and things have certainly changed from our beginning.

Jack and Frances James formed this company (then known as Texas Parcels Service) in 1966. The operations actually began in 1967 in a small, one-door, ground-level, metal building just off of Milby Street. We handled (as the name implies) only small parcels and only between Houston and Dallas. The startup building was soon out grown and we moved to another location just east of downtown on McKinney. We drove and operated very old, and in some cases, worn out, but safe equipment.

The realization that we would not be the next UPS began to sink in and Jack and Frances began to look for options to diversify. I was not privy to financial info at that time, but the company was going through a very difficult time and I am sure there were thoughts of closing the doors. We moved again in the early 70's to a building on Lathrop Street. A deal was made to begin handling the J.C. Penney account about the same time.

We stood at the rear of a Penney load with a felt marker, blank "Pennex" labels, a wet sponge and addressed and labeled every box as it was unloaded. Things have changed.

The next move was back east of downtown and we began doing distribution for Kmart, Woolco, W T Grant, and other retail stores. Some of you are probably asking, "Who is W T Grant?" A lot of you were not born yet and some of you are beginning to remember some of these events. The additional distribution for these stores forced us to move again to a larger facility near the intersection of Market and McCarty. We also added a power conveyor system at this time to handle the unloading of the rail cars and piggyback trailers. That is how we received 95% of our freight in those days.

The move to our current warehouse occurred at the end of 1979, and at about that same time we established an operation in San Antonio. That operation was initially to handle all the cargo we were shipping from Houston to San Antonio but has long since become capable of operating independently of the cargo we ship to San Antonio.

The 80's saw us begin to handle international cargo and begin to dray a lot of ocean containers. Distribution was not what it once was and we felt this was an opportunity for growth in a new area. Houston and San Antonio became C.F.S. (Container Freight Station) operations. San Antonio was designated as a C.E.S. (Customs Examination Station) and now is also the premier container yard in that city.

One of the results of the international cargo was expanding our trucking opportunities to areas we were not serving. You may not know, our basic service areas are Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, South Texas, New Orleans and point in between.

The opportunity to open in New Orleans presented itself in 1998 and we took advantage of it.

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The New Orleans operation is also an extension of what we do here, with some work they do completely independent of us. We now have tractors based in New Orleans and run trucks out of there and it is also a C.F.S. (Container Freight Station).

We have gone from a small metal building to three terminals/warehouses in three cities running about 80 tractors (including owner operators) and provide employment for approximately 150 individuals. Southwest Freight Inc is still considered a small company by most standards but we are very proud of what has been accomplished by everyone here. We believe we are the best at what we do in the areas we serve and have the best people to do it.

You have noticed, I'm sure, no individuals other than the founders have been mentioned and that is intentional. There are so many people that have made significant contributions to this company it would truly take a book to mention them and their accomplishments. Many of you have been with us for years and several of us have family members working here. Some of you are making your careers here and others have, and are, using SFI as a stepping stone to other opportunities. Either way is great. It is truly a pleasure to watch an individual learn and grow with us and become an SFI team member, and that is our goal for every person hired. We have gone from literally no benefits to 401K, paid holidays, paid vacations, contributions to your 401K, uniforms, paid health insurance for the employee, credit union, bonuses when possible and the opportunity for advancement for individuals willing to put forth the effort. There are many people who have worked here for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and even 30+ years. I think that says, "This is a good place to work."...

...This has been a very brief overview of our history and growth and is by no means complete. I could use the entire newsletter telling you tales of our growth. There have been a lot of ups and downs over the years. Many of you have been with us through the bad and the good times. Overall, the last few years have been good and look for that trend to continue into the future. We sincerely appreciate everything you have done to help SFI and yourselves succeed. Let's keep up the hard work and find out what this millennium has to offer!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!