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NEWS >>

INDIANA AUTOMOTIVE TECHNICIAN CELEBRATES 40 YEARS WITH TEAMSTERS

Veteran Local 142 Member Takes Pride in Unionism, Training Workers

If you talk to Robert Spurr's co-workers at Truck City in Gary, Indiana, they refer to him many ways: a man's man, an expert, a workhorse. But through 40 years of service at this family-owned dealership, there's something else you could call Robert day-in and day-out — a Teamster.

On Tuesday, August 9, Robert marked four decades as a member of Teamsters Local 142, first joining the crew at Truck City as a diesel mechanic and automotive technician at just 20 years old. At that time, the Elite Support Certified, Freightliner and Western Star truck dealership was known as Gary White Sales, founded 70 years ago in Gary this year. Robert remembers it as just a fun place to work.

"I liked cars, I liked trucks, so getting to work on them every day, I thought it was cool," he said, standing in one of the bays of Truck City's massive complex, rebuilt seven years ago. "I never thought I'd make it this far, but I'm sure glad I have."

Robert's fellow mechanics and Teamsters came together to celebrate his career of service, including Local 142 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Knipp and Recording Secretary Harvey Jackson. Truck City owner Gerri Davis Parker and her father Art Davis were on-hand as well to award Robert with commemorative plaques, pins and coins from the company and the union.

"Robert really is a man's man who shows up, does what he says, works hard and gets the job done every time," Art Davis said, who previously managed the dealership for decades. "I twisted wrenches alongside Robert for years and, I'll tell you, if you had a whole team of men just like him, you'd really have a winning company."

In celebrating 40 years in the trucking industry as a Local 142 member, Robert looks back on a life of pride, positive experiences and tradition. His father before him was a union man too, and Robert sees strength in the young men following in his footsteps standing together in the shop.

"You could say being in the union was a bit of a tradition since my father had 40 years as well with U.S. Steel. We all have our ups and downs in life, so being in the union has meant stability for me and my family," he said. "If I've helped show the young guys the way, if I've been a mentor to them — which isn't something I necessarily had at work 40 years ago — then I know I've done some good along the way."

Robert hasn't set a date yet for his retirement. But after a lifetime of such committed service and accomplishment, neither the Teamsters nor Truck City could complain about having him around a bit longer.

"Robert Spurr is the definition of a Teamster — someone who works hard, who sacrifices, who stands tall with his co-workers and earns an honest day's buck," said Knipp. "Local 142 and the entire Teamsters Union are proud to have called Robert a brother for so many years, and we're so grateful for his membership. He's the real deal."