

Growing to be one of Canada's most respected carriers, the **SIEMENS** family has stayed true to the values that brought them success and maintained their prairie roots along the way.

BY STEVE MACLEOD

# ROLL ON SASKATCHEWAN

**E**rwen Siemens gets up every morning and heads to work, just like many people across the country. Unlike most, though, Siemens is 69. And he's still as involved with his business as he was when he launched it almost half a century ago.

It was 1962. John Diefenbaker was prime minister, and the Toronto Maple Leafs were Stanley Cup champions. The Blue Bombers won the Grey Cup.

Through 10 different prime ministers, 16 different teams hoisting the Stanley Cup and 10 franchises winning the football title, Erwen Siemens has grown his operation considerably since founding Kindersley Transport.

"He comes to work everyday; he doesn't have to, but he does," said his son Doug Siemens, vice-president of Siemens Transportation Group. "He still likes it, enjoys it, and he has lots of interest in it. It's his life and he's been very successful."

Erwen's introduction to trucking began before he was born. His father operated Siemens Transport and Erwen worked in the family business as a teenager alongside his brothers hauling bulk commodities around Saskatoon.

In 1962, Siemens decided to strike out on his own, buying a truck and doing a run between Saskatoon and the town he would name his company after, Kindersley. And it wasn't long until he started purchasing operating authorities and other small companies.

"Back then," notes Doug, "you could buy operating authorities and he purchased some that expanded us in Saskatchewan and gave us entrance into Manitoba. He also purchased MacKays Transport, which gave us entry into Alberta."

The expansion continued through the '80s and as the industry was deregulated in the last half of that decade, Kindersley established a full North American service network.

Meanwhile, another growing trucking company, the Mullen Group, eyed and purchased the original Siemens Transport, in 1997. After merging that company with its own interests, Mullen dropped the Siemens name, and then at the turn of the century, the family picked it up again. The parent

company is now listed as number 14 on the 2008 *Today's Trucking's* list of Top 100 carriers.

Along with Siemens Sr. and Doug, three other sons—Darrell, Terry and Tom—play prominent roles in the company.

"A family business lends itself to make a business more successful because we're all proud of the company and you have that sense of ownership with family members involved



**PRAIRIE PRIDE:** Erwen named his first company for the town in which it was based.

in it," says Doug. "That's not to say non-family businesses don't have that, I think it's just a little easier with family members involved."

The family pride and sense of ownership also helped keep the Siemens family on the buying side of the mergers-and-acquisition game.

In the past few years a number of large Canadian carriers have expended a lot of effort buying smaller fleets. The team at Siemens has never entertained the idea of selling and always keeps an eye on prospective buys.

"We're not just going to buy for the sake of buying," he says,

## ALL IN THE FAMILY

WITH MORE THAN 2,300 PIECES OF EQUIPMENT AND ABOUT 2,000 EMPLOYEES THE **SIEMENS TRANSPORTATION GROUP** IS NOW MADE UP OF 10 DIVISIONS:

- Kindersley Transport
- Creekbank Transport
- Edge Transportation Services
- Tiger Courier
- Harv Wilkening Transport
- Quill Transport
- Hi-Tech Express
- PMK Logistics
- Triangle Freight Services
- Mid-Sask Ag Services

"but we're open to it and have talked to several people, but it has to be the right fit for us, at the right time."

Although new additions to the Siemens fold have been scarce during the past several years, the company has found ways to grow. (See "All in the Family," pg.32.)

"It seems in the trucking industry," Doug says, "you have to grow and offer more services to your customers."

"Whether it's expanded regions or territories, or more services, you can't be stagnant."

"We try and diversify because we're in Saskatchewan and there's not the volume of a big metropolitan centre, so we have to be as diversified as possible."

Diversification is even more important because the thought of moving out of Saskatoon to a bigger city was out of the question.

Instead of relocating their head office, Siemens relied on setting up branches in other regions and utilizing current technology to monitor developments.

"In terms of keeping the head office in Saskatoon, well Saskatchewan is a great place to live, this is home and our friends are here," says Doug. "It was a conscious decision and it fits with our culture better."

The group recently launched a program wherein employees can receive donations for projects in their communities. It can be difficult to decide who should benefit from money allocated for donations and the Siemens family felt their employees should have a say in the matter.

"Employees within our company are spread out all over and people in their communities in need fundraising for new arenas and stuff," adds Doug. "It gives them the sense we want to support their community."

Other than that tidbit of community involvement, the humble vice-president won't delve much further into the subject.

"We do a few things, but it's weird to start listing them off and say we do this and we do that," says Doug. "My father over the years has been involved in different things and with different boards."

Siemens is well known for its internal apprenticeship program, designed to bring new drivers as well as new technicians into the industry. Vehicle technicians can get hired with virtually no experience and the company subsidizes their tuition fees and tops up E.I. to 95 percent while the student is away from work in the classroom.

As well, a few years ago the company introduced an international driver-recruitment program. Called Going Global, the division has brought more than 200 new drivers from abroad into the Canadian fold. And new recruits as well as veterans can polish their driver skills on the company's \$150,000 driver simulator.

The company encourages student athletes by offering them summer jobs and has introduced something called Drive Your Career, designed to help post-secondary students get a taste of various career opportunities.

Still, the family is loathe to boast. It's all about hard work, according to Doug. Especially the hard work that his dad does.

As Erwen has proven during the past 46 years, Western Canada is not such a bad place to call home. With a prime minister from Alberta, Saskatchewan native Ryan Getzlaf leading the defending Stanley Cup champion Anaheim Ducks in points, and the Saskatchewan Roughriders the reigning Grey Cup champs, he might have even been ahead of his time. ▲