

# COOLING JOURNAL

FOR THE AUTOMOTIVE & INDUSTRIAL HEAT EXCHANGE AND DIESEL EMISSIONS INDUSTRIES



Photo submitted by Industrial Radiator



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# Industrial Radiator Dallas, Texas

**NARSA Member Since 2019**

On May 27, 2019 Industrial Radiator opened its doors in Dallas, Texas. It was an incredible new chapter for Chad Spence, a third-generation radiator shop owner who ventured out on his own to start his business from scratch.

Flash forward to a year later, and the world is the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic. Governments and businesses are on lockdown. Unemployment rates are shattering records. People are being told to shelter in place. Oil prices are down. It's a situation no small business owner could have anticipated, but Spence decided to stay positive and adapt. "My business approach is probably what's going to get me through this," said Spence. "You can't just sit back and wait for this to pass."

What makes his business approach different, Spence says, is not being too dependent on one industry. "I didn't want to focus on just one industry, one potential customer base, or one potential market. This is my third oil boom. One day without notice, somebody hits the switch, and the energy industry comes to a grinding halt," said Spence. "Watching what it did to my family when we were heavily dependent on the oil industry, we went from riches to rags real quick. And because I've lived through it as a child and as a young man, I vowed not to put myself in that position again."

Industrial Radiator services large radiators and cooling systems for heavy-duty equipment. It also does fuel tank repair, hydraulics, and aluminum welding ser-



Mark and Chad Spence, 1979

vices. About 50% of its business is in the energy sector.

Like many NARSA members, Chad Spence grew up in the radiator industry. His grandfather Lee Spence started out in the 1950s as a sales representative for Daniels before opening Stanton Radiator in California. Chad's father opened his first radiator shop in Bryan, Texas in 1972 before joining the Navy. Later throughout his career, Mark Spence planted businesses in New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Nevada and Venezuela.



Chad and Mark Spence

Chad Spence's father is his inspiration. "He just has this real entrepreneurial spirit unlike anybody I know, and I don't say that lightly. I mean, this man sees an opportunity, and he will pick up and pack his suitcase and his belongings and leave the state or even leave the country. He's passionate about it," said Spence. "He taught me how to be adaptable. He taught me customer service. He taught me how to take care of customers and how to understand market demand."

Spence says there's one piece of his father's advice that really stands out regarding customer service. "Twenty-five or thirty years ago, I was talking to my dad about a service that we were providing to a customer. I thought we should charge more for this service. My dad paused to give me some instruction, 'Son, you can shear a sheep for many years, but you can only skin him once. One day that customer is gonna find out that he got skinned and you're never going to see him again.'"

Spence went to Oklahoma State University to study Business Management. That's also where he met his wife Shelly, and together they have 8 children. For 12 years, Spence's life was dedicated to ministry, and he was the pastor of a church outside of Dallas. But then life took another direction, and in 2016, Spence returned to the radiator business.

Throughout his career, Spence said that NARSA has been a great resource to him. He has attended a couple of NARSA events including the annual Heavy Duty Conference. He was able to connect with vendors and also picked up some methods that he's brought back to his team. "Afton Radiator had a booth on aluminum welding. They were showing work on aluminum oil coolers. We were doing the same thing, but they were showing a better technique. I liked the way they did it better than the way I was doing it. So, we came home and made an adjustment," said Spence. "So I learned a new technique, a new skill. It was a new way to make money."

Through NARSA's social media and *The Cooling Journal*, Spence says he's able to stay informed on news, new products, new technology, new government regulations, and to learn which direction the industry is moving.

Industrial Radiator is only a year old, but it has a solid customer base. It's also

**"You can open your own radiator business or open up a boutique, if that's what you want to do. If it's going to make you satisfied, then do it."**

- Chad Spence

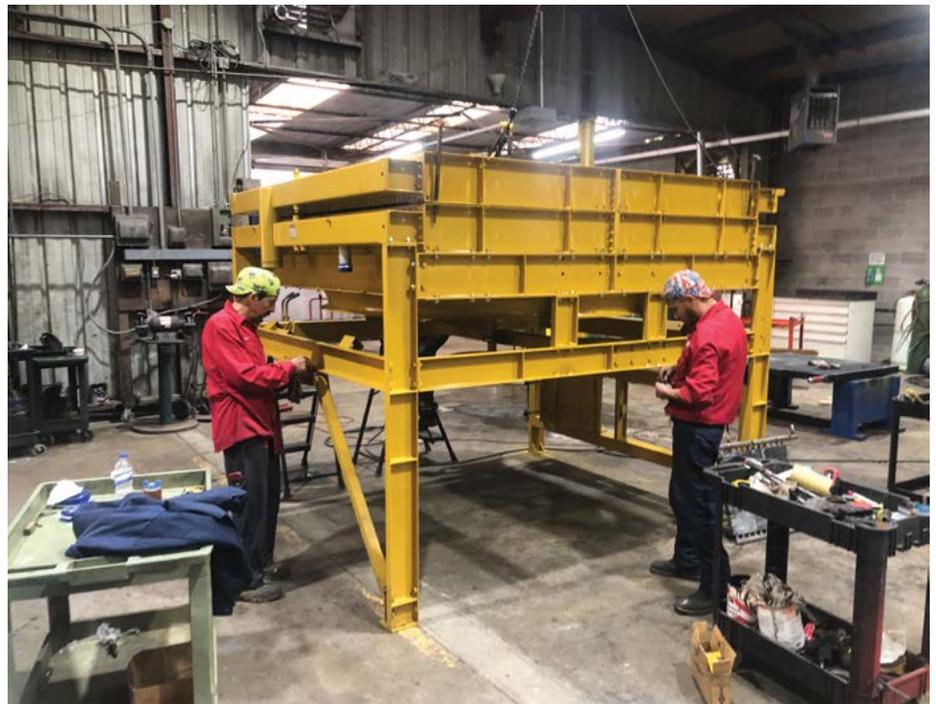
now debt-free, which is a huge accomplishment. And while there's no specific strategy when it comes to success, Spence does have some advice for anyone attempting to spearhead a business during uncertain times and crises. "What is it that you're passionate about? What is it that you want to do that you're hyped enough about and you're instantly excited because you're going to do what you love today? You can open your own radiator business or open up a boutique, if that's what you want to do. If it's going to make you satisfied, then do it," said Spence. "And I think that advice will spill over to times like this. I still love what I



do, and I'm going to find a way to make it through this."

Fortunately, Spence has been able to stay busy during the Coronavirus pandemic. "Every week, we've had jobs on the floor that are supporting infrastructure, supporting hospitals, healthcare," said Spence. Industrial Radiator was able to secure a loan from the SBA's Paycheck Protection Program during the second round of funding, so all 10 of its workers are still employed. No one has had to be let go. Spence hopes he can stretch that money for the next few months.

So what does the future hold? He wouldn't go into details, but Spence said he and his father are looking to the future of the radiator industry. "Where can we provide cooling systems service for large diesel engines?" said Spence. "Where do we see in America the next place big engines and big equipment are going to be making an impact and stirring things? How can we get in and support them and be a part of the action?" The Spence family has no shortage of ambition, so NARSA is excited to see what they come up with next.



**New Members**

*Welcome*  
**NEW MEMBER**

NARSA would like to welcome the following company and thank them for their membership.

**Howard Spratt**  
Frenzeli, Inc.  
Lexington, North Carolina