



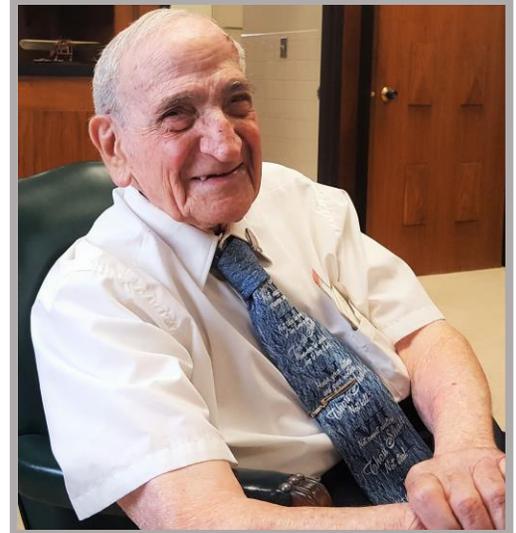
## Happy Birthday Frank! 100 Years Old and Still Selling Lubes

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By Thomas F. Glenn

JobbersWorld (JW) had the honor to meet with Frank Secondino this week in East Hartford, CT. We did so because Frank reached the 100 year milestone of his life today and he is still actively selling lubricants in the New England market for G.H. Berlin – Windward, a Brenntag Company. Yes, you heard right; Frank is still selling lubricants at 100 years old. And with a wry smile on his face and a handshake that could crack a clam, Frank tells JobbersWorld he loves sales, but from time-to-time, “The younger reps sometimes slow me down.” In addition, he had a good deal of timeless thoughts on what it takes to be a successful sales rep.

But before we get into Frank’s thoughts on successful lubricant sales, it’s important to speak about his past. This is because his past shaped who he is today and why he is still alive and well, and selling at 100 years old.



*Frank Secondino*

Frank was born in Bronx, NY on August 12, 1916. To assure JW’s credibility was maintained, we did, in fact, (with a sense of humor) card him. And interestingly, without hesitation, Frank pulled a document from his wallet verifying his DOB. That was the first lesson we learned from this centenarian; a successful sales rep comes prepared for a meeting. And prepared he was. He brought folders filled with articles, pictures, awards and other material memorializing his time in the business. In addition he had personal pictures of his family (nine children) and friends, both here and gone. Whereas he didn’t yet mention lubricants, Frank had our attention and was capturing our hearts.

Frank shared memories of the days in the 1930s when he started a trucking company (North Branford Transportation). During that time he hauled hay to feed mills and cattle dealers. Years later, his company stepped up where others failed to dismantle and move a Navy submarine from Connecticut to Albany, NY. Whereas we pressed for details, Frank said he was restricted from telling us more, and if he did, kiddingly, he might have to kill us.

After selling the company in 1954, Frank took on several other ventures. One was selling tires for BF Goodrich. And according to Frank, there was only one place to buy BF Goodrich tires in Connecticut in those days, and that was his company.

If that was not enough to keep him busy, in 1972 Frank purchased a defunct Gulf gas station in Branford, CT. In a relatively short period of time, Frank turned the station from a loser to one of the shining stars for Gulf in Connecticut.

*In Frank's view, the most important attribute of a good sales representative is "A good memory." The second most important is to "Listen."*

Driven by his love of the business and what Frank says was 8 to 10 cups of coffee a day (with sugar), he had yet more to achieve. With that, he started Statewide Petroleum in the 1980s as a Cities Services (CITGO) lubricant distributor. Based on the number of awards (including a rather hefty Bronze Eagle Award Frank received from CITGO back in the day) it's clear he made his mark in lubricant distribution. But business being business, he had a falling-out with his partner and ultimately exited that business. This is when Frank joined G.H. Berlin in 2000 at the age of 84 as a lubricant sales representative. To this day, Frank is still with G.H. Berlin, and, make no mistake about it, he is sharp as a tack and still has what it takes to make a sale.

That takes us to Frank's answer to our question about what it takes to be a successful sales rep. His comments were both priceless and timeless.

***In Frank's view, the most important attribute of a good sales representative is "A good memory."***

Frank says a good memory is about retaining the names of the people you meet, their titles, the times and dates of the meetings you had and meetings currently on your calendar. It's also about remembering details of the lives of those you meet (i.e. birthdays, names of spouse and children, and other meaningful details.) In addition, it's about remembering the makes and models of their equipment, lubricant suppliers, prices and problems they have had and are currently dealing with. In short, Frank says, it's about truly caring for the wants and needs of your customers.

***More time listening and less time talking.***

The second most important factor Frank says that makes for a successful sales representative is to "Listen." And in his view, this ties to the first point about having a good memory. If you are not listening, there is not much to remember other than what you said. And whereas your words might sound sharp, compelling, and convincing to your ears, they can often fall flat with your prospects. So rather than listening to what you have to say, Frank says, "Listen carefully, very carefully to what your customers and prospects have to say." In doing so, you will often find they lead you to the challenges they face and open the doors for you to offer solutions.

Whereas this may seem like sales 101, Frank adds, "All too often, sales representatives walk into meetings with answers to questions that have yet to be asked; solutions to problems that may not exist, and push forward proposals that prospects can easily push back."

So according to Frank, that's what it takes to be a good sales representative.

But now for the most important question, a question we all might ask regardless of the businesses we are in. That being, what does it take to reach your 100th birthday?

To that, Frank once again did not hesitate with an answer. First and foremost, Frank says "You need the Gift of the Lord in your life." Secondly, he adds, drop the sugar from your diet (something he did when he was just a kid in his seventies). And in his case, although it certainly has not slowed him down, Frank says, cut back a bit



*Left to Right. Thomas F. Glenn and Frank Secondino.*

on the coffee. He feels, as long as you drink it in moderation (5 to 6 cups a day), you will be fine. With that, he grabbed a cup of joe to go (without sugar) and was out the door and on his way to meet with a client.

**Happy Birthday Frank!**