



Frank M. Late
1908 - 2002

Frank M. Late was born in Johnson, Arkansas in 1908. He was a businessman with interests in oil field services, both domestic and international, as well as automobile dealerships, manufacturing, soft drink bottling, banking, oil and gas exploration and ranching.

He began his business career by acquiring a Chevrolet dealership in 1936 in Claremore, Oklahoma. In 1939 General Motors offered him the opportunity to establish a dealership in San Angelo, Texas. From 1936 through 1999 Mr. Late became one of the largest automobile dealers in the southwest.

Mr. Late's involvement in the drilling business began in 1944 when he formed Cactus Drilling with George Baker in Hobbs, New Mexico. When the Spraberry Trend began, he decided that Midland/Odessa was where he needed to be. Mr. Late joined forces with Frank Garrett and the men formed sister company Cactus Drilling Corporation. Both companies prospered with Cactus Drilling focusing on shallow drilling in the Permian Basin while Cactus Drilling Corporation acquired rigs to drill deeper and operated on a wider geologic footprint. He acquired Mr. Garrett's interest in 1958 and Mr. Baker's interest in 1967.

Cactus Drilling expanded internationally, first drilling in Canada and then in Argentina. Cactus International owned and operated a fleet of 60 rigs, including eight platform rigs and was the third largest drilling company in the United States. Onshore Cactus operated in the Permian Basin, New Mexico, Michigan, Oklahoma and South Texas. When Mr. Late sold Cactus in 1980, it was the largest U.S. land-based contract drilling company.

In the early 1960's, Mr. Late entered the service company arena with Baron Ulmer Kidd forming Cardinal Chemical which sold a full array of oilfield chemicals to operators and drilling contractors. The company flourished and was sold to Dowell Chemical in the late 1970's. In 1985, he bought all assets of Republic Supply from LTV Energy Products Company and grew the company to 25 locations in eight states. Republic Supply was sold to National Oilwell in 2000 but today one of the Republic subsidiaries, Howard Supply Company continues to operate in eight states.