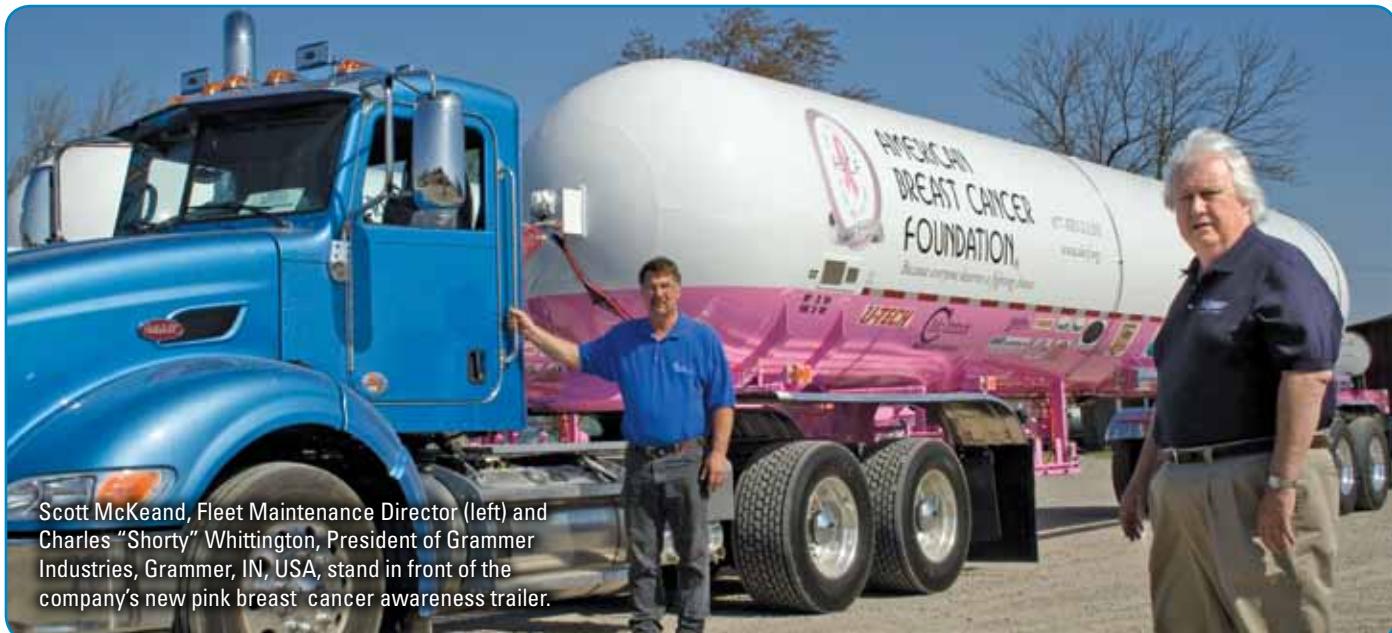


# Grammer Lesson

**BY DOING THE RIGHT THING AND TAKING A FEW RISKS—AS WELL AS PARTNERING WITH TRUSTED COMPANIES LIKE BLACKMER® AND MISSISSIPPI TANK—GRAMMER INDUSTRIES SETS THE PACE IN ANHYDROUS-AMMONIA HAULING**

*By Doug Chapman*



Charles "Shorty" Whittington has two simple rules by which he tries to live:

1. If you give, you get.
2. No guts, no glory.

Looking at all that Whittington has accomplished as the President of Grammer Industries, Grammer, IN, USA, over the past 40-plus years, it would be hard to question his approach. Beginning humbly in 1968 as a provider of grain and dry fertilizers for industrial, agricultural and retail suppliers, Grammer has grown into one of the country's leading carriers of anhydrous ammonia and, to a lesser extent, LPG. The company's reach has grown to extend from Nebraska to Eastern Canada and from Indiana down through Cincinnati and into Arkansas.

This success has also resulted in Whittington becoming one of the leaders in the industry. His success culminated in October of 2008 when he was named the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Trucking Association (ATA), the first commercial agricultural transporter to ever reach that lofty position with the ATA. That earned him the first-ever Agricultural Transportation Leadership award from the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, which was presented in December 2008. Along the way, Whittington

also found time to form Integrity Biofuels with his son, John, in 2006. Integrity Biofuels, located in Morristown, IN, USA, was Central Indiana's first soy biodiesel plant. That venture earned Whittington the Indiana AgriVision Award from the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, which was presented to him by Lt Governor and Secretary of Agriculture Becky Skillman at the 2008 Indiana State Fair.

And all of this success and recognition—for both Whittington and his company—has been mainly due to those two simple rules.

"I've always thought that when something is the right thing to do, it's the right thing to do," Whittington explained. "We've always been willing to take chances. We made a \$5 million investment in 2008 mainly because we've always worked closely with our vendors so they give us a better product and we share our experiences with them to make things better. That's the way it's worked since 1968, and in 2010 it's paying hellacious dividends."

## In The Beginning

After shipping dry-bulk grain and fertilizer products for the first 10 years of its existence, Whittington and Grammer Industries recognized an opportunity to branch out into



Grammer Industries has purchased 250 trailers from Mississippi Tank Company. All 250 trailers are equipped with Blackmer pumps.

anhydrous ammonia hauling in 1977. Through 1986, most of Grammer's 15-unit rolling stock was being leased from fertilizer companies. That changed in 1986 when the major fertilizer manufacturers came to the decision to do away with their trailer fleets. Swooping in, Grammer bought a 25-trailer fleet in 1986, then 25 more trailers in 1987 and hit the mother lode when it scooped up a 105-trailer fleet from Agrico in 1988. Virtually overnight, Grammer had gone from a bit player in anhydrous ammonia hauling to a major force with a fleet that numbered more than 150 trailers.

The size of the fleet also allowed Grammer to expand the types of products that it could haul and handle. While hauling anhydrous ammonia—both in its C grade and Met grade forms—was still its stock and trade, Grammer also began offering hauling services for LPG, carbon dioxide, nitric acid, liquid and dry fertilizer, and bulk-liquid corrosive hazardous waste. This earned Grammer a license from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a reputation as a reliable and safe hauler of hazardous materials, thanks to its "Satisfactory" DOT rating and "Excellent" SafeStat rating.

"We understand the industry, know how the equipment works, experiment with a lot of things and stick our toe in the water to see if something works better or smarter, those things that will help improve our business," said Whittington.

In acquiring all those trailers, one thing began to stick out to Whittington: the ones that worked the best all seemed to have been manufactured by Mississippi Tank Company (MTC), Hattiesburg, MS, USA. Founded in 1945, Mississippi Tank builds bobtails, transport trailers, specialty trailers and storage tanks for a wide variety of industries.

"When we started paying attention to the equipment we were acquiring, it became evident that Mississippi Trailer was

the best out there," said Whittington. "With the quality of the used equipment, it became apparent that we needed to be a partner with MTC."

## The Test Of Time

So, in 1991, a new partnership was born when Grammer Industries purchased its first new MTC anhydrous ammonia trailer. To say that the partnership has grown and flourished in the ensuing two decades would be an understatement—since buying that first MTC trailer, Grammer has purchased 250 more new trailers from the company, including 70 in 2009, with an additional 40 on the drawing board for 2010.

"They have picked up some more contracts for anhydrous-ammonia hauling," said Joey Runnels, Sales at MTC.

"They've wanted to get some of the trailers lighter to haul more product, so we worked with them to create trailers that cut some weight so they could haul more volume."

"We really work these trailers, so we know the industry, we know what works and what doesn't work," added Whittington.

Grammer Industries received a very special trailer from MTC in April 2010 when it took delivery of what is believed to be the industry's first breast-cancer awareness LPG transport trailer (see Sidebar). This also marked the 250th trailer purchased by Grammer from Mississippi Tank. A second breast-cancer awareness transport trailer that Grammer commissioned has been sold to PAPCO, LLC, Bridgeton, NJ, USA.

## Another Helping Hand

While the relationship between Grammer Industries and Mississippi Tank has stood the test of time, the two companies have also benefited from the reliability of the pumps that are used on all 250 of Grammer's trailers. Those pumps come from Blackmer®, Grand Rapids, MI, USA, a leading global provider of sliding vane pump and reciprocating gas compressor technologies for the transfer of liquids and gases. Specifically, the Grammer trailers feature Blackmer's TLGLF4A sliding vane pumps. These pumps can handle all that Grammer throws at them because they have been designed for maximum performance and reliability under the most severe operating conditions. Standout features include cavitation suppression liners that reduce noise, vibration and wear; replaceable casing liners and end discs; ductile-iron construction with internal relief valves; self-priming and dry-run capabilities; and vanes that can be replaced without removing the pump from the piping system.

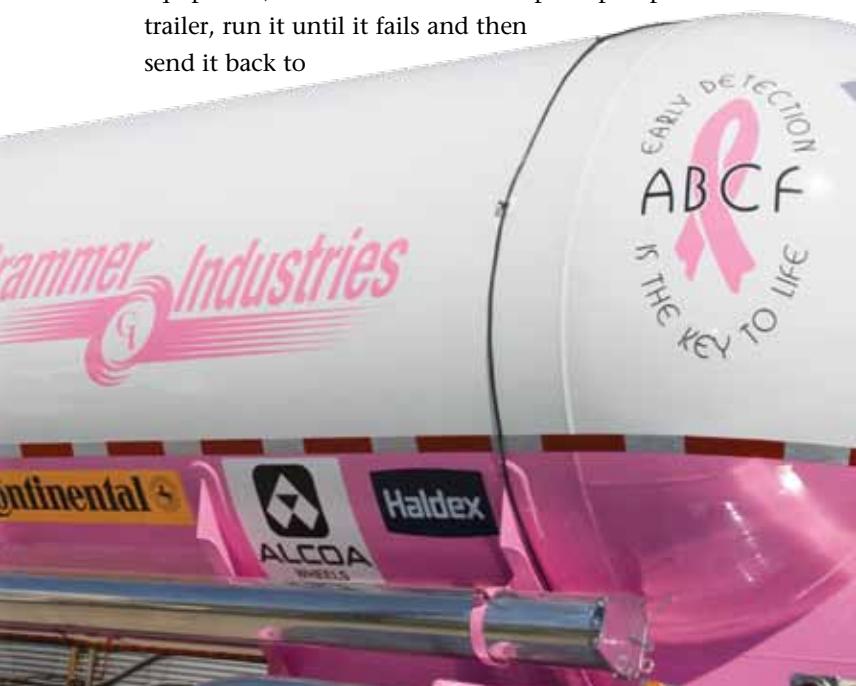
"We're standard on Blackmer pumps and we have not had any issues," said Runnels. "Grammer is running dual service on most of its trailers, going back and forth from hauling anhydrous ammonia to propane, and Blackmer makes a good service pump for that. We put the Blackmer pumps on the trailers and can pretty much forget about them, and if you do need to rebuild one, it's very easy. Lack of downtime is very important in the transportation business, and with Blackmer pumps you have very little downtime."

Scott McKeand has known Whittington for 30 years and joined Grammer Industries full-time in 1988; he is currently its Fleet Maintenance Director. In that role, he is responsible for the upkeep of Grammer's entire rolling stock. Having the trailers outfitted with Blackmer equipment has made his life a lot easier.

"My association with Blackmer dates back many, many years and it's been a good, long-standing relationship," said McKeand. "All 250 Grammer trailers are equipped with Blackmer pumps. In addition to the equipment, the availability of Blackmer services and support is second-to-none. If I've got somebody in New York and they've got a failure, it's very easy to locate somebody to work on the equipment."

McKeand and Grammer have also provided a service to Blackmer through the years, as Grammer's trailers have served as a sort of "beta-testing" site for any number of new pieces of equipment that Blackmer has developed.

"We help Blackmer do research and development for its equipment," said McKeand. "We'll put a pump on a trailer, run it until it fails and then send it back to



CASE STUDY: Grammer Lesson

## Fuel For Hope

One of Charles "Shorty" Whittington's guiding tenets is, "If you give you get." That guiding principle has recently played out in a unique and historic way. In October 2009, Whittington, the President of Grammer Industries, Grammer, IN, USA and Danny Miller, President of Mississippi Tank Company, Hattiesburg, MS, USA, gave their blessings to the construction of a pair of transport trailers that would be used to haul LPG.

But these were no ordinary LPG transport trailers. They were the brainstorm of Grammer's Scott McKeand and MTC's Joey Runnels. While talking at last year's National Tank Carriers Show, they came upon the idea of doing a pink LPG trailer that would promote breast-cancer awareness. Aware that while numerous LPG breast-cancer-awareness bobtails have been created over the past several years, McKeand and Runnels didn't think any full-size trailers were on the roads. So, they approached Whittington and Miller with their idea and got an enthusiastic thumbs-up for the project.

"We wanted to step up to the plate and do something to give back," said Runnels, who works in Sales for MTC. "Scott was the guy who pushed it; he's the customer. We addressed it with Danny and Shorty and they told us, 'If you think you can pull it off, we'll leave it to you.' This is the first pink trailer MTC has done—and the first pink trailer I think anyone has done."

The final decision was to build two trailers, one of which Grammer Industries will keep, and the other of which has been sold to PAPCO, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA, USA, for use in its New Jersey market. Partnering with Grammer and MTC on the pink trailers is the American Breast Cancer Foundation (ABCF) with a portion of the sales from the LPG that is pumped through the trailer going to ABCF's "Fuel for Hope" campaign, which provides financial grants for a variety of diagnostic and support services, including screening and diagnostic mammograms, ultra-sounds and emergency biopsies, wigs, medications, travel assistance and mastectomy bras.

"Grammer Industries, with the blessing of Shorty Whittington, and Mississippi Tank, with the blessing of Danny Miller, were behind us 100 percent," said McKeand.



Scott McKeand, Fleet Maintenance Director for Grammer Industries kneels next to the Blackmer TLGLF Series Sliding Vane Pump on the company's newest trailer.

them to see why it failed. We've done lots of work to help Blackmer come up with better components. We've had a good partnership with Blackmer and Mississippi Tank, and that's the reason we've stayed dedicated to those folks."

Those thoughts are echoed by Danny Miller, President of Mississippi Tank Company: "Blackmer pumps have been the industry's choice for many years. They are proven, reliable products that are backed up by a supportive staff that is top notch. Our motto has long been 'Quality Without Compromise' and Blackmer fits well with MTC's commitment of standing behind our products."

## Conclusion

In his position on the front lines of the anhydrous-ammonia-hauling industry, Shorty Whittington has been able to acquire a unique perspective on the industry and where it might be headed. In his role as Chairman of the ATA, he had an opportunity to give 53 speeches in a total of 44 states in 2009. His presentation, titled "The Road Ahead in a Dysfunctional Environment," was designed to present a realistic overall look at the state of the industry and what needs to be done to ensure its prosperity in the coming years—as well as how Grammer Industries fits into the equation.



"I think it's safe to say the rich are gonna get richer and the poor are gonna get poorer; a good business will get much better and a mediocre business will go downhill," he said. "We're trying to stay ahead by tightening our belt, and for the first time ever we're looking at weight, looking at fuel mileage, really looking at the durability of the equipment. In our world, it's about service, it's about safety, it's about utilization. If we get our arms around these things, get pointed in the right direction, we'll be in good shape."

It's also about partnering with the right companies, the ones that share similar goals and ambitions. And by partnering with like-minded companies like Blackmer and Mississippi Tank, Grammer Industries is definitely headed in the right direction.

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Doug Chapman is a Regional Manager of Energy & Transfer for Blackmer, a member of the Dover Corporation's Pump Solutions Group (PSG™). Doug can be reached at (919) 556-5131 or [Chapman@blackmer.com](mailto:Chapman@blackmer.com). For more information on Blackmer's full line of pumps and compressors, please go to [www.blackmer.com](http://www.blackmer.com) or call (616) 241-1611. PSG is comprised of six leading pump companies—Wilden®, Blackmer®, Griswold™, Neptune™, Almatec® and Mouvex®. You can find more information on PSG at [www.pumpsg.com](http://www.pumpsg.com).



[www.blackmer.com](http://www.blackmer.com)

### World Headquarters

1809 Century Avenue SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-1530 USA  
T 616.241.1611 F 616.241.3752

