

Episode 30

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SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Scott Duff, Ethan DeLeon

J Jason Duff 00:00
ways that you, when you have disagreements, what are, what's kind of your advice to like heal that and work on that?

S Scott Duff 00:07
Well, you hear everybody out, but like you said, in a family business, everybody needs to have some avenue that is theirs only, and they make the decisions for it.

E Ethan DeLeon 00:18
Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon, and I'm here with our founder and CEO of Small Nation, Jason Duff, to Today we have a very special guest who happens to be Jason's father and president and CEO of Ohio Ready Mix and the vice president of Duff Quarry, Scott Duff. We want to welcome you to the Small Nation Podcast where we share some of the valuable lessons with what we have learned about entrepreneurship, real estate, economic development, and more. The point of this podcast is to create value for you, the listener, and to create a space to learn, talk about what's trending, and inspire others.

J Jason Duff 00:53
Thank you, Ethan. Dad, welcome to the show.

S Scott Duff 00:56
I'm glad to be here, guys.

J**Jason Duff** 00:58

Now I have to say, uh, when I first said, Dad, like, I'd like you on the podcast, he's like, well, It's a podcast. And that's okay because I said it's this radio show that is a new way of delivering content that is sharing advice and stories. And there's kind of no one better to understand the mind of like how all this began than talking to people that created you. So it's great to have my dad on the show today. And I think, you know, jumping into when I meet other people, one of the things I like to do is understand who their thought leaders are, like, who are the people that inspired them to do what they do, and what are the reasons why behind it. And, uh, family business is something that has come up, uh, in a number of conversations when we go to towns and communities. There are these, uh, families that have maybe started companies, could be the, the big, uh, company town business, and oftentimes those businesses go out of business. Those businesses have transitions, meaning that there are family members that disagree. And, you know, sometimes— no way. Yeah, I mean, it's just— I think being real and raw about how important and valuable free enterprise and free market is to building towns and communities, but really understanding more of the personal stories behind it. So I'm just excited to have you on the podcast today. So, um, To give, you know, some listeners some perspective, um, tell us about the Duff family and really from your eyes and perspective when the idea of starting businesses began.

S**Scott Duff** 02:39

Good question. I can go back to when my grandfather Elder Duff and my dad Jim Duff, they were in the trucking business during the day and they trucked stone for Western Ohio Stone out of Westminster and also out of Huntsville. Well, not only did they do the trucking during the day, then they started another business at night. They started the Elder Theater. It was one of the first motion picture theaters in Jackson Center. They actually built the building. They made the concrete block that they used for the building. But I can remember my dad telling me that on Saturday nights, people were lined up around the block to watch Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, and the tickets sold for 25 cents for adults and 10 cents for students. Well, he also had the popcorn machine that he sold a bag of popcorn for 10 cents, and I believe he made more net profit out of the popcorn machine than my grandfather did out of the movies. They actually— MGM would send someone at the movie theater and count the number of people that would come into the theater And that's how MGM would get then get paid. So, you know, they started, like you say, very early, uh, my life. I always remember working all the time. My father started the quarry in 1956 along with my grandfather. And the way that happened was Western Ohio Stone was on the west side of 117, and the farm on the opposite side come available for sale, and they thought if there was stone on one side, there might be stone on the other side of the road, which, uh, turned out to be true. That's where we're actually mining the stone today at the quarry. We have over 200 acres and we're mining over 100 acres at 70 feet deep. So it started out as a very small operation, and now we're producing between 600,000 to 700,000 ton a year.

J**Jason Duff** 04:45

So, you know, the, the lineage of that— so, you know, is mentioning that Elder Duff, so it would be your grandfather, my great-grandfather, you know, started literally having a dump truck and helping people move. He also had a moving service. So like, he would listen to customers and whatever that they needed moved or picked up or delivered, like, he would do that. But, you know, when you get bit by the entrepreneurial bug, and I think that's kind of how he was— he meant, you know, my dad mentioned that he worked all the time. That was his love language.. And so imagine in wartime in 1941, I think it was '41, the theater just celebrated a significant anniversary, starting a theater right when the Japanese dropped the bombs. That's true. And how the uncertainty of that time, still having the courage to start that business in Jackson Center. And then later, you know, like you said, the quarry actually picking up limestone and delivering it to, to neighbors and communities and farms. But the Western Ohio Stone location was out of reserves or deposits. So meaning, imagine you own dump trucks and then the place that you pick up stone, it's going to run out. What happens to your business? Yeah, not good. But he had the fortitude, the courage, and really didn't have the money at the time to like buy the farm across the street. But he found a way to do it. And so those kind of that DNA, then the vision became of C.E. Duffin's son was the company. So Elder Clayton Elder and his son James founded father-son, found the business. And James had two boys. So you have my dad, Scott, and brother Dave. You guys came along. So when you grew up, What was family-like life like for you?

S**Scott Duff** 06:39

Well, I spent a lot of time as a toddler— when I say toddler, 4 to 6 years old— there at the quarry riding the loaders and being in the dump trucks. I remember, reason I can place a time factor on it, I was sitting on the desk out there at the quarry and I broke— I fell off backwards and I broke my arm. Well, my grandma Claire, she was the scales master at the time. She didn't rush me to the doctor's office. She reset my arm. And to this day, I can remember the bone was not sticking out of my skin, but it was protruding, and she pulled it and set the arm. And I thought— so I can remember that. I was in kindergarten. So in a family business, it's not if you're going to go to the business, you assume you are going to be part of the operation. So you look at the different jobs. I mean, I can tell you, I started there as an 8th grader driving a haul rig out of the, the hole up into the crushers. And Bill Page, who just retired recently, had put— he put in over 50 years at the quarry. Bill was one year older than I was, and we started together. And so you look at the different jobs we did. We did the haul rigs, then we did the loaders, then we drove the dump trucks, then we drove ready-mix trucks. And then I eventually in 1975 started learning how to batch and load the truck. So it wasn't what job you were going, what career you was going to look into, it's what position did you want to help the family business because that's It was just assumed that you were going to— and I'm a lucky person because I have a son working there. I have a son-in-law, Jeremy, that's made his life mission to run the Ready Mix. My brother had his own business in the block and brick business, and he's now operating the quarry business, and he has a son, Ross. So we have quite a few family members that have stayed with the business. I look to the future. My, my goal is not just to make the company successful and solid, which, which is a goal, but it's also to make an opportunity for— I have grandchildren coming up, and to me, a home run would be, you know, seeing that I have 5 grandchildren, that either them or their spouses want to keep the company going because it's something I've committed 50-some years to, um, I'd love to see it continue.

J**Jason Duff** 09:22

Yeah, it's your legacy. And I think that word legacy is something that comes up a lot. It's— I think what you hear from— it's not about— I mean, money, we talk about this in the podcast, money and energy are the same thing. That's the fuel. But like, it's the reason why we do the things we do. Yeah. And whether you call it normal or, or weird, um, like, you know, Dad said, like people in family business, that's actually where you spend your family time. I mean, we— evenings you talk about business, and, uh, that's, you know, my, my significant other, when he started attending some of our family gatherings, it was somewhat unique for him because, um, he kind of equated it that it's like attending a board meeting because, you know, he was never exposed to that. And I think for people that, that it's new to them, you You know, we enjoy what we do so much. It's like a combined common goal to something that is a shared experience that we can work to build together. And I think, you know, going back, I want you to go back in the time machine to say, you know, you had been working at the quarry at the time. We were just selling limestone and, and sand and gravel, but, uh, the opportunity came to You know, today the title that you have is, is that you are President and CEO of Ohio Ready Mix. Ohio Ready Mix was just new right about the time that you were, you know, stepping into adulthood of graduating high school.

S**Scott Duff** 10:51

Yes. The way that Ohio Ready Mix got started was there was 3 ready mixes. There was called Logan Ready Mix. They had a plant in Bellefontaine. They had one in Huntsville. and there was also one in Walpole, Kanata. Well, they were pouring on Detroit Street. There was a big bridge that went over the railroad right up here in Bellefontaine. Logan Ready Mix was pouring it, and a thunderstorm come up, knocked their electricity out, and back then they did not have a generating set big enough to run the conveyors or batch the ready mix out, so the bridge pour went, south went sour and they had to stop the pour. Well, the contractor, you know, even though it was an electric storm, act of God, they sued the Ready Mix, Logan Ready Mix, and they were awarded over \$100,000 in damages. And back in 1970, \$100,000 would be probably equivalent to a million today. So Logan Ready Mix went out of business. They basically you know, went bankrupt. And so those companies were available and my dad looked at it and was talking to me. It's an avenue to sell our stone. We need the ready mix to exist. So he said, what do you think if we start running the ready mix? And at that point in time, I was like 17, 18 years old. And I said, sure, Dad, I'll do what we can.. And, um, so I started learning how to batch, and a fellow named Dwight Gratz taught me how to batch the trucks. And you basically, you didn't have all the computerization that you do today, but you had the old beam scales and you had the Toledo scales. And so basically I've seen the ready mix evolve from pretty, uh, archaic type operation to today we can remote batch, we can load trucks from Huntsville to Bellefontaine, we can dispatch trucks in Marysville, and we're covering an area from Columbus to Lima. So I've seen our company evolve and grow, and it's, to me, that's been one of the most exciting things in, in doing the job that I am doing.

J**Jason Duff** 13:12

And, you know, the thing that I think is really special about what you do is that in general You sit kind of in the same building, pretty much the same office that you pretty much started when you were 18. That's true. And, you know, but this is what's kind of neat for me watching how it's evolved, is that it used to just be one dispatcher, which was Dad, right? And, you know, growing up as a young man, you know, my school bus, I would get off every day at the Ready Mix plant. And, and what was neat about working with family is I had a grandfather and a father and, and other our employees that would be nurturing to have me explore ideas of ways that I could work there, ways that I could create businesses. Like, one of the things that was really neat is I started selling candy bars because a lot of our truck drivers, you know, they'd be famished, famished working very long hours. And so, you know, when I would have a school project that I could sell candy bars, like my family allowed, encouraged me to do that. And when the school project ended, you know, going to Sam's Club and formalizing that of actually buying a vending machine and having, you know, people that would support doing that, there's something powerful. And I think that's again mentioning about legacy for the family members that want to be involved in that process. It is an incredible opportunity to learn and it builds some of those healthy, great habits of, of drive and passion and hard work and discipline to do that.

S**Scott Duff** 14:45

I agree with you. And like the latest McDonald's restaurant that was just built at Indian Lake, it's such— it gives me such joy to be part of it. It was a project that was supposed to last 100 days and they built it in 110, and they needed concrete deliveries on time and they expected service. And we gave them the best service we can right through a cement shortage. To make their project happen, that gives me great satisfaction in seeing it open. And I think the drivers that work for us, they get satisfaction in being there from the start, from the foundations to the finish of the floors. So all our drivers get to see many different variety of projects, and I'm proud of all the drivers. I mean, I think they all give their 100% effort, and, uh, it's exciting to see them be part of things.

J**Jason Duff** 15:39

At every CEO or family that's at the helm, there are these support people that oftentimes are employees, could be advisors, could be, you know, accountants or attorneys, but they're part of the team. And the other thing that I think when people look at the Duff family our success is only because of the support family members that were around us. And so if you go back in time and think to some of those people, who are people that kind of come to mind and what kind of things did they do?

S**Scott Duff** 16:18

Well, I'll go back to probably the top of my list would be Harry and Bill Page.

J**Jason Duff** 16:26

Father and son.

S**Scott Duff** 16:27

Father and son.

J**Jason Duff** 16:28

Father and son.

S**Scott Duff** 16:29

And then there was Duster Collins that basically he was right beside beside me for 20 years, and they gave their lives, they gave their career to it.

J**Jason Duff** 16:40

And you can see, you can hear it in his voice, it's the people. So like Harry Page, when we didn't have money, when we didn't have nice things, when we— our equipment was put together with Band-Aids, he was the engineer, the mechanic, the person that figured it out. He also— we started hiring and building more of our employees he ran the crew. And so, and then when his son came along, which was a few years younger than dad, what was really neat—

S

Scott Duff 17:10

Yeah, Bill's one year older than me.

J

Jason Duff 17:12

So, well, one year older. Okay. So in your age group, not only did we have dad, we had son, we had another son, like the whole Page family. And that's— we shared. And again, as Harry is passed on, but like, The thing about when you, when you read these obituaries and the pride that they took, it's kind of a two-way street because they also got to be a part of that success in that journey too. But I think every successful family business, it's not just the people at the helm, it's the, it's also the support characters and the loyalty, the hard work, the, the, the ingenuity of locking arms with the entrepreneurs because you need people that will be at the point. They're the lightning rod, the heat, but you need those support actors behind them.

S

Scott Duff 18:00

And we have that now. I mean, I don't want to name a lot of names, but yeah, you know, at the quarry you got, uh, Jacob Purdy that gives his life. And, you know, in, in Marysville plant, you got Chris and Eric.

J

Jason Duff 18:14

I mean, and, and, you know, but prior to them, it's the Scott Halls of the world.

S

Scott Duff 18:17

I mean, we could go around, I could go around, name a whole bunch of people. But yeah, and, and you talk to people in the Indian Lake region, and a lot of them used to work as dump truck drivers, they worked as loader operators. I mean, they all have a connection where, as they were growing up, and that's what takes a family business, that's how it's going to succeed. And I, and like you said, Jason, I hope that, you know, you, you're the fourth generation, you and Ross, and I hope that—

J

Jason Duff 18:42

so the statistics are not good. Okay, well, no, I'm just saying, like, I mean, for us, I agree, I hope we do, but let's just speak generalization, you know, to go for a business that goes from first generation to second generation, the failure rate is something like over 50%.

S

Scott Duff 18:59

It's usually the third generation.

J

Jason Duff 19:00

Well, that's what I'm saying.

S

Scott Duff 19:01

It's like, I put 50 years. You did.

J**Jason Duff** 19:04

You've done your work. And, you know, I think that's the, the other thing too, you know, painting the picture of sacrifice. I mean, be, being honest, you probably, in, in terms of your life vacation time, probably as we were growing up, Maybe took a week vacation a year.

S**Scott Duff** 19:23

In the wintertime, you know, it slows down. But when you're in a community and you're involved in the community, you're basically working 24/7 because when you're out in the public and you see someone at a grocery store or restaurant, things like that, how you treat them, how you greet them, it's all part of business. And it's not like when you're working in a big city and you don't know everybody. You know everybody in the community. So But the, in the community supported our company.

J**Jason Duff** 19:52

So, uh, yeah, I mean, we put such a big highlight on entrepreneurs and the leaders, you know, talking about how it takes a support system. But like, and it was such a vital thing, such as a concrete, you know, uh, organization. Like, literally your buildings are not going to go up, that McDonald's is not going to just show up without, you know, that kind of support. So it's like, no wonder, you know, you're connected because you're literally building their communities. And then I think in the family too, like you mentioned, a lot of people that are working in the business there's also the, the actors of those, uh, the significant others that are supporting the entrepreneurs in the business. Because truthfully, when you work, Dad, I mean, I'd say on average growing up you would be up because the concrete pours, some of them start at 3, 4 in the morning. You were up early in the morning and then maybe you would be lucky to get home at 5 o'clock. But like being a— you were a T-ball coach, you hit, you know, the school events. It's, it's there is a great sacrifice in that process.

S**Scott Duff** 20:51

Well, I'd do it all over again. I mean, that's what I chose to do, and, and it's been very, you know, fulfilling to be able to do it.

J**Jason Duff** 21:00

And— but most people, I just say, listening, they, they see the surface. It's like, oh, you live in a big house, or you're driving this car. The sacrifice behind the scenes is like, yeah, like no other. And it's in— it's not for everyone. It's not for everyone, because when you say the negative with it, you do sacrifice your health, right?

S**Scott Duff** 21:19

It's stressful at times, like you said.

J**Jason Duff** 21:22

Which, you know, some people, you know, it sacrifices your health. It's not easy on relationships or marriages sometimes, right?

S**Scott Duff** 21:28

Sometimes.

J**Jason Duff** 21:29

Right. And so I think that's the flip side of this is that, you know, I'm so thankful to be in the family and to have these opportunities. But it also allows you to kind of figure out what's going to work for you and what's not going to work for you. Let's just speak to that a little bit. Tell me, in families you have lots of personalities. You do. And you're not in a family business. We, we have a very diverse group of family members. True. That— but we, I think we, everyone wants everyone to win. It's different ways that we approach doing that.

S**Scott Duff** 22:07

Everybody is pulling for the same thing, for the companies to be successful. I mean, and they can— the companies can provide very good lifestyles for if you put the time, the effort, and are good to the people that work for you.

J**Jason Duff** 22:21

So in ways that you— when you have disagreements, what are— what's kind of your advice to like heal that and work on that?

S**Scott Duff** 22:29

Well, you hear everybody out, but like you said, in a family business, everybody needs to have some avenue that is theirs only, and they make the decisions for it. So You know, my brother and his son, they build houses and they've been very successful at Longview Cove and other places. And, you know, you have your ventures here with the different storefronts, the lofts, restaurants. And then Jeremy has made a decision to make the Ready Mix his livelihood. And it's very important to have people that the other employees can look at and say, this is going to be the management of the future. So I think we have a very strong company. We are in the third generation. The fourth generation's there now working too. And I think we have a very good chance of making the fifth, fifth edition. The ready-mix business has so many technical support seminars. There's the CONAGG show that's coming up here in March. That is the biggest construction aggregate show in the world, and it will attract over 250,000 delegates to come out there. And they take the complete convention center of Las Vegas, and they— and like Caterpillar, their booth rental alone and the amount of equipment they bring cost them over millions of dollars to display. And, and so there's all these seminars that go on that tell us about concrete, and I'm so proud of, uh, our technical people at the Ready Mix, Neil Wireman and Dalton and Sam March. They're all trying to make our concrete better. We have our own lab to make our concrete better. So I'm very proud of the way that our company's heading.

J**Jason Duff** 24:22

Real quick, what, just if you can, can like highlight, do it at a high level, tell me a little bit about the process of what it takes to make concrete.

S**Scott Duff** 24:30

Okay, concrete. First off, you have to have stone, which it's a 3/4-inch to 1-inch stone. Then you have sand, they call it concrete sand, and it's a fine sand like a natural sand. And then you have to have cement. A lot of people say, I'm putting in a cement drive. Well, cement is the ground powder that you put into concrete along with water and the proper chemicals to make concrete do what you want. So cement We have the first concrete street in America here that was produced by Bartholomew, and he made cement. The way you make cement, you take clay, limestone, and gypsum, and you grind it all up, and then you put it through a, like, a wet process. You mix it all together, then you put it through a kiln And the kiln is like long as a football field, and you burn this. You put it, you put it to real hot heat, and it comes out the, the, the final finishing end of the kiln in little balls, little ball bearings. And you take that, uh, ball bearings and you put it in a crusher and you grind it up to powder fine. And then when you add water to it, it starts the heat of hydration to making the concrete set. And how much gypsum you put in this will make the set time vary. So they're constantly checking this at the cement plants of how to make cement. So the Romans made it many, many years ago by just putting it in a fire pit, you know, but cement's come a long ways. There's this last year, I'll just talk briefly about it. There was a shortage of cement and all the ready-mix companies got put on an allotment of only getting maybe 60 to 70% of what they needed for their daily use. So there was a shortage of concrete. Will it happen again this next year? I'm not sure, but we're looking as Ohio Ready Mix, we're looking for an outside of the state of Ohio to be able to bring it in rails. We have a site located where we're going to bring it in by rail because I don't want to be caught shorthanded on cement again and not be able to supply the projects that we committed to.

J**Jason Duff** 26:54

Yeah. And we've talked a lot about on this podcast about, you know, housing shortages and, you know, some of the developments happening in central Ohio and how it affects everything out, you know, down 33 on this way. You know, how can you speak to supporting some of that, you know, through the shortage, you know, and going forward?

S**Scott Duff** 27:13

I think here in central Ohio, we're going to have a construction boom for the next 5 to 10 years. You have in New Albany— everybody ought to take a trip over there on Saturday or Sunday next year and see all the construction that's going to take place for Intel. It's going to be huge. They need over 7,000 construction workers just to get the project rolling and just to organize that many. But so with all that coming into the area, all the new warehouses that will be needed, housing will be needed. We, we provide concrete for Fisher Homes in the Hilliard, Powell, and Dublin area, and I was showing it to Jason earlier. They had projected they would sell 460 homes just last year, and next year they have projects for 500 homes, 700 homes. The home building business is going to be phenomenal. And so if you, if anybody, young person, male or female, that wants to learn about construction, plumbing, drywall, electric— Trades are hot. The trades are hot. Yeah. I mean, that those jobs are going to be there and they're going to be very good paying jobs. Yeah. So I'm excited for the next 5 to 10 years. I think Ohio will be a hotbed for construction.

J**Jason Duff** 28:30

Yeah. No, that's great. I think you, you know, have a really unique perspective of seeing, you know, all that happening. And so I appreciate you sharing that.

S**Scott Duff** 28:39

You're welcome.

J**Jason Duff** 28:41

What, uh, when you think of the ways that Ohio Ready Mix and Duff Quarry and family business have impacted the area, what are some of the things that people don't know about the housing developments and industrial parks and other things that you've helped kind of do and spur in the community?

S**Scott Duff** 28:58

Well, back in 1985, my brother Dave and I, we went with Indian Meadows. We put the First Street in over there, and there's over 110 lots. It took from 1985, and I think Dave, he finished up selling the last lot about 2005. So it took 20 years to sell, for him to sell 100 of the homes. And we, we made the lots big, maybe a little bigger than we should have. They're about a little over an acre, but that appeals very much to a young family that need space and playing in the yard. So we did Indian Meadows. We also, over the industrial park over by Honda Transmission, where you have World Class Plastics and you have the knife sharpening place there too, and we put that in. And then you, Jason, put in the self-storage there across from Honda Transmission. So those are some of the projects that we participated in.

J**Jason Duff** 30:04

So if you think about— that's the other thing that, uh, you know, once a family business gets going, there's other ways that they can plug in from an economic development standpoint. And what was neat about renovating, uh, or I'd say purchasing that property and rezoning it, is that those new projects sold more construction materials. So when you build a new house, they used our products. And so it was like vertically integrating and finding ways to serve the community even more. And there was a period of time that we also operated a lumberyard.

S**Scott Duff** 30:33

We did. We, uh, my brother Dick Harmon and myself started Ohio Lumber in 1985, and we kept it, I think, around 20 years. And we were approached by the Bruns family, um, that has, uh, Saint different lumber yards, Pickle Lumber, Schochman Lumber, and they had quite a few Amish crews that would work for them putting up pole barns. And it just looked like a better fit for them because we were wanting to expand into the ready-mix business down into the Columbus market. So you only have so much time to do things, and Doug Bruns has taken it over and they've expanded Ohio Lumber. It just amazes me. Where they put up all the, uh, buildings.

J**Jason Duff** 31:23

Doubling down on what you're good at, identifying your goals. Exactly. There's also, you know, it is transitions, and, you know, for many years Ohio Lumber was led by Jeff Ramsey, and Jeff did a great job. Yes. Um, but, you know, Jeff also kind of was looking for new things to do, I think. And, um, it is painful sometimes, like, selling something because there's so much memories and experience and history with that. But I, you know, I think that that has been a great transition to then allow to focus on Ohio Ready Mix and Duff Quarry.

S**Scott Duff** 31:52

So when you look at myself, what my goal in life is, is, you know, Father Time, you know, catches up with you that you can't always continue at the same level that you're used to. So my goal is to make sure that I have a young staff to take over the Ready Mix, and I'm very fortunate. I've got dispatching— I can name names— Brady, Damon. I mean, all the— I've got We've got about 5 or 6 guys that are between 22 and 35, and they're all eager to learn. They're all eager to take on more responsibility. So I think our, the Ready Mix and the quarry are both in good hands to continue.

J**Jason Duff** 32:31

This is another thing just you hear in companies, and I think that continuity plan is really important, but you have different lenses at different points in your life. And I'd probably say that's something too that there may be in our family at times there can be some friction on is that, you know, you have someone that has worked really hard to build something and is in more the mentality, let's protect what we have, but we're not— we don't have to keep growing. And there's a lot of value in that because we've even been talking like in the staffing shortages, like we cannot work any harder. We cannot pack anything more in the day. We cannot be any more efficient. And so then it becomes together. You don't want to stretch yourself too thin then because you're fragile then. But in the same light, as we bring younger people or younger family members into the process, they're growth-minded. Like, they're not in that phase because they still want to prove that they can plant their flag or do their ideas. And I think that's something that you definitely want to have conversations in your organization, your community, whatever that is, because you're approaching it with lenses based on your life experience.

S**Scott Duff** 33:44

Yeah, well, Jeremy, your brother-in-law, was very initial in getting the ready mix to go to the Plain City, Dublin area. And I listened to him and the decision we went down there with a portable plant 3 years ago, it's probably been the best decision we've had for high ready mix. Now we're getting ready to—

J**Jason Duff** 34:05

Can you pause on that though? Can you, when he first brought that up, Can you be honest about, were you a little resistant to that idea?

S**Scott Duff** 34:13

Yeah, I said, you sure you want all these new headaches? Yeah, but yeah, but, uh, and I don't want that. That's— somebody keeps asking me, when are you going to retire? When, when are you going to do something different? Well, I will still stay at the ready mix. I want to see the Plain City plant, uh, the new one put up and, and operated. But I always want to know that when I'm not an asset, that I'm more of a detriment or that I hold people back, then at that point in time, then it's for the younger generation to take over fully. But as long as I can still contribute and I feel I'm an asset, then I'll stay working.

J**Jason Duff** 34:53

Trust me, we can't let him go anywhere. We need him really, really bad. Otherwise, hey, there you go. You got to step in there. Work a little bit harder, Jason. Well, you know, and that's the other thing of how our business changed. And I'd love to hear more of you sharing this story from your lenses and perspective is that we were a pretty small company until the '80s, and there was a news announcement that a large manufacturer was coming to Marysville, Ohio. Do you want to share what that was like for you?

S**Scott Duff** 35:20

If you remember, that was 1978, I believe, when Honda came into the area, and we did the motorcycle plant. We had a plant there at Phil Conley's East Liberty Quarry, and we did the motorcycle plant was the first. My dad had said, "You know, if that motorcycle plant's coming, I think, you know, there's gonna be other people follow 'em to Union County or Logan County," which he said, "Let's go down and look at this." There was an old house that was for sale out, had like 7 or 8 acres. And he said, "What do you think we put a different plant?" I said, "Well, let's go for it, Dad." I mean, so we put the plant—

J**Jason Duff** 36:00

'Cause you were in a growth mindset at that point.

S**Scott Duff** 36:02

And that was in 1978.

J**Jason Duff** 36:04

And just to give some perspective, so this ground was some of the worst farm ground in all of Ohio on old US 33. So between, you know, Bellefontaine and Marysville, okay, there is nothing there. And they had just started in the ready mix industry back in Huntsville, right?

S**Scott Duff** 36:24

And in Bellefontaine, '75.

J**Jason Duff** 36:25

So you got 2 or 3 years later, not a lot of money, but the gumption to say, I think we should plant our flag in the middle of nowhere because there might be— this motorcycle plant might take off.

S

Scott Duff 36:38

Yeah. Yes. And then we put the plant up and then it wasn't more than 6 months later that Honda announced that they were going to build the automobile factory right across the street. Well, everybody said, you must have had insider information.

J

Jason Duff 36:49

You had insider information. I wish we did. We had none of that. It was luck.

S

Scott Duff 36:54

Yeah. Okay. And you talk about dedication. And Scott Hall went from the quarry to manage the load, the trucks there out of that plant. And he just retired about, I think time gets by, about 2 years ago, 3 years ago. But he batched over 1 million yards of concrete out of that plant since that plant's been there. And that's a lot of concrete. That's a lot of concrete.

J

Jason Duff 37:16

Geez. So now you have Huntsville, Bellefontaine, Marysville, and Plain City?

S

Scott Duff 37:21

That's correct.

J

Jason Duff 37:22

Okay. Wow.

S

Scott Duff 37:23

Geez. And if I listen to the younger folks, they're still looking for more sites. Yeah.

J

Jason Duff 37:29

Yeah, we'll see. It's being respectful of both sides, understanding that you've, you've been, you know, here before. Like, you, you, you have a different perspective than them. And like, obviously, you know, growth is a good thing, but I don't know, yet you have to— in a family business, I can only imagine. So for you, what, what, uh, when you think to some of your favorite memories of what you've enjoyed kind of doing in the family business, what are some of those that pop up?

S

Scott Duff 37:57

When you say favorite memories, you mean as far as what jobs that we've—

J

Jason Duff 38:01

could be jobs, could be, you know, this is, I just remember when this happened and just that was really neat or really special. I guess just thinking back over the time that you've worked at the quarry and the Ready Mix, any, any special memories come to mind?

S**Scott Duff** 38:15

Well, I think it's, it's been a pleasure to meet all the different salesmen that have come into the Ready Mix. I mean, I've learned a lot of knowledge from You know, I remember Larry Stevens that worked for Southwestern Cement, and I never— we never bought anything from him, but he would stop in like once a month and just to check on how we were doing. And that guy told me one thing in life. He said, Scott, if you said— if you can go through life and you have 5 good friends that support you and are, you know, true friends, you're a lucky man. And I always remember that.

J**Jason Duff** 38:56

That's good advice, right? And sometimes it's those people— and that's kind of another neat story— we never bought a single thing from him, but he still came in and wanted to find ways to add value.

S**Scott Duff** 39:09

Yeah, and he did.

J**Jason Duff** 39:11

He did. Can I— can I— even those people that maybe are in a sales career oriented now That's a really important life lesson. It's not gimmicky.

S**Scott Duff** 39:19

No, you got to learn the person. You got to show a genuine interest in knowing them and what they do in life. And I think that gets you in the door.

J**Jason Duff** 39:29

Yeah, it's relationships, right?

S**Scott Duff** 39:31

It is all relationships.

J**Jason Duff** 39:32

Care about the person and not just trying to make the next sale. And, you know, we had Kurt Weiskopf on the podcast and, you know, if you're in sales and wanting to hear more about that, I feel like that's a pretty good episode. If you haven't listened to that, that's a great episode talking about the same thing, relationships. And it doesn't have to be fake. You can be authentic in doing it, and you can see here, you know, the difference in the impact that it makes.

S**Scott Duff** 39:53

And I think when you do a job for a certain company and you perform well and you give them a good quality product at a fair price, that'll also sell you the next job. And I think that's what Ohio Ready Mix and Duff Quarry— we have always given service to the large jobs, to the small contractor, as just as important. And that's what makes you— and I mean, I— it's how you treat people, generally how you treat people, and you'll get the business.

J**Jason Duff** 40:21

Yeah. So when I, uh, was kind of talking, you know, when I was graduating high school, no one in my family actually went off to get a college degree. And there's nothing wrong with that because you can see obviously the success that's right, that's come from that. Um, but you know, it was a very kind of a little uncomfortable conversation when I said I'm gonna go off to college and I'm gonna be a music major. And you know, the The thing that I think came full circle is that that experience for me gave me confidence and I met mentors and leaders that I would never have been exposed to.

S**Scott Duff** 40:56

I agree with you, Jason. I think it broadened your horizons and there was more people that you gained information and advice from than just in local.

J**Jason Duff** 41:08

But for you, one thing that I always remember you speaking about as a point of pride is that you entered into the Dale Carnegie course.

S**Scott Duff** 41:17

That was why I was still a junior in high school. I remember it wasn't my idea, but it was my dad's idea, so that, um, and back then it was, you know, How to Win Friends and Influence People. That was the book that was given to you. Wow. And I remember going up to Lima. A fellow named Bill Mays was the instructor for that., and I was just a junior in high school, and it was pretty beneficial. It gave you— every week that you went up there, you got up in front of people and you gave a situation or a speech on how you would handle certain situations.

J**Jason Duff** 41:58

So the 3 C's— and I'll always like— this was something that, that came out of that book is never criticize, never condemn, and never complain. So another golden nugget of advice— wow— is if you can just simply remember those 3 C's, right, you can go pretty darn far in life.

S**Scott Duff** 42:16

Well, I remember when people say, how are you doing? You always say terrific, and they wonder what is up his sleeve.

J

Jason Duff 42:25

That's awesome. Yeah. Um, Jason, what do you think the role of family business— to kind of bring it back to family business here— affected you and the work that you're doing today? It's been everything.

S

Scott Duff 42:37

Yeah.

J

Jason Duff 42:37

Um, you know, I think some of my best memories of family is, is what we were able and what we still are able to build together. Um, you know, it was, you know, the chance to go to the Reddy Mix to see my grandparents every day, to see my parents every day. And like, I also think emulating— you kind of watch their behavior, their patterns, and you, you want to aspire to impress them. You want to— you want them to be proud of you. But you also— there's also a little bit of like, I want to do— I want to do better.

S

Scott Duff 43:09

Yeah.

J

Jason Duff 43:10

How can I take what I've learned and actually do something even greater? And so I think, um, and not that— and then those are the positives. The, the, the pain side of it is, is that, um, you know, we, we probably should have taken a lot more trips together.

S

Scott Duff 43:27

You don't play.

J

Jason Duff 43:28

You—

S

Scott Duff 43:28

your work is—

J**Jason Duff** 43:30

you're— it's a life. It's our life. Yeah. And so, you know, the, the there's sacrifices in health. There's, um, you, you, you run raw and exhausted most all the time. But, you know, if you don't know any different— and I, I kind of got to use this analogy on another podcast. I, I always would watch sled dogs, like, and like, I thought like, oh, that's so inhumane that these dogs that pull, you know, these carts. And, and the dogs wake up every day excited to pull sleds. If you take the sled away from them That's all they know. That's all they know. And they're not happy. Like, and so it's a little strange when I try to use that analogy, explain to other people this. That's all we know. Yeah. But, but for me, seeing the impact that the family has had on the community, and it's not just the family, it is the entire team, employees, culture, like that's the service that has been done and the wealth that has been created. And that's just not just for the family, that's for everyone. It, it's completely inspiring. Yeah. And what's neat is what I've learned of watching, you know, you kind of get passed from generation to generation. You get this collective knowledge because it's the stories. Like, I remember the stories of growing up, of hearing things that being a 10-year-old that probably someone that would be in their 20s or 30s would get. So like, I, when some people ask me, and I think people have said this to me too, I'm kind of, I feel like a 60-year-old in the the capacity of my business and life knowledge. Um, but it's because I had— I had to grow up pretty quickly.

S**Scott Duff** 45:05

Yeah, being young, you were given a lot of responsibility early. So, you know, so was I.

J**Jason Duff** 45:11

Yeah, well, you, you got— you got taken to meetings that a 10-year-old would never get taken to. And, and then, you know, I think once the trust factor was there, it's like, you go handle this, I trust you to do it. Yeah. And then your success is just kind of built on the shoulders of, you know, those who are before you. It is. And, and I think too, the— it's okay. And that's the other thing I want to say. We have other family members and cousins that aren't active in the day-to-day. Like, I, I love my sister, but Ashley does not want to be a part of the family business.

S**Scott Duff** 45:44

She has her own business.

J**Jason Duff** 45:46

She does. And, and, you know, she operates this incredible yoga studio called Breakthrough Soul Care. And is, you know, with, with her ministry and the work that she's doing in the church, like, I am so darn proud of her and I am too of what she's doing. So she's carving her own way too. Yeah, that's awesome. Thank you for sharing that. And thank you so much just for all the work you've done throughout the years and building our communities quite literally. And then, you know, the impact obviously here on Jason and, you know, everything else is just really cool to kind of go back and see how it all played out. So appreciate you. Thanks for being on the podcast and sharing some of those stories. You're welcome. Um, what are some of the— have you had any like, uh, resource, whether it was— you talked about the different conferences or anything that was just like impactful for you, or a book or a mentor or something that really helped you in your journey?

S**Scott Duff** 46:37

Well, that's a good question. The cement companies, they put on technical seminars to show you the latest batching techniques, the latest, uh, admixtures that they have to make concrete do different things. Uh, that's pretty helpful, um, for everyone.

J**Jason Duff** 46:59

I know that listeners are really excited about that. Yeah, but no, in the concrete industry, really. And truthfully, Dad, the, the thing that I think is awesome about him is that he's learning on the job every day.

S**Scott Duff** 47:11

Yeah. Yes, the new technology is, uh, you know I don't want to say I resist change, but I look at it like, oh no, I got to—

J**Jason Duff** 47:20

I put a new phone system in this week. He's so excited about it.

S**Scott Duff** 47:22

I got all kinds of new buttons. So yeah, Jason's right. I like— if everything's working, let's please don't change it. But it seems like it gets changed all the time.

J**Jason Duff** 47:35

And then the last thing I want to— does Ready Mix have a website or anything that— or social media? Yeah, www.ohioredimix.com. And we're also on Facebook and Instagram.

S**Scott Duff** 47:45

And our contractors from this area, like Gary Alexander, he's constantly posting jobs, Marker Construction jobs that we're part of, and, and that a lot of times will take a video of us on an early morning pour. And that's something Jason mentioned, it used to be 6 AM was an early morning pour. Well, now the contractors are liking to start at 3 o'clock, 2:30, 3 o'clock Well, that takes a dedicated crew to stick around till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. That's one thing that we have to get a better handle of is not make, you know, ask our employees to work those hours if you don't.

J**Jason Duff** 48:28

I mean, you can't do it all.

S**Scott Duff** 48:29

Yeah. It wears on them. And I feel bad about that. And we need to get that under control.

J**Jason Duff** 48:35

And for the onlookers just to be appreciative of those people that are doing this kind of work.

S**Scott Duff** 48:40

100%. 100%. Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 48:42

Yeah, awesome. Well, thank you so much, Jason. You have any final thoughts for us as we close out this episode? I told you it wasn't going to be too bad. No, no, no, no. Thank you, Dad. Appreciate your, your realness, your, your honesty and your mentorship and love. I mean, this is— this has been awesome. And we— this journey continues to unfold. So I hope people continue to follow us.

S**Scott Duff** 49:04

I had no idea what questions were coming.

J**Jason Duff** 49:08

All right. Well,

E**Ethan DeLeon** 49:09

thank you everyone for tuning in and checking out the Small Nation Podcast. You can find us anywhere that you listen to your podcasts, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and even the Small Nation YouTube channel. I hope you're able to pull some value from that conversation and we hope to see you in the next one. If you enjoyed it, be sure to leave a like, comment, or a 5-star review to help more people to discover this podcast. Stay tuned to Small Nation on social media to keep up with all the cool projects that are happening here. And until next time, this is Ethan with the Small Nation Podcast. Signing off. Thanks, everyone.



Scott Duff 49:37

Thank you.