

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Radio station KWED and the Seguin Daily News originally planned to write a feature story about Soechting Motors celebrating its 50th anniversary before learning that LeeRoy Soechting died Sunday. Our editorial staff deems it necessary to salute the late businessman and civic leader and his family for their significant contributions to the Seguin community.*

(Seguin) – Radio Station KWED and the Seguin Daily News today pay tribute to the late prominent businessman and civic leader, LeeRoy Soechting, and his wife of 59 years, Marciel, who is vice president of Soechting Motors.

October is a bittersweet month for the Soechting family who while mourning the loss of their patriarch, inveterate car dealer LeeRoy Soechting, also celebrates their 50th year in business. With integrity, it can be written in the history books that future generations of the family will continue the tradition of excellence in the dealership's operations. After all, they learned from the best, said Sally Maierhofer, the Soechtungs' daughter, who works as secretary and treasurer of the dealership's corporation.

"I think it's the honesty of this dealership. We could probably sell more vehicles. We don't do it if it's not good for the customer. And my husband and my dad are very adamant about that – they're not going to do something if it's not good for you," she said. "We want to sleep at night so we're going to make sure we do things the right way."

The Soechting clan says their heritage and the intense pride that various family members take in running the business are instrumental in the dealership's success.

"Right now, including us, there are seven members of our family working in the dealership. Besides my wife and myself, our daughter (Sally Maierhofer), son-in-law (William Maierhofer), the youngest granddaughter (Jan Wilke) and her husband (Jay Wilke) and the (Lisa Hollub) oldest granddaughter's husband (Clay Hollub) – he is in sales. The youngest granddaughter's husband is in the parts department," said LeeRoy Soechting during a recent interview with radio station KWED and the Seguin Daily News.†

As family, friends and loyal customers cope with the passing of LeeRoy Soechting, they will wholeheartedly continue to embrace the dealership for its decades of stellar customer service. They will also keep in their hearts and minds that the iconic automotive dealer LeeRoy Soechting leaves behind a legacy of demonstrating in his everyday life what it means to be a leader in upholding faith, family, civic responsibility and faithful service to his community.

A former board member of State Bank and member on the advisory board of American Bank of Texas, LeeRoy Soechting was also a longtime congregant of Cross United Church of Christ.

LeeRoy Soechting through the years†earned an untarnished reputation as an esteemed businessman and philanthropic caregiver in supporting youth-oriented events and organizations. He is widely applauded for his unswerving devotion to the Guadalupe County Youth Show in addition to his many other charitable efforts.

During this interview, LeeRoy Soechting, past president of the New Car Dealers Association and recipient of countless awards as a first-class car dealer, reminisced about his modest beginnings in the automotive business.

Before founding†Soechting Motors, located at 603 E. Kingsbury St., which offers the community an array of trusted Pontiacs, Buicks, GMCs and Jeeps, he worked as a car salesman in the late 1940s. He also worked in the capacity of Ford sales manager before establishing Soechting Motor Company, which at its genesis was a used car dealership.

When he first started in the car business, he was about 28 years old, and the first car he sold was a Nash Rambler.

“In October of 1957, my wife, Marciel, and me started Soechting Motors down on Austin Street together. Sally, our only daughter, was starting school,” he said. “In to ’49 and ’50, the old dealership over here where I have the Jeeps – I was a salesman there. Mr. L.L. Ray, he had Nash, Crosby, Packards and Willys – the Jeeps were Willys at the time – and then I went in partnership with a couple of friends as Stahman Motor Company. We started Nash Rambler in January of 1960, and we acquired Oldsmobile in 1969. We started Pontiac and GMC in 1982.”

Through his dealership, Soechting has sold scores of GMC trucks and Buicks over the years.

Soechting said his dealership was previously renowned for selling Oldsmobiles.

“We probably sell more GMCs than we do of anything else,” he said. “Why? Because we’re in truck country. Plus, the fact that we’ve had those for a long time. Buick was really a replacement to us for Oldsmobile. We were Oldsmobile dealers over 35 years. The factory quit making Oldsmobiles. We had just recently had Pontiac GMC for more than 25 years. We’ve had Buicks for three years.”†

Pure and simple, Soechting emphatically said that the secret behind his longevity in the car business is hard work and painstaking detail to meeting customers’ needs.

“You gotta work hard and then have satisfied customers – your customer comes first,” he said. “And service is very important.”

Another key ingredient in sustaining the dealership has been treating employees like members of the family, LeeRoy Soechting added. Longtime employees such as son-in-law and sales manager and vice president William Maierhofer and Royce Harborth, sales, have been with the dealership for more than 30 years each. Mechanic Kevin Krueger has 27 years of service, Larry Ferguson, parts, has 25 years of service, Tony Herrera, assistant service manager, has 25 years of service, B.J. Jeffers, parts manager, has 24 years of experience, Glenn Cook, mechanic, has 23 years of service and Otis Hoffmann has 22 years of service as a mechanic. The elite group of workers undergoes rigorous training on-site to keep abreast of changing trends in the automotive industry, LeeRoy Soechting said.

Marciel Soechting adds that the highly trained, award-winning team's unity, or cohesiveness, has greatly fueled the success of the dealership.

"Just hard work and working together and pleasing customers and being good to your employees," she said. "We treat them like family."