

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Sun Fun Tours and Canada West Coachlines Ltd. is a family-run business that is all about high performance and customer satisfaction.

By Lucie Grys

Keeping it in the family is what Sun Fun Tours and Canada West Coachlines Ltd. is all about. Bernie Driedger bought out the company in 1983 and children Stacey Spencer, Shelley Thiessen and Brennan Driedger became shareholders in 2005, after working for well over a decade in the family-run operation. Now, with over 25 years of experience in the motor coach industry in western Canada, they provide transportation for the Kamloops Blazers Hockey Club, Wells Gray Tours, Sun Fun Tours, Kamloops International Bantam Ice Hockey Tournament, Thompson Rivers University and Sun Peaks Resort - just to name a few. The company's fleet of buses can also be chartered and their drivers and tour leaders are favourites for elementary and secondary schools trip, seniors group excursions, hockey leagues tournaments, weddings, and church outings.

Sun Fun Tours' ground transportation fleet, owned and operated by Canada West Coachlines Ltd., offers a variety of coaches to meet any group's needs or requirements. From 30- to 56-passenger deluxe highway motor coaches, the family provides the service to get clients where they want to go - safely, stylishly and comfortably.

Coordinating the dispatch of 11 coaches, and keeping everything running smoothly and on time is what Stacey Spencer does best. Born and raised in Kamloops, British Columbia, Spencer and her siblings grew up on the buses. "Once we were old enough, we always helped out and

started with cleaning the buses," says Spencer. Her parents, Bernie and Joan Driedger, trained them well and now the whole family works and plays together.

"I was introduced to the motor coach industry when I was nine, and being a family business, there was a lot of shop talk going on at the dinner table, so I'm sure I started picking up on things at an early age," she says. "It has all been learning through hands on, starting at the bottom and working my way up." Their company belongs to some great industry associations and Spencer finds the seminars they hold and the networking opportunities with other people in our industry invaluable.

"Tourism can be a volatile, ever-changing industry and you are always dodging obstacles," Spencer confesses. However, the success of a quarter of a century relies on the family's efforts. With Spencer in charge of sales and dispatch and her sister leading the tour company, her brother uses his skills to head up the maintenance facility and also drives buses. When passengers learn that it's a family affair, they are really thrilled by the experience. The sisters, likewise, have a fantastic time when they are out leading a tour together and their brother drives. When all the children are out of the office, the parents mind the shop.

Working as such a tight knit group must have its downfalls but Spencer says that there really aren't any. Since each person has his/her own role in the business, it all seems to run smoothly and internal problems rarely arise. The sisters are completely happy contributing to the family business in their different roles and even confess that they are glad they don't have to do each other's job. "We each have our own little niche and we're not stepping over toes to make decisions. When we need to make a decision, we make it as a family."

The pride in performance the Driedger family takes in its motor coach company is obvious. They are all extremely dedicated to their various jobs within the business and truly have a passion for sharing the destinations throughout Western Canada with interested travelers. It's this caring and detailed approach that has made them such a success over the past 25 years. And now, with the second generation running the business, travelers and social groups will be able to revel in the excellence and thoughtful planning of Canada West Coachlines and Sun Fun Tours for years down the road. ■

From left to right: Bernie and Joan Driedger and siblings Shelley Thiessen, Stacey Spencer and Brennan Driedger

