

## EXCAVATING ENTREPRENEUR

In 1917, the merger of Moline Sand Company and Moline Channel Ice Company created Moline Consumers Company. A 26-year-old man, by the name of Oscar Ellis, was working his way to the top of the company. In 1941, he reached his destination. Oscar, who started out as a clerk, became the president of Moline Consumers Company, the Midwest's leading producer of aggregates, including crushed stone, sand and gravel. The products are used in various environmental, construction and agricultural programs.

When Oscar was young, his father went west to look for gold during the Gold Rush era. His mother ran a boarding house and was an endearing woman. Oscar would find whatever work he could to help support his mother. Shining shoes and setting pins at a bowling alley were some of Oscar's first duties in the employment field. After growing into a hardworking gentleman, Oscar was married to Mary Fuhrman. They had two children, James (Jim) and Betty.

Oscar enjoyed golfing and spent some of his time as a member of Short Hills Country Club in East Moline. He also enjoyed fishing. In fact, Jim recalls a time when he and his father were fishing at the Mississippi River, in New Boston, Ill. Jim said the wind had been blowing so strong that their fishing boat tipped over. The two of them grabbed onto the top of the capsized vessel and managed to wrap their legs around some branches of a downed tree. After remaining in the river for about eight hours, they received help from another boater passing by. After that incident, Oscar made sure Jim knew how to swim.

Moline Consumers Company was run by Captain James Pearson before Oscar took over as President of the company. With the help of Charlie Loptein, who served as General Manager and Consultant, Oscar became President of Moline Consumers Company, now known as "RiverStoneGroup, Inc." Charlie and Oscar were colleagues for over thirty years. Oscar served as director and president of many other companies that he and his son, Jim, created. Oscar and Jim began opening quarries when Jim came back from serving in World War II. A few of their quarries were opened in places like St. Louis and Edina in Missouri and Quincy and Ottawa in Illinois. Oscar realized a sense of gratification, opening the company's first quarry in Hannibal, Mo. He and Jim opened that quarry without the help of others. Hard work is what Oscar desired of his employees and the people around him were were ready and willing to deliver. Some of the traits that people have taken from Oscar, and continue to apply today, are loyalty and honesty.

Having a sharp eye for business opportunities, Oscar turned his attention to the brewery business. He discovered Warsaw Brewing Company in Warsaw, Ill. The brewery had been caught by the U.S. Treasury Department for distributing alcohol in their "near beer" during prohibition. Oscar and some of his friends bought the business and refinished the location. Home to "Burgemeister Beer," they ran the business for about 25 years. Jim Sr. still keeps some of the beer from the brewery.

Being the sociable type, Oscar made a lot of friends. One of his friends was a man by the name of Charlie Carpentier. Mr. Carpentier happened to be Secretary of State of Illinois. Charlie issued Oscar the license plate number "6." Oscar began receiving notices from Chicago for parking violations. The notices turned into tickets, and Oscar wondered why he was being fined. He knew he had not been in Chicago during the time the parking violations took place. He also knew that his car had been with him the whole time. Oscar found out that the state had issued a duplicate license plate with the number "6" to a priest in Chicago. The state issued each of them new license plates.

The continued growth of a company that has been around for 90 years is a terrific accomplishment. Keeping up with today's technology and government regulations is not an easy task. Yet, RiverStone Group, Inc. has proven itself as a staple of successful businesses in Moline, Ill. This soon-to-be fourth-generation company has withstood the test of time and is something Oscar Ellis, Sr. would be very proud of.