



Mailman's Carpet — A True Family Business

This month's featured NEIRC member is Mailman's Carpet Cleaning in Gardner, MA. The owners of this family business are Tom and Deborah Mailman, who with their son Matt, truly are the business.

Born in 1948, Tom was the elder son of Arthur and Helen Mailman of Gardner, MA. He grew up in this central Massachusetts town, and went to Worcester State College, where he majored in biology. His plans for a medical career however, ended with his enlistment into the United States Air Force. After his military service, Tom reentered the civilian work force, looking for a new career opportunity. One day, Tom received a call from his uncle in Florida. His uncle was researching career options for Tom's cousin in Florida, and discussed the new process called "Steam Carpet Cleaning."

After doing some research of his own, Tom called a Canadian company named Deep Steam, the makers of the original steam cleaning machines. After speaking with Aram Kalsaian, the company's New York City sales rep, Tom bought his first machine, a portable steam-cleaning unit (the first steam carpet cleaning machine in New England). Tom started his company, Mailman's Carpet Cleaning, and in 1970 became the first steam carpet cleaning company in New England.

The business started as a family enterprise right away with Tom doing the cleaning and his mother Helen running the office. This continued for several years and the company grew. After two years, Tom once again became cutting edge, bringing the first truck mounted steam-



Starting 'Em Young — *The Mailman family likes to start members of the family business while they're young. Pictured are three generations of Mailman (from left): Matthew, Jonas and Thomas.*

cleaning machine into New England, a HydraMaster unit. Twenty-five years later, Tom still runs HydraMaster truck mounts. The business also grew enough to run a second truck, as Tom found a good friend and employee in Bob Carrier. Bob continued to work for Tom until he passed away in 1993, upon which Tom went back down to one truck.

Tom's wife, Deborah, has also joined in the business in both the cleaning and administrative sides, and their son, Matt, has been working in the business for two years now. They also have a daughter, Nicole, who is working in Maryland as an assistant manager for the Kay-Bee Toy

Store chain. Now that Matt has joined the business, they are considering going back up to two trucks again. Deborah also plays an integral part in the business. While Tom and Matt do carpet cleaning with truck mounts, she does all the upholstery cleaning with a portable Bridgepoint System 3 upholstery-cleaning machine. Along with the carpet and upholstery cleaning services that Mailman's currently provides, Matt would like to expand into water damage restoration.

Mailman's Carpet Cleaning is an IICRC Certified firm. Both Tom and Matt hold certifications in carpet cleaning and commercial carpet maintenance, and are working towards their Master Cleaner certifications.

As a certified mill inspector, Tom would like to once again become a certified carpet inspector. He always felt

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	LOCATION	SPEAKER
Sept. 21	Manchester, NH	Chris Pond
Sept. 29	Manchester, NH	Craig Jasper
Oct. 8	Wallingford, CT	Doug Bowles

CONVENTIONS

NEIRC 1998 Convention & Trade Show
Sept. 17-19, 1998
Sturbridge Host Hotel
Sturbridge, MA

NEIRC 1999 Convention & Trade Show
Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 1999
Holiday Inn
Manchester, NH

NEIRC, Member Profile

that his biggest challenge in business was when he was first starting out. He was not only starting and promoting a new business, but he also had to sell and promote a whole new process. He was selling and performing steam cleaning while everyone else was still cleaning carpets with rotary shampoo machines. The success of this endeavor has given him reason to be very proud. As Tom states, "28 years in business, as a true family business, and we still enjoy it."

Tom is not used to dwelling on the past, however, and as he looks toward the future of our industry, he sees certification and education as a good trend. As he says, "A more educated cleaner will mean more knowledgeable personnel and a higher quality service."

Tom is also a believer in the importance of membership in industry associations. He was first introduced to the NEIRC (then the New England Institute of Rug Cleaning) by Tom Horrigan, in 1971. Tom feels association membership benefited him greatly by introducing him to sources of education and many friends. In fact, he met his best friend Alan Shade through the NEIRC. Tom also credits Armen Dohanian, one of the founders of the NEIRC, with being a great help and influence over the years. Thanks to Armen, Tom became a member of the Association of Interior Decor Specialists (AIDS International), now known as the Association of Specialists in Cleaning and Restoration (ASCR).

Tom became very involved in the associations, and was part of the group

that put on the very first NEIRC convention. He was NEIRC president from 1982-1983, and was on the advisory board for the Carpet and Upholstery Cleaners (CUCA) division.

Tom left the association in 1987, but has now rejoined so that Matt may have a chance to take advantage of the educational and social opportunities available through membership. He feels it is a chance for Matt to hear other ideas and information than just those from "the old man."

Tom also has many interests outside of the carpet cleaning business. He has been a member of the Gardner Lodge of the Elks since 1970, and is a past Exalted Ruler. He also draws a cartoon strip, which has been published, and is hoping for a syndication offer. ♦