

# 4TH-GENERATION TRUCKING BUSINESS GOES HIGH-TECH



**F**resh out of journalism school in 1995, Jen Farruggio Bennett had snagged a prestigious job working in the White House press office. But she was having a hard time adjusting to the world of politics and politicians.

"It was awful," she recalls. "I just wasn't cut out for that job." She prepared her resume and sent it to her father to review, preparing for another job search. But he had another idea. "Dad said, 'Why don't you send me a resume and apply here?'"

"Here" is Farruggio's Express — a

drayman service and trucking company headquartered in Bristol, PA, and "Dad" is President Sam Farruggio.

Bennett decided to give the family business a try and joined her father, her uncle and her great-uncle in the warren of cubbyholes above the hectic dispatch office. With the trademark Farruggio charm, she is a natural in sales, but it was her ease with the computer that her father saw as an added asset to the company. Now, years later, Farruggio's Express employs a digital imaging system that consolidates all the paper associated with a load into a neat



*Left to right: Joseph Farrugio, Jr., Sam Farrugio, Kim Farrugio and Jennifer Farrugio Bennett with their family portraits in the company conference room.*

computer file. Unlike most other imaging systems in the trucking industry, it is then integrated into the office workflow.

Bennett's sister, Kim Farrugio, has joined the company as well, and the fourth generation has found its place in the family business.

Farrugio's Express certainly doesn't fit the profile of an early adopter of high technology. Guiseppe and Maria Farrugio, Bennett's great-grandparents, founded the company in the early part of the 20th century. Italian bakers, the elder Farrugios made deliveries by horse and carriage. Then, in the early days of autos, they drove the 20 miles to Philadelphia to pick up supplies. Naturally, people asked Guiseppe and Maria to take packages to the city for them; before long, Farrugio's Bristol and Philadelphia Auto Express was born. When the Interstate Commerce Commission began to issue motor carrier numbers in the 1930s, Farrugio's was grandfathered into the system. Today, Vice President George Weinberg says he has yet to see an earlier ICC on a truck.

Over the years, Farrugio's Express grew into a drayage service and carrier to the ports of Philadelphia, Baltimore, Norfolk and NY/NJ with six terminals. The Baltimore office is the busiest, moving approximately 140 boxes daily between the two rail yards, the Port and

warehouses within a 150-mile radius.

"We were literally getting buried in papers," says President Sam Farrugio. "Think about it, we move about 70,000 boxes annually. Each of those moves generates at least five documents; that is 350,000 pieces of paper! I was looking for a computer system that could help us keep documentation for each move organized and generate our billing and payroll."

That's when Bennett got on the case. She has the computer know-how and the familiarity with the trucking industry's requirements to work extensively with EBE, an Illinois-based software developer, to tailor their SHIPS (Shipping & Hauling Image Processing System) scanning program to Farrugio's needs.

Typically, scanning documents is as simple as using a copier, but trucking paperwork comes in various sizes and shapes and often gets folded as it moves from the truck to the office. Very large trucking firms have dedicated software developed for just their needs, but Bennett, together with Paperless Solutions and EBE, had to work out a way to customize a program for the medium-sized Farrugio's Express, and ultimately other draymen.

"This system has eliminated a weekly mailing from our Baltimore office — that box weighed 50 pounds!" says Farrugio, whose goal is to go as paperless as possible.

## Baltimore Piers Program

"The beauty of the Baltimore Piers (BALPIERS) Program is its simplicity," says Sam Azzarello, General Manager of Logistics for the Port of Baltimore. Developed by Joe Green, Vice President of Business Development at Farrugio's Express, the program is a unique rail-truck-shiping combination that streamlines international shipments through the Port of Baltimore. Farrugio's Express facilitates and manages the program in its entirety. Just one word — BALPIERS — on a container tells the tale.

"To either one of the railroads serving Baltimore, CSX or Norfolk Southern, a box marked BALPIERS says, 'expedited Service,'" claims Green. All the documentation for that cargo is in order and it is headed for a ship for export or onto a train for import.

As cost-cutting in shipping companies has led to a reduced workforce to handle the paperwork involved in railroad moves, BALPIERS offers a one-stop shop to international customers.

The Port had long sought a way to allow containers to move efficiently between the intermodal rail ramps in Baltimore and the pier and vice versa. The BALPIERS program fit the bill. For the implementation of the project, forward-thinking Farrugio's Express came onboard enthusiastically to manage the moves. Farrugio's Express provides drayage service to all the BALPIERS boxes.

"Farrugio's Express worked hard to perfect the BALPIERS program for those customers concerned with streamlining their transportation cost, and truly understood the value of using the Port of Baltimore," says Azzarello. He credits Sam Farrugio and Joe Green with taking the time to work through the program to get it up and running.

The Port of Baltimore, known for its innovative customer service initiatives, finds this program beneficial for both the customers and the Port.

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Sam Farruggio is on a mission to get other trucking companies to go “paperless” as well. He willingly shares the information he and his daughter gathered over the past year while working on their own system.

Of course, there will always be certain parts of the business that will not change quickly, such as the “T” cards, slid into racks lining the walls of the dispatch office. In each vertical slot the “T” card,” named as such because they are shaped like the letter “T,” represents a specific shipment. The card’s location along the racks traces its progress on the road, to or from a ship or train. When the move is complete, the card is placed in a basket in the middle of the room. The pulse of the company can be measured by the cards on



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the walls and jangle of the phones. Bennett says that the system has been in place for so long, she doubts that the "T" card will ever go away.

In the meantime, she is working with the company's Web designer to simplify customer access to their accounts online.

"I want to make navigating this Web site as simple as picking up the phone," says Bennett. "A lot of our customers are not used to using the Internet like this, but once they see how convenient it is, they love it."

The focus on customer satisfaction and innovation that led Guissepe and Maria Farruggio to begin carrying parcels while picking up baking supplies is alive and well in Bristol. ⚓

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