



## Brother's Load pays off Truck Center a success

By Jay Woodard - Fayetteville Observer

Two Fayetteville Brothers were trained for their life's work with the help of the GI Bill. Now James H Smith and James D Smith are giving back. Their company - Smith International Truck Center - sponsors training for their own mechanics. "We send at least three people per year or more to some kind of school," said James H. Smith, majority partner in the business that sells and repairs trucks.

The walls of the company's offices are lined with certificates granted to Smith employees, who get their regular pay while taking training. "One mechanic is leaving this week for a school in rebuilding electronic Detroit's (a truck engine)." Like people in the automotive repair, the technicians at Smith have been almost forced to continuous training. "When they come here, most of them are trained mechanics anyway, but to keep up with the electronics and other complicated things in engines, people have had to keep retraining," Smith said. "There're schools in transmissions, electronics, air-conditioning, rear ends, brakes, electrical wiring."

While the equipment is complicated, the Smith brothers are anything but. The story of their business starts in Raleigh in the early 1960's where they were working as truck mechanics. Greener pastures beckoned. "I took the GI Bill and went to mechanical school in 1960, took my brother with me," said Smith, 58. After World War II, the government created the GI Bill, which provided money for veterans to attend college.

The "we decided we were pretty good at mechanic work. Let's see if we can open a little shop ourselves." Two of their customers were Jack and Jerry McDonald of McDonald Grading Co. of Fayetteville. "They told us about a little shop in Fayetteville that was available. Bruce Farrell at the old 301 Truck Stop had a little building right behind his. It was a two-bay building and we opened there in 1966.

"Ed McLeod (the late founder of Edmac Trucking Co.) gave us a lot of work," Smith said adding that their skill in working on Mack and Cummings truck engines was valuable in the Fayetteville area. Long hours in the heat or cold, seven days a week if necessary, laid the foundation for the business, Smith said. "We'd even get calls in the middle of the night that someone had broken down and I would get up and go to work then."

Jack McDonald, who looks after the trucks at McDonald Grading Co. and is a truck dealer, remembers the dedication. "They'd work until 8, 9, 10 o'clock at night, whatever it took to get the work out. They're not lazy. They've worked hard and accomplished a lot. I'm proud of them."

**SMITH INTERNATIONAL**

- Service Department
- Paint & Body Shop
- Parts Department
- New & Used Trucks
- Machine Shop
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**SMITH INTERNATIONAL TRUCK CENTER**

**CATERPILLAR** **Allison Transmission**

**Services**  
For all your light, medium and heavy duty truck repairs contact our service department. We do many types of electronic engine repairs. Smith has state of the art electronic test equipment and the experience on several different electrical and electronic engines. We also do engine, drivetrain rebuilding and repairs.

**Service Dept Hours:**  
M-F 8:00am - 5:00pm

**Trucks for SALE!**  
We have a wide selection of trucks for sale. From MAC's to International to Volkos, we have the right truck for you in our large trucking center.

**Contact Form**

Name   
E-mail Address   
Details of Request   
Submit

**Our Locations**

Fayetteville Location 918 Cedar Creek Rd. Fayetteville, NC 28301 Phone=1-910-483-3471 1-800-682-2906 (Toll Free in NC)	Lumberton Location 3190 West 5th St. Lumberton, NC 28358 Phone=1-910-671-9111 1-800-260-4222 (Toll Free in NC)
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**Email Us**  
info@smithinternationaltruckcenter.com

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## Brother's Load pays off 'Continued

By 1969, the Smith brothers had saved enough money to pay cash for a three-acre site on Cedar Creek Road. They had enough money left over to pay cash for half the \$38,000 cost of a 6,000 square-foot building. The rest they borrowed. They've done little borrowing since, Smith said. "We don't take on a lot of debt. If we can't afford to do something we don't do it."

Smith estimates he saved about \$100,000 not hiring a general contractor for their soon-to-open truck center in Lumberton. "We did the contracting ourselves." They added a wing to their home office building that is the same size as their original building.

The brother's decision to avoid any debt may spring from memory of the business' early days. "We had \$400 when we started," Smith said. "And we were able to borrow \$800 from the bank."

David Brock, manager of T&H brake service, remembers those days in 1966.

"(James) started out with a toolbox and a shed," Brock said. I don't think that building even had any heat. I've been in the business 33 years and I don't know of anyone else who's taken as little and made as much of it as he has. He's a fair, honest businessman. He's a real success story."

While Smith, a plainspoken, unpretentious man, might hesitate to describe himself as a success story, he will say that he started out with nothing and had to keep a job to support his wife and family while in mechanics school.

He's now partner in a \$7-million business, plays golf at his country club and collects antique cars. In fact, one day last week, he said he might leave early Friday to go to the mountains where he would drive his prize winning 1930 A-Model Ford for a weekend of rest.

Taking a little time off seems a natural thing to do after 29 years in the business. Jack McDonald seems to think so. "They have slowed a lot in the past 10 years," he said of the Smith brothers. "But I have too. After so many years, you use your knowledge instead of your back."