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Charlie Short (at left with his hat pushed back) and his son, Gene who became a partner in his father's trucking company in 1945. The two little girls are Charlie's daughters, Betty (left) and Barbara.



KMCA PRESIDENT

M By Barbara Oringderff
ike Short, the incoming Kansas Motor Carriers Association (KMCA) president is proud to be part of a family business that is one of the oldest trucking companies in Kansas.

Short and Son, Inc., in Goodland was started there by Mike's grandfather, Charles Short in 1934, and has been family owned and operated for 81 consecutive years.

Today, the three Short brothers,

Mike, Dick and Bob operate the trucking company that primarily hauls cattle and some hay and machinery. In their grandfather's day, however, the entrepreneurial Charles Short hauled "Whatever needed hauling", and Mike says that included livestock, farm machinery, and even a railroad boxcar!

All the Short brothers grew up working with their granddad and their dad, Gene (Charlie's son), who died suddenly in 1977, when he was only 53.

"It's a good thing we all got along,"

laughs Mike, "because we've had to work together all our lives! Bob and I mostly drive while Dick takes care of the office and the paper work. We have three other great drivers, and Dick still drives when we need him. Trying to find qualified drivers now, especially those who know about hauling livestock, is a real challenge.

"We've been very fortunate to stay busy, and we can't say enough about our wonderful customers. I'll still be on the road this coming year while I'm KMCA president," explains Mike,



The Short fleet in 2012 — Kenworths with Wilson trailers.



“because I feel more comfortable there than in the office.”

Mike Short has been a member of the KMCA board for a number of years, and knew that usually led to serving as president: “But I was actually surprised by it being this year. Someone else was in line to take over as president, but he had some unforeseen business commitments and felt he just couldn’t do it, so Tom Whitaker (KMCA executive director), called me and said, ‘Mike, I want you to get on line to be president.’ I had to do some thinking about it, and I called Mary Tarkington (former KMCA executive director and an old friend) and Mary said: ‘Mike, I’ve known all your family forever and I think you should do it.’

“So, here I am, and, yeah, I’m excited about the challenge,” he says. “It’s going to be a busy year for us, because Dick is the new Worthy Grand Patron of the Eastern Star, and he and his wife, Sarah, who has retired from teaching, are already traveling all over Kansas, but, there’s no slackin’

here,” he jokes.

“We had a conference call board meeting last week, and Tom reported on what was going on. He’s an awesome guy. I’ve known Tom forever, and I think what he does for Kansas Motor Carriers is great!” says Mike, “He puts in a lot of hours and he’s not afraid to go to our (Kansas) legislature and tell them what we think. Tom gets along well with the railroad people, too. Some of the laws that affect us also affect them. All of transportation is a real challenge right now. It’s a little scary to me. Growing up in the trucking business I imagined there was always going to be somebody there to haul cattle, etc., when they were needed, but now our government has put so many rules and regulations on us that lots of the guys in this business just say its not worth it, and they will just find something else to do. It’s sad, but I think the government is just going to phase out some of the good people in the trucking industry.”

One of the big issues coming up for truckers will be going from paper log books to electronic log books, and Mike has a take on that:

“I think this change will upset the agricultural people, those who haul livestock, grain, hay, etc. the most because our schedules are definitely different, not as predictable as other companies who don’t work with live animals or worry as much about the weather,” Mike explains.

“For instance, sometimes when we go to a feedlot or a packing plant with cattle there might be 10 or 12 other loads of cattle already there and we have to wait. We all (truckers) have to observe our federal laws,” he says, “but sometimes we have a real challenge trying to log our day and get done what we need to do in the 14 hours we are allowed.” (Drivers can drive 11 hours, within the 14 allowed and then must take 10 hours off.)

“Another problem I think we’re facing here in Kansas because of the financial condition of our state, is that some of our roads are getting to be absolutely terrible and with the state budget being cut back, I’m afraid it will be a struggle for some of our counties to keep up their roads,” says Short. “And that affects the safety of everybody driving not just truckers. Unfortunately, I don’t think there is any more money, and we are likely to have some bad Kansas road conditions for the next two or three years or longer.”

All problems aside, Mike Short is enthusiastic about taking over as KMCA president in September (2015).

“Yeah, I’m looking forward to it, and to working with our KMCA executive board. They are a good group of people, and willing to listen to everybody’s ideas. We get along, even though we don’t always agree on everything, and that’s also true of my family. We talk every day, sometimes more than once, and I feel lucky to have a family that supports each other and gets along. That’s what it’s all about.” ■

