



DAY
in the
LIFE

Whitney Case considers his truck to be his office because he spends more time there than anywhere else.

The Long Haul with a Shortline Salesman

Cummings & Bricker shortline salesman visits dealers throughout Maryland, Pennsylvania

By Mackane Vogel, Associate Editor

It's around 8:00 a.m. as I approach the home of Whitney Case just south of the Pennsylvania state line near Bel Air, Md. I am sufficiently caffeinated and geared up for what I expect to be a long but adventurous day-in-the-life of a shortline salesman.

Case is a territory manager for Cummings and Bricker (C&B) and travels through Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and parts of New Jersey visiting ag dealers and selling them various products that C&B carries. The company aims to bridge the gap between manufacturer and dealer, providing tools and functions which lower distribution costs through warehousing and marketing.

My morning began when I left my childhood home in Baltimore, Md., where I have been camping out on a work trip for the better part of two weeks. I left around 7:00 a.m. to make the roughly 1 hour drive to meet up with Case. I've spent the past week and change visiting farmers and dealers throughout Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware, but today I am putting my shortline salesman hat on.

Any good salesman in any industry has his phone on 24/7...

8:12 a.m.

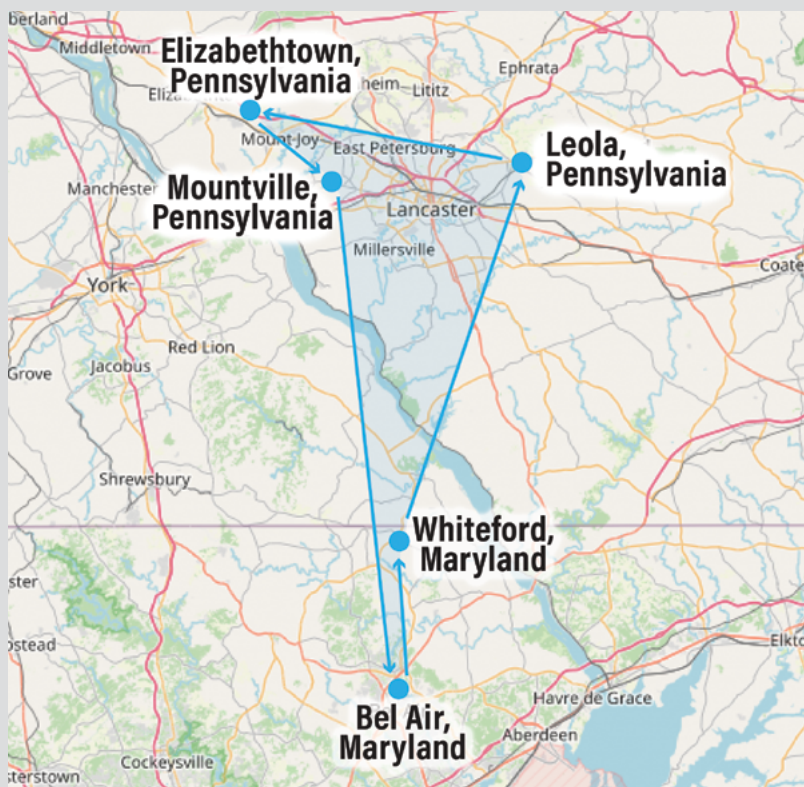
I give Case a call to let him know that I think I have arrived, although I'm a little unsure — there is a barn with some cattle and a long winding driveway that leads up the hill. He tells me to continue up the driveway and as I approach the top of the hill, I see him standing next to his big silver Dodge pickup truck.

As we jump in the truck and start heading toward our first destination, I remind Case that I'm mostly planning to be a fly on the wall and observe him during a normal work day.

"A normal day would have started about 2 hours ago for me, just so you know. Plus, I hate flies," he grins as he glances over at me.

A North Carolina State graduate, Case majored in agriculture with the intent of coming back home to the Whiteford, Md., area to help manage his family's farm. When he came back, he ended up getting a job with the local John Deere dealership — Atlantic Tractor, which happens to be our first stop of the morning — and later was hired by C&B.

As Case tells me more about his background, he pulls up to a traffic light and waves to a truck driver that passes in front of him.



Approximate Mileage Breakdown:

Baltimore to Bel Air: 40 miles

Bel Air to Whiteford: 20 miles

Whiteford to Leola: 50 miles

Leola to Elizabethtown: 25 miles

Elizabethtown to Mountville: 20 miles

Mountville to Bel Air: 50 miles

Bel Air to Baltimore: 40 miles

Total: 245 miles

“There goes my uncle,” Case says. “Can you tell I grew up around here?”

8:41 a.m.

We arrive at Atlantic Tractor and Case greets a few of his former co-workers. While he used to work at this very location as a store manager and inventory control person, he now frequents the store not only on behalf of C&B (Atlantic Tractor carries not just Deere products but also Stihl and several other shortlines), but as a customer.

After dropping off a baler and talking business with a few of his clients, he stops by the parts counter to pick up a part he needs for his own farm operation. Case has the unique advantage of having worked on almost all sides of agriculture. As a farmer himself, he knows what customers are looking for and as a former dealership employee, he understands that side of the business too.

Our first stop ends up being a relatively quick one because we have a lot of business to do in the greater Lancaster County region of Pennsylvania.

Case is planning on pitching some products to a few clients and he also has logistics to discuss with some of them regarding the upcoming Keystone Farm Show and Ag Progress Days — two of the biggest ag expos in the state of Pennsylvania.

Another part of Case’s job involves helping his dealer clients decide what machinery they want displayed at various farm trade shows and helping coordinate the transportation of certain products.

My truck is my office. I spend more time on the road than I do in my house or anywhere else...

9:37 a.m.

We leave Atlantic Tractor and head north for Leola, Pa., where we will stop at Agriteer’s newest location. The drive will take about an hour. Case refers to this part of his day as office hours.

“I spend more time in my truck than I do in my house or anywhere else,” Case says. “My truck really is my office.”

He explains that while Agriteer is another relatively large dealership, that won’t be the case for all the visits we make. C&B works with many different types and sizes of dealerships.

Agriteer carries Fendt, Claas and Massey Ferguson products, but much like Atlantic Tractor, they also sell products from about a dozen other shortlines including Landoll, Drago and Tubeline. Case has built up a good relationship with several of the representatives at the Leola location. He tells me how important trust is when it comes to being a shortline salesman. One of the reasons he likes working for C&B is because a lot of the values needed to sell shortline equipment are similar to running a family farm or a small family dealership.

“That’s one of the things I always really liked about working with Cummings and Bricker,” Case says. “It’s still basically a small, family-owned business. We’re flexible. We’re easy to work with. You need help with that? No problem. We’re going to take care of it. You don’t get that kind of thing from everyone in this industry.”

Case never turns his phone off and considers himself to be on the clock pretty much 24/7. In fact, he is technically on vacation — his wife and kids went down to their favorite vacation spot the night before I met up with him, but

Case says he will get there a couple days late.

10:46 a.m.

We arrive at Agriteer in Leola and I follow Case inside. He’s got his iPad with him, ready to show off some new

products that could be of interest to this dealership. Case first says hello to sales rep Richard Rutt. He breaks the ice by asking about a neighbor he has who used to be his customer at Atlantic Tractor but is now a customer of Rutt's at Agriteer. After some brief banter, Rutt asks Case what else is going on.

Case hands over some literature regarding HLA Attachments, Diamond, Rossi and a few other shortlines. He tells Rutt that he knows Agriteer has a lot of brands and products on their plate at the moment, but he wants to at least show him a few new products that might be of interest to him.

They discuss the pamphlets and Case shows Rutt a few videos of some Rossi products that he has been impressed with in his own use — another instance where his farming experience helps add some credibility.

Case also shares this info with sales reps Derek Weaver and Randall Wenger, who each have an office on either side of Rutt's at the Leola Agriteer location. While Case speaks with Wenger, I



Whitney Case (r) chats about upcoming trade shows and McHale balers with Austin Zimmerman (l) at Ag-Com, a shortline dealership in Elizabethtown, Pa.

notice he has a copy of the June edition of *Farm Equipment* sitting on his desk. The cover story depicts an installment of our color conversion series — a customer switching from Massey Ferguson products to New Holland.

"Not the story we want to hear but hey, it happens and maybe we can learn from it," Wenger says.

A few minutes later while Case explains new product information and opportunities to Weaver, I notice a few key things about the conversation.

First, this type of sales pitch isn't even a long lost cousin of the type of cold calls I once made for a company which shall not be named right after I got out of college — there is no hostility or choice words. Instead, it's all about trust and wanting to help each other out.

Case tells Weaver even if he and his Agriteer associates are not interested in saying yes to a new product line right this second, he is here to share information with them and keep them in the know on possible opportunities.

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MACKINNE VOGEL

Whitney Case (r) uses his iPad to show Justin Weaver (l) some product videos on the front lot of Ebling's Service Plus, a shortline dealership in Mountville, Pa.

"It's just something for you guys to think about," Case says. "It's an opportunity and this way you can't say I never offered it to you."

The products in question include Rossi roller bars, HLA Attachments straw & lime discharge buckets and a potential opportunity with a new product line from Dion.

Weaver and Case discuss these options for a solid 30-40 minutes while continuing to look over videos and

brochures. Eventually, Case decides to leave his Agriteer clients with the information he has presented and tells them to think it over.

Even though no deals were decided upon, it is very clear that both sides considered it a productive and beneficial meeting.

11:57 a.m.

We depart from Agriteer and make our way west to a Lancaster County

lunch staple — Shady Maple Smorgasbord. On our way there, Case explains how he measures success in his role and just as I suspected, it's not as black and white as asking yourself 'did I make a sale today?'

"Companies will always measure success with numbers," Case says. "But on a personal level, I look at it a little differently. If you look at all the visits you made in a given day, ask yourself — was anybody unhappy? Was anybody upset with me? No. They're all happy with me and with Cummings & Brickner because they're happy with the products we have already sold them. If you can keep everyone happy and maintain that attitude at every dealership you go to, the sales will follow."

12:15 a.m.

We stop for lunch and the Shady Maple Smorgasbord immediately lives up to its name as Case and I both fill our plates with a smorgasbord of different items from the buffet. The place is also jam packed, which is always a good

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sign at any restaurant. The mashed potatoes and gravy took the number one prize for me with the pulled pork trailing just slightly behind.

1:56 p.m.

After lunch we cover another 30 miles or so to get over to Ag-Com in Elizabethtown, Pa. At the start of our day, Case made it clear that he wanted to take me to 4 distinctly different dealerships to give me a true feel for the wide variety of dealers that C&B works with. As soon as we arrive at Ag-Com, I can already tell just how different this is from our first two stops. This is a much smaller, family-owned operation with two brothers — Austin and Cody Zimmerman — working as the main technicians.

Case says Ag-Com ended up as a C&B dealer when Case went to them with the opportunity to become a stocking McHale dealer. McHale is one of the premium lines that C&B carries and Ag-Com has done well with the product line so far selling round balers, mowers, bale wrappers, hay rakes and more.

Today, Case has a few items on the agenda that he wants to talk over with the Zimmermans. First, because their partnership is still somewhat new, he wants to check in and see how they're doing with the products.

"I want to make sure that they are moving along, getting stuff done on hay season products and that they don't need any additional help from me," Case tells me. "It's a good idea to see where they are on inventory. That way I can report back and make a note that they've got two bailers left and think they've got them sold. This way we can do some forecasting and find out what's working and what's not working from a marketing standpoint."

This goes back to the way Case measures success. He wants to make it abundantly clear to his clients that he is there to help them and is a partner with them. Just because he has made a sale to them, does not mean his work is done.

Another item Case covers while chatting with the Zimmerman brothers is Ag Progress Days — Pennsylvania's largest outdoor ag expo which is held annually at Penn State's campus.

Case shows off some Rossi products to them and the brothers take interest in a specific Rossi rake. They ask if Case can arrange for it to be on Ag-Com's lot at Ag Progress Days — a good initial sign that they are serious about their interest in this product.

This visit certainly checks the box as a success and a good use of time for Case. And there's still time for us to

make one more stop as we make our way back down south.

4:14 p.m.

About 20 miles later, we arrive at Ebling's Service Plus in Mountville, Pa.



Learn More Online

To read more about Mackane Vogel's East Coast road trip, check out the full blog here FarmEquipment.com/0924



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This is yet another distinctly different company from our prior 3 stops. Ebling's has historically been much more focused on lawn & garden, but Case tells me that recently, they've been dipping their toes in the water of the ag and construction industries. They currently carry products from Kioti, Avant, Stihl and several other shortlines.

Case says that because this final visit of the day is getting dangerously close to the end of the work day for his clients at Ebling's, it's important to take a more casual approach and not be too forward about pushing sales. Instead, Case uses this visit to chat with sales manager Justin Weaver about the overall state of the business, how satisfied they have been with C&B and, like the prior visit, if there is anything special they might want to arrange to have at their booth

for upcoming ag expos in the area.

Case and Weaver chat for 30-40 minutes before the conversation eventually allows Case an opportunity to show Weaver some new product videos. They step outside and begin to review some footage and compare what they are looking at to some pieces of Kioti equipment that Ebling's has on the lot in Mountville.

Once again, Case leaves Weaver and the Ebling's staff with something to think about for the future, rather than trying to be pushy at the end of a long work day.

5:27 p.m.

Case and I are finally done for the day, but we still have a lot of windshield time before we make it back to his place, and I have even more windshield

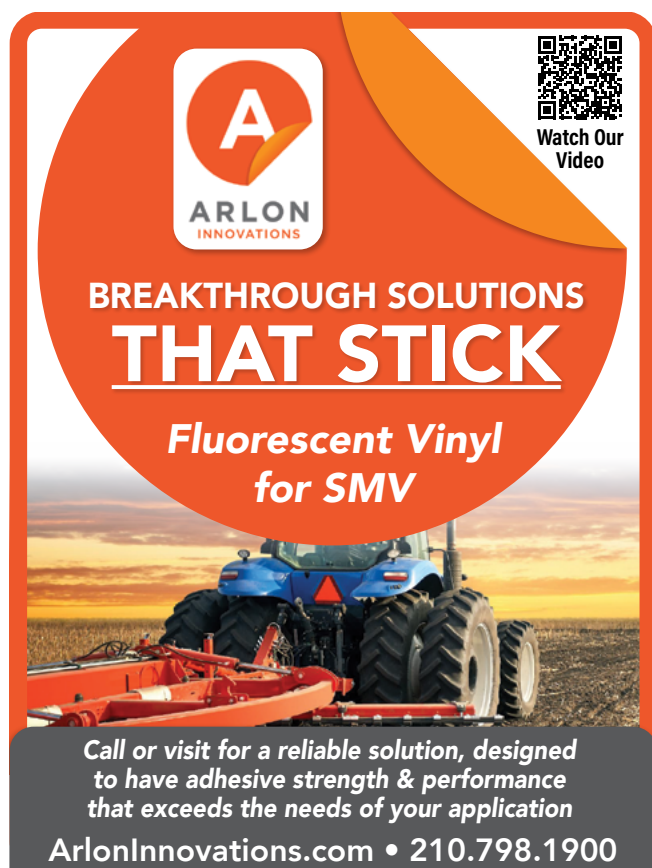
time after that for my drive from his house back to Baltimore City.

I ask him if he's glad to be done for the day. He laughs and tells me he's just getting started. He still has other work to attend to on the farm at home once his day job is complete. And even then, he reminds me that his day job is really never complete.

"Any good salesman in any industry has his phone on 24/7," Case says. "There's no downtime. It's like I told you, today was a vacation day for me. And most days in general don't end for me until about 11:30 p.m. or quarter to midnight."

But it's clear that Case wouldn't have it any other way. He loves what he does and there is a gleaming sense of pride coming from him for another job well done and a full day's work.

And despite what he may tell you, he will get a chance to relax while doing some fishing and ATV riding with his kids on his vacation. But you can be sure that if one of his customers has a question or needs something, they will be able to count on Case for anything at any time. **FE**



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