

Norris Wheel & Brake

As a child, Miller Norris would spend hours working diligently on 500 piece jigsaw puzzles. He was captivated with finding the right piece that would fit perfectly in its designated space. This early love of puzzles would later turn into a curiosity for the interworking of machinery.

At age 12, a neighbor's tractor provided an opportunity to test his natural abilities for repair. "My neighbor allowed me to work on his tractor after school and I learned a great deal by having that hands-on experience," said Norris.

In 1961, at 14 years-old, Norris was hired as a gas pump jockey at Keels Gulf Service Station located at the corner of Hancock and South Jefferson Street. Although, at this young age he was not allowed to work on the cars brought to the station for repair, he watched and learned from the mechanics laboring around him.

"Working at the station gave me a lot of opportunities to observe the process of repair," says Norris. "I found that I enjoyed the actual progression of problem-solving."

As a high school senior, Norris would be forced to test his own skills out on the family car. One evening he found himself in the tempting position of drag racing another teen through downtown Milledgeville. The duel that started as fun ended with Norris wrecking the only car his mother owned.

Norris recalls: "We had to buy a junk car after I wrecked the family one. I then had no choice but to keep that car running. I did just that-without anything but a handful of tools."

Most people would have let this one mishap detour them from future racing endeavors-but not Norris. His appetite had been stirred and led him to years of weekend semi-professional racing. He added: "We had a lot of fun traveling and racing and just loving cars."

The station provided Norris steady employment throughout the high school and college years. In 1971, while still in his early 20s, he decided to take a life changing step and purchase the business-establishing Norris Wheel and Brake. From the beginning, he knew he wanted to earn the trust of his customers. "I've always believed that if you do what is right and treat people with respect, you will earn their business."

This philosophy must have worked well because, in 1986, the business moved in order to expand to its current location at 401 East Hancock Street. "For the first time, we had room to work on multiple cars at the same time and enjoyed protection from the elements," said Norris.

Norris's son Grayson grew up working in his dad's shop and a few years ago joined him as a fulltime mechanic. He observes: "When I was younger, all I wanted to do was work to earn some money. Now that I'm an adult, I can truly appreciate the hard work and sacrifice my dad has made over the years to provide for his family while building a successful business."

He adds that Norris is a positive role model, not only as a father but as a businessman, as well. Grayson says of his dad: "He has always been a trustworthy man who is strong in his Christian

faith. He insists on treating everyone-customers and employees-as family. This is why his business has thrived for 40 plus years and will continue to do so.”