

The hotel-developing, racecar driver of York County



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(Photo: Courtesy of Dave Hogg)

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When the brakes on his racecar failed while traveling at 110 mph on a track in West Virginia a couple years ago, Dave Hogg was in danger of leaving a lot behind, many miles away from his Spring Garden Township home:

A wife and two sons. A thriving real estate company. And a vital role in turning York County into a tourism hot spot.

But Hogg, whose lifelong car passion led him to racing in 1998, managed to escape with "just" a severe concussion when his BMW M3 hit an oak tree at 90 mph, according to the 61-year-old CEO of Springwood Hospitality.

Hogg, a York City native, left the county when he was 17 before returning to start his business 23 years later. He's now working to build a portfolio of high-end hotels in the area.

Anne Druck, president of York County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, said Hogg's hotels have been very popular with tourists and are a major reason hotel occupancy and revenue have increased in the county recently.

Hogg's journey in and out of York has included major risks, difficult times and plenty of success

Constructed in York: Hogg grew up near York Hospital, he said, as his father built up his construction business, Harold H. Hogg Inc.

After graduating from York Suburban Senior High School, Hogg went west to the University of Denver with the idea that he'd study study construction and eventually come back to work for his father. But real estate quickly piqued his interest more.

"I took my first real estate course and remember thinking ... I just found what I really want to do ... and I never looked back," he said.

Hogg's journey back to York included stops in Camp Hill, Evansville, Indiana, Tucson, Arizona and Hunt Valley, where he worked in his father's business.

By 1995, as his brother, Jim Hogg, prepared to buy the company, Dave Hogg remembered a conversation he'd had with his father years earlier.

"Growing up, I used to race (slot cars) with my brother, and I had a red Ferrari Daytona, (and) my whole life, that car just stuck in my head," Dave Hogg said.

"Around 1992, I was talking with my dad and said, 'One of these days, I'm going to own a red Ferrari,' and he said, 'I hope you do, but it's never going to happen unless you start your own business, because you'll never be able to afford a red Ferrari working for somebody else.'"

With that in mind, Hogg started Springwood in York Township and, two years ago, his business had proved successful enough to allow him to purchase that red Ferrari, but not without some bumps along the road.



Dave Hogg, CEO of Springwood Hospitality, photographed next to his racecar in 2002 before his first race at Watkins Glen Raceway. (Photo: Courtesy of Dave Hogg)

Springing up: "I had just moved my wife to York, just built a home, just had our first son, started a business, and now we were out of money," Hogg said, recalling his situation during those early years. "I had \$50,000 saved up (from previous work), and I went through it in six months. It was not a happy time."

Hogg ended up purchasing the former Hungerford wire cloth plant in Shrewsbury from his father and turning the one-story, 60,000-square-foot building into an affordable housing complex for seniors.

"It was a much bigger risk than I realized at the time," Hogg said of the decision. "My house was on the line if it didn't work out."

But the project was such a success that Springwood commissioned two more complexes using the same configuration.

With the capital coming in from those successes, Hogg decided to enter the hotel business, developing a Comfort Inn in Manchester Township and turning his father's Comfort Inn in York Township into a Holiday Inn Express.

But when major roadwork blocked the Holiday Inn's driveway access for seven months, revenue tanked, and the bank was ready to foreclose.

Shortly before an important meeting with the bankers, Hogg decided to risk it all again, scraping together "every dime" he had to pay off the million-dollar mortgage.

"I'll never forget walking into that meeting," Hogg said, smiling, recalling the shock on the bankers' faces when they found out the loan had been paid off. "It felt good ... and we never did any business with them again."

The hotel rebounded once the roadwork was complete, and Springwood has never missed a mortgage payment in its history, Hogg said.

Racing to the future: Hogg has since decided to operate Springwood exclusively as a developer and manager of Hilton and Marriott hotels; the company currently owns and operates five throughout York, Hershey, Lancaster and Hummelstown.

Hogg's decision to exclusively work with Hilton and Marriott was heavily influenced by his future successor, Justin Shelton, who he hired from a hotel management company in Alabama more than six years ago.

Shelton, now president of Springwood, said he had been content in Alabama, but Hogg won him over in their meeting.

"The first time meeting Dave ... was back when swine flu was going around and Dave had it," Shelton said, laughing. "Because I made the trip up here, he continued with the interview, but he wasn't doing very well. I guess you could say he's dedicated."

The other tidbit about his future boss that piqued Shelton's interest was Hogg's involvement with racecar driving.



Dave Hogg, CEO of Springwood Hospitality, regularly competed in the BMW Raceway Series before suffering a severe concussion two years ago from a crash. (Photo: Courtesy of Dave Hogg)

In 2005, Hogg won the BMW Northeast Regional Championship for his class, receiving a plaque, which he said is "definitely a prized possession."

After his crash two years ago left him in a haze for about three months, Hogg promised his wife he'd stop racing, but his passion for cars continues.

Hogg's passion for his business also continues, even as he's worked out a plan for Shelton to eventually take over.

"I really want to help drive success for this next generation because they're going to do great things, and I want to help them get as far as I can before I decide I don't want to do this anymore," Hogg said, "but I'm having fun, so I don't know why I would want to quit."

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