

If the Boot Fits, Sell It



Company support, a line that works in various stores and loyal clientele make selling easy for sales rep Jim Simpson.



Jim gears up for a visit to Simmons in Bastrop, La., an outdoor store of immense proportions.

By Barb Kastens, Assistant Editor

Jim Simpson knows footwear. Across more than three decades, the Georgia Boot sales rep has sold every kind of shoe. He's also held every position the shoe business has to offer, from retail consultant to shoe store owner.

Simpson knows his retailers, too, and what they expect of him. Service is his mantra.

"As long as customer service is around, salesmen will have jobs," he said.

He began his career at 16 working in a small shoe store. Within three years, he was the store manager.

"Back then, it was just Penney's, Sears and Woolworth's. No big boxes," Simpson said. "Retailers have it tough today. You have to be sharp."

He moved on to retail himself for several years, managing a family shoe store in Memphis. Eventually, he began repping for Acme/Dingo while his wife ran the store.

The Urban Cowboy boom days were in full swing and business was good. Then in the early 80s, Western hit bottom and sales plummeted. Simpson went to work for Desa Shoe Co., a quiet company that made ladies' and tennis shoes, and it prospered for a time but eventually failed.

"I was fortunate enough to be noticed by Georgia Boot," Simpson said.

That was 17 years ago. Today, his territory includes northern Louisiana, northern Texas and southern Oklahoma. Simpson talks proudly about the company and his fellow reps. "With Georgia, you could be interviewing any one of them, they're all that good," he said. "It's what we have behind us that's unseen. The product is good, but support is what makes the company."

There are 25 Georgia Boot salesmen, and according to Simpson, all are doing well. "There's no turnover," he said. "There's guys waiting in line for my job, saying, 'would you please retire?' It's a stress-free life, really. Good products, and I'm making a good living."

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