

Industry Mourns Loss of Fred Taylor, OTR Wheel Engineering Founder, Community Leader & Philanthropist

ROME, Ga. – [OTR Wheel Engineering, Inc. \(OTR\)](#) reports that founder, Fredrick (Fred) Taylor, passed away peacefully on December 13, 2021, at the age of 70. Known as a visionary, entrepreneur and innovator, Taylor was also a highly respected community supporter whose acts of generosity and philanthropy benefitted his employees and neighbors alike.

Taylor was born in Pontiac, Michigan, on March 31, 1951, and grew up in the northwestern Michigan town of Ellsworth, where he attended high school. He earned a degree from Michigan Tech University in Houghton, Michigan, in mechanical engineering. After graduation, Taylor returned to his hometown, where he married his wife, Mary Vander Ark. He worked in his family’s business until 1982, when he moved his wife and children to Rome, Georgia, to start his own enterprise.

Taylor founded several businesses but he is best known for his success in founding OTR Wheel Engineering in 1987. Taylor served as CEO of the company until early 2021 when Tom Rizzi was hired, after which he transitioned to the role of Chairman of the Board.

Known for his entrepreneurial spirit, Taylor was the driving force behind the creation and launch of many innovative tire and wheel assemblies, securing numerous patents and trademarks that set the standard in the industry, such as the well-known Outrigger tire. As a result, the company was able to do business with well-known original equipment manufacturers and aftermarket customers, with whom he ultimately enjoyed close personal relationships.

“The characteristic I strive for in my family of companies is to build customer relationships,” said Taylor. “After all the contractual and product negotiations are over, it is the relationship between OTR and our customers that sustained the business over many years.”

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“We’ve lost a great innovator for our company and the industry as a whole,” said Tom Rizzi, OTR CEO and president. “Additionally, his passion for taking care of customers and establishing partnerships is a legacy that will be long-lasting, and it will continue to drive the company forward for many years to come.”

In addition to his contributions to the tire and wheel industry, Taylor was well respected for his philanthropy and heavy involvement within the Rome, Georgia, community. There he supported numerous organizations, including the First Presbyterian Church, the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Unity Christian School and the Boy Scouts of America.

[OTR Wheel Engineering, Inc.](#) is a market-leading global enterprise specializing in off-road mobility solutions for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and the aftermarket. For more information, visit www.otrwheel.com.

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