



ON THE MOVE

Gurney Trucking in Aurora, Utah transports livestock and dry goods all over the west.

Gurney Trucking, headquartered in Aurora, UT, started with one truck in the mid-1980s and today has a fleet of over 65 trucks. Owned and operated by Scott and Jodi Gurney, they have built their business on hauling livestock for growers in central Utah.

Scott grew up on Gurney Land and Livestock, a family ranch owned by his parents, Ken and Jan Gurney, and his brother, Alan Gurney. Scott realized he needed a way to bring in more income. He knew how to drive truck and he wanted to stay in the livestock business. In 1986, Gurney Brothers Inc. was formed by Scott and his brothers, Alan and Brett Gurney. Scott drove the only truck and oversaw the trucking part of the operation while Alan ran the cattle side and Brett served an LDS mission in Australia.

In 1988, Scott met Jodi and they started their life together. In September, Jodi went trucking with Scott. Gurney Brothers had two trucks at this time, and they had to get loads from different companies to keep the trucks running. In 1990, Gurney Trucking was incorporated by Scott, Jodi, Ken and Jan. In the early days of the trucking business, Scott and Jodi would be out on the road together with their small children stopping at payphones to try to get a backhaul from the Midwest to

Utah. Jodi recalls, “We’d haul cattle one direction and then we would unload the cattle, wash the trailers, and put tarps in and then load corn and come back.”

Going over the road with small children required creativity in order to keep the kids occupied. “We would take toys in the sleeper and let them ride their trikes,” said Jodi. “I would unload their toys while Scott was sleeping and when he was loading the truck so the kids could play.”

As the family and the business grew, circumstances necessitated a change in how the business operated. While Scott was on the road, Jodi stayed home with the children and Scott’s sister, Ann Shaw, would bring her three children to the Gurney’s home. Together, Jodi and Ann would manage the business-side of the company. Ann took care of the accounting while Jodi looked for loads, hired drivers and did the payroll. At the time, Scott and Ken were on the road driving.

Working together, the couple was able to steadily grow the business. Part of that growth came from expanding into new markets. Scott set his sights on a commodity he believed would help them get the backhauls needed to ensure profitability – pigs. Since they already had livestock trailers, it seemed like the perfect backhaul.



Photo Credit: Faun Jackson with Faund Images Photography

“He told me, ‘all you need is one load of pigs to make this thing work.’ That’s what he said, and I said, ‘okay, where do I find that?’” said Jodi.

Determined to find an inroad in trucking pigs Jodi researched the industry, found a contact, and persistently called him to see if he needed help. She didn’t take no for an answer, and over the course of a year, Jodi called him at least weekly to see if he had work for them. One day, her efforts paid off when she was offered a challenging load. A driver that was supposed to take a load of pigs from Greeley, CO to Los Angeles for processing never picked-up the load, and time was running out. Jodi’s contact told her he didn’t think they’d be able to make it happen. Assuring him they would, Jodi tracked Scott down and Scott and Ken hit the road.

It was noon, and they had to load in Greeley the next morning and make it to Los Angeles the next day. Tag-teaming the drive, they were able to get the load to the plant on time, proving their abilities as a trucking company. The customer was impressed they delivered the load on time and started giving them more loads. This also opened other opportunities to haul hogs.

In 1994, the Gurneys set-up a meeting with Circle Four Farms and started doing business with the new pig farm in Milford, UT with just a handshake. Scott hauled the first load of pigs. “It took eight hours to load because they were transloading from mini-busses onto the truck. This started out with one load a month, later grew to one load a week, then to three loads a week and now they are up to 150 loads a week along with a written contract. It has changed ownership a few times and is now owned by Smithfield Foods,” said Scott.



Jodi and Scott Gurney



Gurney Trucking’s first two trucks.

In 1996, the Gurneys purchased an old turkey rendering plant in Aurora and turned it into their current headquarters. Jodi transitioned from running the business from her living room to operating it out of a single-wide trailer at their new home base.

As their business grew, it facilitated the need for a more centralized shop to service trucks and dispatch loads without all trucks returning to Aurora. In 2010, the Gurneys bought out a competitor that included trucks and a shop in St. George, UT. The St. George location has given them a lot of flexibility when it comes to managing their business.

The Gurneys are always looking for ways to maximize their miles on the road, and their St. George location helps facilitate this. For instance, they were hauling several empty trailers back from California after they unloaded pigs for processing. One day, Jodi received an email from Ashley Furniture wanting to know if we could haul furniture from California to Salt Lake and Reno. Jodi forwarded the email to Scott. Scott remembered a trailer he had seen while out driving that had hauled livestock one direction and freight back. Scott called Merritt Trailers and asked if they could re-design a trailer like the trailer he had seen.

The re-designed trailers soon started hauling pigs one direction and furniture back. They did this for over five years until Ashley Furniture decided to bring their transportation in house, requiring the Gurneys to find other freight to haul back. They now have 35 trailers that haul pigs one direction and return with freight. To properly transport the new freight, they had to get creative. They started transloading from the hog vans into dry vans in St. George and then delivering into the Denver area. This provided them the trailers needed to bring freight back to the St. George and Cedar City areas.

Growing a business from a few trucks to over 65 necessitates a larger infrastructure. Today, Gurney Trucking employs about 130 people, including 90 drivers, to keep their 65 trucks on the road. In addition to the

drivers, mechanics and wash-out crews; they have a full-time accounting department, safety personnel, payroll, billing and dispatch. "We have after hours dispatch," said Jodi. "We have somebody by a phone 24 hours a day."

The Gurneys employ several people that have been with them since the early days, including Scott's sister Ann Shaw. "We're very family-oriented, that's what we try to do," said Jodi. "We started out being family and not many people can be married 30 some years and work together, and we work together every day."

Scott and Jodi are still very involved with the business. Scott oversees equipment ordering, bids hauls and continually meets with various customers. Jodi oversees both offices and still is very active in hiring every driver. She wants to make sure they feel like they are part of the family organization, "We just treat drivers how we would want them to be treated, and they know that. They know we are just firm, fair and consistent," said Jodi.

The Gurneys have organized some of their routes to allow drivers to be home every night. Part of their workforce is in the Las Vegas area, and those drivers trade out on the Milford to Los Angeles run so drivers can be home at night.

The trucking business keeps the Gurneys busy, but they also take time to help in the community. Scott was the mayor of Aurora for 12 years, Jodi volunteers in the schools and both take time for church callings. Scott never gave up his love for ranching, and today they run a cattle operation in Lost Creek, Central Utah and Wyoming with the help of three full-time cowboys.

When it comes time to work the cows, Scott and Jodi's four children, their spouses, and their grandchildren help with the ranch. Scott and Jodi both like to ride with the crew, and Jodi also takes care of feeding everyone.

Whether they're working on the ranch or in the trucking office, Scott and Jodi have proven to be a successful duo as they've grown their businesses into successful enterprises.



The Scott and Jodi Gurney family.



Jodi and Scott Gurney.