

**RIFE MOTOR COMPANY, INC.
SPANNED THE
REO-DIAMOND REO-GIANT ERAS**

An important element in a motor vehicle manufacturer's success is a strong dealership network. Chambersburg, Pennsylvania's Rife Motor Company, Inc. is a good example. Founded in 1943 by Melvin K. Rife as a garage, repair, and custom trailer fabrication shop, the company secured its Reo dealership in 1952. Brothers Edward and Warren joined the business in 1953 and 1958, respectively. Today, Edward is president, and Warren is vice president, with several of their children representing the third generation.

The Rife Motor dealership prospered. Reo honored it with numerous VID ("Very Important Dealer") awards. Ed and Nancy Rife fondly remember their one-way flight to Lansing to receive their 1964 VID award and the return drive with a brand new 1964 Reo.

Rife Motor was a Diamond Reo dealer until 1975. From 1978 until 1992, they sold Osterlund Inc's Harrisburg, Pennsylvania built Diamond Reo and Giant trucks, and from 1994 until the present Western Star Trucks.

The Rife brothers remember that in 1977, Loyal Osterlund initially named all his trucks "Diamond Reo Giant." Later, the Diamond Reo portion was dropped, and the trucks were simply named "Giant." That proved to be unpopular with customers, and soon the former name was restored. The names were simply used to identify the brand of truck. There was no "Diamond Reo Company." The brand was built by Osterlund, Inc. Continuing the old Diamond Reo model identification system, the first Osterlund truck built was a C11664DB, finished on January 7, 1978. Osterlund's dealer network expanded to 32 dealers, including some, like Rife Motor that had earlier handled the Lansing-built trucks.

The Rife brothers well remember that success in the truck business means attempting to meet every customer request (or demand). Osterlund installed only Cummins engines, not wanting to invest the money to engineer a Caterpillar engine into Diamond Reo Giants. One of Rife Motor's best customers preferred only Caterpillar engines. "No problem" was Rife Motor's response. In 1985, Rife Motor simply bought a Diamond Reo dump truck (47,000 pounds payload) complete but without engine and installed a Cat 3406B, 310 HP at 2100 RPM engine purchased from Cleveland Brothers of Harrisburg. This was the first installation of a Cat engine in an Osterlund Diamond Reo. Osterlund soon began offering the Cat alternative to Cummins, and Cat-powered Diamond Reos eventually became 70% of Rife Motor's sales.

Diamond Reo Giant production by Osterlund ceased in 1992. Various individuals acquired parts of the assets and expressed hope to resume production. Those hopes

apparently ended permanently on November 23, 2002 when an auction was held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The auction flier offered to sell "the Diamond Reo product line. This will include the copyright/trademark name of Diamond Reo and all molds, blueprints, manufacturing records, tooling parts, books and manuals." That auction may have been the final end of Reo and Diamond Reo trucks.

The dedication of Warren and Ed Rife to their dealership and shop was inherited from their father. Melvin Rife was essentially "married" to the business he founded, having built his home on adjoining land. Melvin Rife retired from active participation in the business in 1976. After retirement, on nice days, Mr. Rife enjoyed relaxing on his patio overlooking the dealership, watching the busy goings-on there, and occasionally offering Ed and Warren some sage advice. He passed away on December 20, 2002.