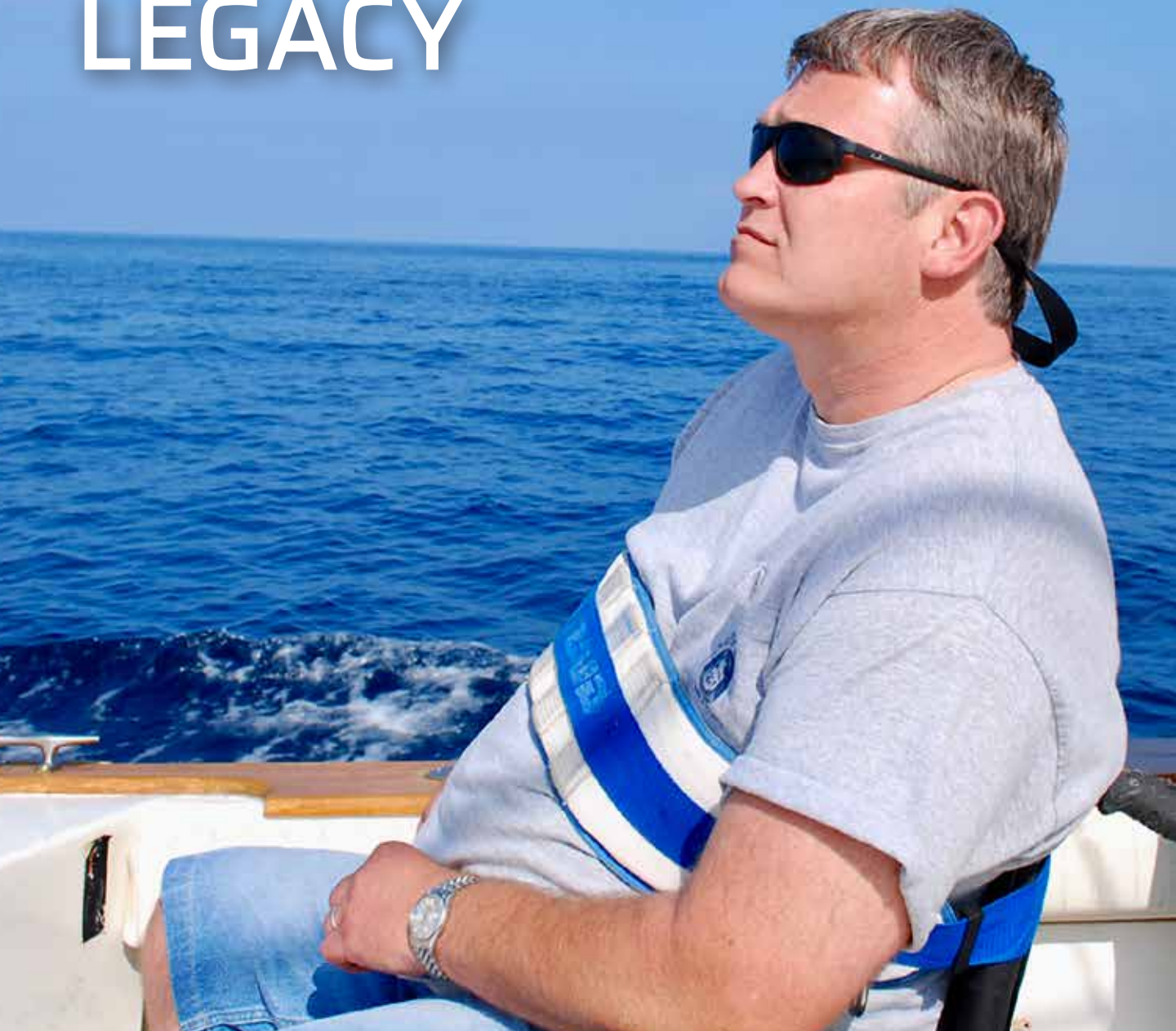


IN MEMORY

DAVID CHRISTOPHER 'COOP' COOPER ▸ 1961-2024

A LASTING AND MULTI-FACETED LEGACY



Media Solutions president and CEO had a talent for transforming challenges into opportunities – becoming a successful, well-respected leader in the B2B publishing world.

By KENNETH CARTER ▀ Wind Systems editor

Media Solutions' employees always knew when David Christopher "Coop" Cooper was in the office.

At any given time during the day, the hallway would be filled with an off-key refrain of "Only You"; quotes from the movie "Top Gun" ("Talk to me, Goose!"); and, of course, a loud, often-repeated, cacophonous chorus of "Sell! Sell! Sell!"

Media Solutions Inc. — Coop's 20-plus year media business responsible for publishing *Gear Solutions*, *Thermal Processing*, and *Wind Systems* magazines — was his life and his passion. But there was more to the man than just business — although most conversations would circle back to that topic eventually.

BAMA FOOTBALL FAN

If Coop wasn't talking about his business or ways to improve it, it's a good bet he was talking about the University of Alabama's football team. He was an avid Bama football fan who often could be found at every home game until recent health challenges kept him away from his beloved Bryant Denny Stadium. Beyond business and football, another of Coop's passions was deep sea fishing. Coop loved going on vacation with his wife, Teresa, and they especially treasured making fantastic memories in Key West, Florida.

Coop, whose experience in the B2B magazine publishing industry spanned decades, passed away December 7, 2024, after an extended medical battle. He was 63. During his short life, his enthusiasm, passion, and sheer force of will allowed him to touch many lives and bestowed upon him the unique ability to turn hardship into opportunity.

He met every challenge like a juggernaut. He was headstrong. He was determined. He was resolute.

That can-do positive attitude — ironically — was born from tragedy. In his 20s, Coop suffered a terrible car accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. From that moment on, he was forced to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. But he refused to let that stop him.

Instead, Coop took this life-altering event as a way to inspire him to work even harder and help others who faced similar situations. He focused much of his time around accessibility education and being an example of how life in a wheelchair can still be a full and rewarding one. From 2013 to 2017, Coop served as chairman of the board for the United Spinal Association.

ENTERING THE B2B MARKET

But perhaps most of all, Coop's outgoing, no-nonsense personality led him to a place where he would develop and hone his talent for sales in the B2B publishing market.

Coop was hired as a salesman at Vulcan Publications in 1988, where he quickly skyrocketed up the chain of command with an impressive resume.

In his first year, he was awarded the Rookie of the Year award. That was followed by 14 years of being employee of the year, as well as top sales and top production recognitions.

But Coop eventually saw himself as more than just a salesman.

During his later years at Vulcan, he developed a niche for selling for the gear-manufacturing market in the magazine he was responsible for, *Industrial Machinery Digest*.

"We ended up creating a gear section in *Industrial Machinery Digest* that seemed to grow and did a nice job creating a little niche inside the magazine," said Rich Piselli, owner and president of Piselli Enterprises, whose business was one of the first to advertise in the newly created gear section.



Teresa and Coop on one of their trips.

"Our relationship grew from there as I worked with them to build that niche and make it more of an industry opportunity for the gear business."

With some encouragement from Piselli and other clients-turned-friends, Coop planned for the next — and most successful — phase of his life: the creation of Media Solutions Inc.

"Coop was always wanting to do his own thing and had a lot of experience running a magazine, so he asked me if it would be a good idea to start a gear magazine and if I'd be interested in advertising in it," Piselli said. "And I said, 'Of course. I would. Wherever you go, whatever you do, I'm with you.'"

MEDIA SOLUTIONS BEGINS

In December 2002, he started Media Solutions, where he continued his publishing career as president and CEO. In April 2003, the inaugural issue of *Gear Solutions* was printed. Coop would later expand his publishing portfolio across other industries with *Wind Systems* in May 2009 and *Thermal Processing* in November 2012.



It did not take long for *Gear Solutions* to become a well-respected publication in the gear manufacturing industry that would cultivate a relationship with the American Gear Manufacturers Association (AGMA). This relationship still continues with the magazine.

“For years, David has supported the efforts of the gear community by publishing *Gear Solutions*, highlighting the innovations and technologies needed to move the world,” said Matt Croson, president of AGMA. “He was a good person, helping to elevate the industry, and we will miss him. On behalf of the AGMA Board and its 415-member companies, we offer our deepest condolences.”

So, it was clear from the beginning that *Gear Solutions* was on its way to becoming something special.

“That magazine (*Gear Solutions*) became a great opportunity for a lot of people in the industry who weren’t able to advertise in some of the other publications,” Piselli said. “And with that, *Gear Solutions* began with Coop at the top pushing and giving everybody a nice platform in which to market their services and equipment and a nice niche industry.”

TURNING CLIENTS INTO FRIENDS

By observing the way Coop treated his clients, it’s easy to see how so many of them became lifelong friends as well.

“I got to know him on a personal basis, but originally he reached out to me when I was running Mitsubishi Machine Tool Group,” said Tom Kelly, who retired as senior vice president of MHI Machine Tool in 2021. “He was starting the new *Gear Solutions* magazine, and he wanted to sell me an ad, so I picked up the back cover.”

Even though MHI Machine Tool became Nidec Group a few years ago, the company continues to advertise on the back cover of *Gear Solutions* — another testament to Coop’s vision.

And on top of that, Kelly and Coop’s journey from client-salesman relationship to friends is filled with fond memories.

“We would get together at the AGMA annual meeting wherever that might be,” Kelly said. “My wife and I would get together with him and Teresa, and we did have a great opportunity to join them down in Tuscaloosa for a (Alabama) football game in 2013.”

Just a few conversations with Coop's friends demonstrate what kind of a man he was both personally and professionally.

"He was just always a great guy to talk to," Piselli said. "We'd get on the phone, and we'd discuss the Alabama games, because he loved college football. We would talk about the teams, the coaches, what we would do if we were the coaches, because of course, we knew better than the guys on TV. There's no question. But he was always inviting me and my two sons to the Alabama-LSU games, which were always just cherished. It was a phenomenal time, because my kids got to meet him, and they got to spend some time with him and just have a good time. He was always willing to entertain and give what he had, which was great."

LARGER THAN LIFE

Coop's infectious and sometimes irreverent personality could be a constant source of entertainment among his friends and coworkers.

Whenever Coop was asked how he was feeling, his quick response almost always was: "If I felt any better, I'd be two paraplegics."

With that example, it might go without saying that many more stories, sadly, are unprintable — chalk that up to the irreverence. But all agree that Coop was often a larger-than-life character both in and out of the office.

That became evident as longtime friend Jeff Barnes, president and founder of New England Gear, reminisced about Coop. He realized some Coop stories will need to remain remembered only by a few special individuals.

"We should probably go back to when I first met him — my first encounter with David Cooper," Barnes said.

He recalled first getting a pitch from a salesman at Vulcan.

"He was working me," Barnes said. "I'm like, 'You know, this just isn't my thing.' So, we went back and forth, and he finally gives up on me and says, 'Hang on, let me put my boss on the phone.' Well, sure enough, golden-tongued David Cooper gets on the line. He sold me within five minutes. I put a big ad in his magazine, and that was my first encounter with him. It was a good one, and we've been dear friends ever since."

During his time at Vulcan Publications, Coop longed for an office of his own, but his desk was one desk among many on the sales floor, according to Glenn Raglin, who worked with Coop at Vulcan and remained a friend to the end.

"We didn't have cubicles — just desks in a row," he said. "So, we decided to take some masking tape and tape up the floor to make an office for him. We had the window and a door. Somebody would come up and ask, 'Do you know if Coop's in his office?' 'Yeah, let me see.' We'd come up and knock on the imaginary door. 'Coop? Coop, you in your office?' We had a good time with that. Of course, he ended up getting his own office."



LIFE BEYOND THE BUSINESS

During his time at Vulcan, Coop also met the woman who would eventually become his wife, Teresa.

In 1998, he completed the Dawson Memorial 5K, which was a prelude to his relationship with Teresa. One of their first outings was when Coop challenged her to complete a wheelchair race at Pelham City Park.

The couple eventually were married in 2010.

Coop was born in Coos Bay, Oregon, and spent most of his childhood splitting the year with his grandparents in Oregon and the other half in Miami, Florida, where he learned to love deep sea fishing.

Coop joined the United States Army in 1981, and served several years in Germany. In 1984, Coop was awarded the Army Achievement Medal for outstanding meritorious service. While serving his country, Coop continued his education and earned his associate degree from Central Texas College in 1987.

'HE ALWAYS GAVE PEOPLE A CHANCE'

Coop had a zest for life before his accident, but, eventually, even more so afterward. He was fiercely loyal and demanded the best from the people who worked with him and for him.

"He wants the best out of everybody," Raglin said. "When you set the bar high, which he did, then if you fall short, you're still better than where you were if you hadn't set the bar high to begin with. He set the bar high for all of us, and that made us all better."

Piselli said Coop was a big believer in karma.

"He was always looking for the good in everyone for the most part, and he always gave people a chance; he always gave them a second chance," he said.

"He always looked at things with a positive attitude. He was just a positive individual and always had good things to say about people."

Through the years, his body would often try to tell him, "no," but his spirit would never fail to look those challenges in the eye and say: Not today.

"I just think that the industry has lost a really good individual who created and produced a quality product," Piselli said. "And he was always striving for it to be better. He was always looking at making sure that it was a good, clean operation and always did the right thing."

With that implacable attitude, Coop has left a lasting and multi-faceted legacy that his friends, family, employees, and clients can be proud of. It's a legacy made possible by the fact that Coop refused to slow down and settle for anything less than success. And now, there's nothing left to weigh him down any longer — a sentiment perhaps expressed best by one of Coop's favorite songs:

"Cause I'm as free as a bird now; And this bird you cannot change." 🐦