



A Tribute to Brenda Johnstone

BY FRIENDS, FAMILY AND ASSOCIATES



Creating a vision for an award-winning magazine came easily to Brenda Johnstone back in 2007. She recognized the need for a publication that would delve into the day-to-day issues that owners and operators of c-stores and carwashes faced and seized the opportunity to start Johnstone Media.

A YEAR LATER IN OCTOBER OF 2008, with the support of industry leaders, friends, and family, the first edition of *Convenience & Carwash Canada* (CCWC) launched with Mac's Convenience Stores on the cover. Fast forward 11 years, Brenda and her publishing team have been recognized by one of Canada's most prestigious publishing programs, The Canadian Online Publishing Awards. These are the awards being celebrated by the CCWC team and the industry they represent.

- **Winner Best Print/Digital Magazine** in the Business to Business Category
- **Finalist for Best Industry Feature-Business** for one of the WashTalk articles covering the opening of the PA Wand Wash in Prince Albert, PA.

Starting a new publishing venture with the digital age in full swing might deter some entrepreneurs but not Brenda, her ability to connect and genuinely care about people in the industry is the foundation of her success. For Brenda it's more than a business, it's a network of friends. Her confidence, enthusiasm, and tenacity have helped her grow the magazine, create exciting new industry events, and forge important industry

partnerships over the years.

Brenda recalls: "When I travel to different towns and cities across Canada I stop at different sites, not just the majors, but true independent locations to ask operators what their issues are, what would they like to see in the magazine. One year, I called a number of sites across Canada to ask what they'd like to read in upcoming issues, one fellow told me that we covered foodservice as a whole but we never really told them how to start a foodservice section, what they'd need to begin and so we began Blueprint to Foodservice."

THE MAKINGS OF A STRONG ENTREPRENEUR

Success runs in the Johnstone family and Brenda has a twin sister named Bonnie who is also a successful owner of Gramp's Place, a c-store, tackle store, gift shop, and gas station – with her husband Danny in Temagami, Ontario. She learned a lot about caring for people from her mother June, who passed away in 2000.

Her father Gordon Johnstone and his wife Gene told us: "Even as a child, Brenda was full of energy and very

determined. From the start, Brenda was always a bit of a tomboy and once helped skin and trim a lamb, even when other kids did not want any part of it." Her career began at age 16 working at the local MacDonald's in Orillia, Ontario. At age 18 she moved west to work on a Dude Ranch in Canmore, Alberta where she broke and trained horses to saddle." While there, she also carried a rifle every day on tour rides through the scenic Canadian Rockies. Not long after that, she moved to Toronto to work for a publisher for many years until she started Johnstone Media on her own. "From the time she was a little girl until the present, she also loved sports, enjoyed golfing and nature. She has never given up accomplishing whatever she has set out to do," said Gordon Johnstone.

Unlike many entrepreneurs, she cares more about people than business and as a result, Johnstone Media has been going strong for over 11 years. In the following testimonials from friends, family, and associates, you will notice a common theme about Brenda. People first, business second. It's the recipe that has made her successful for so many years. >>

WHAT FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES HAVE TO SAY

JEFF LEANARD VICE PRESIDENT INDUSTRY INITIATIVES NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONVENIENCE STORES (NACS)

The success of *Convenience & Carwash Canada* goes beyond the written words in each issue. It's really about the passion behind those words and I have seen that firsthand with Brenda and her team over the years. She is a tremendous supporter of the innovation seen and Canadian convenience stores in suggesting ideas to celebrate the industry. One classic example was when she personally picked us up in North Dakota to go to a video shoot at TimberFalls in Steinbach. She literally saved the day in getting us across the border with a six-hour drive on a holiday. (No laws were broken; it was more of an unanticipated car rental snafu.) And then she took us on a tour of some great stores in Winnipeg. These are stories that don't make it into the magazine but make the magazine what it is.

ANDREW KLUKAS PRESIDENT, KLUKAS & ASSOCIATES

I first heard of Brenda while attending my first presidents' meeting after accepting a contract with WCSA. Her industry contacts are extremely diverse and many of these connections appear to run quite deep. Her connection with the petroleum sector is clearly an advantage. What makes Brenda stand apart from other providers to the industry is that fact she genuinely likes engaging with retailers, learning from them, and helping them to improve their business. I have often had the impression that her current magazine is merely a means to indulge her desire to help retailers – independent retailers and small chains in particular. And this is manifest in the focused, practical content of her magazine, which sets it apart from the other Canadian magazines, and in her direct personal connection with so many recipients of her magazine. I have no doubt that she would have the energy, enthusiasm, capacity, and the touch to make the magazine a greater success than it has ever been.

TONY MOUSSA CHANNEL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, MARS WRIGLEY

I have known Brenda for more than

12 years now and I can say that all my conversations, dealings and work with her have always been professional, personal and from the heart. Her ability to come up with opportunities that are mutually beneficial for all parties concerned has always been why our contact with each other has never changed. She has an inherent ability to find opportunities for your products and services and promote them in a way that drives the key principles that your business is based on. Brenda is responsible, efficient, and passionate and is always thinking about quality over quantity, which is the way I run my business, so we always see eye to eye. She has a knack for driving results and collaboration in everything she does. I don't only consider her to be a great business partner, but a great friend and I wish her all the best in the future and congratulate her on this fantastic award.

PETER KILTY SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT RETAIL OPERATIONS PARKLAND FUEL CORPORATION

I have known Brenda for about 15 years, and we met through industry associations. We got to know each other the best when she was doing a special report on P.D. McLaren and as a joke, I responded to one of her questions by saying – “So there really is a PD McLaren? – And to think that after all these years, I had no idea.” And she actually printed it which made us both laugh.

There are lots of stories of working with Brenda, but probably the most fun we've had is/was working on the 50th anniversary book for Parkland Fuel – to say it's been a labour of love is not too far off and Brenda's help and expertise throughout the process has been invaluable – from the interviews, layout, content and sifting through the countless photographs and artifacts has been a truly thankless job, but Brenda and her team have done an amazing job on this project.

I think Brenda is a strong entrepreneur and continually sets the bar high for both those she works with and those she partners with. Brenda runs a great organization, as evidenced by this most recent award, but also is constantly looking for new opportunities to drive business and

add value. It has been staring people in the face for years, but it took Brenda's drive and passion to actually bring forward the Women in Car Wash events – and the success of the events and growth potential speak for themselves – well deserved and congratulations for leading by example – something everyone in our industry can learn from.

KIM HANSEN PRESIDENT, MI PETRO

Brenda – I am so pleased to have been asked to offer a couple of words about you. I remember when you were excited about starting your new venture and as with all new start ups, a bit of trepidation existed. I however, have always believed in what you were trying to do. Your dogged determination, a never say never attitude, and an amazing network of contacts in our business made it a 'no brainer' and the rest, as they say, is history. Congratulations on your achievement Brenda! So, pleased to be a part of your success. Continued success to you!

CARTER HAMMETT

My first recollection of meeting Brenda Johnstone occurred in 2008. A mutual colleague had recommended my name to Brenda as a potential editor for her new magazine and I became the first editor of *Convenience and Carwash Canada*. During that time, I got to know Brenda and her story a little better. She was feisty, clear about what she wanted, painfully organized, didn't mince words and perhaps loyal to a fault. She had a clear concept of what she wanted the magazine to become and what she wanted to achieve.

During that time, we were all over the issues of the day, including changes in legislation affecting c-stores, technological advances, environmental issues and even fraud. We interviewed former Alberta premier Ralph Klein and some of the industry movers and shakers of the day. We also covered the not-so-serious issues too, including products like frozen pickle pops and fancy c-store drinks. Not too shabby for a recently launched magazine.

Last year I learned about another one of Brenda's crazy ideas: A Women



in Carwash conference. If anyone could make it work, she could and sure enough the concept's taken off. Brenda is an original. A trailblazer. A risk taker. Even when ideas didn't pan out, she rose above it, licked her wounds and kept going, head full of ideas, eyes wide open to new opportunities.

RICHARD PARKINSON

I've known Brenda for about 20 years. She's a hard-working dedicated person to our industry. She's very well connected, and I think everybody I know loves her. Her attention to detail is special. She follows through on commitments and goes above and beyond to look after her clients and industry individuals I never have an issue referring potential clients to her knowing they will be treated professionally, and all issues will be handled well if there ever are any. Brenda is very deserving of the award she received. I'm very proud of her and pleased to have her as a friend and a business associate.

NANCY SMAUTZ PRESIDENT, ODESSA CONSULTING

I met Brenda many years ago when she was concluding working for one magazine and starting her own publication.

Brenda has more guts and determination than any woman I have ever met. She always sees the end goal and stays the course. Along the way, my journey with Brenda at TD Industries and now Odessa Consulting was rewarded with friendship, networking and mutual mentorship. Brenda doesn't mind hearing that you can't place an ad this month or attend a golf tournament as she respects your individual decisions. She is one of the fairest persons in the industry. Brenda always looks for opportunities to profile companies, has organized golf tournaments, trade shows, seminars and workshops. She is a great ambassador to the carwash industry.

She amazes me with her constant learning and feet on the street manner. She gets the job done! I am privileged to count Brenda as a friend and business associate.

JOHNSTONE MEDIA was privileged to produce and publish special anniversary stories on behalf of companies such as Mid Island Co-Op for their 50th anniversary, P.D. McLaren's 90th anniversary, DSL 100th, Becker's 60th to name a few.

January/February 2010 – Brenda created a partnership with the United Korean Businessmen's Association (UKBA) and began publishing in both English & Korean and then in January/February 2011 – travelled to Korea with the UKBA as their guest.

AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE WORDS OF BRENDA'S ASSOCIATES, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY, HER JOURNEY CLEARLY SHOWS THAT DOING WHAT YOU LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION OF A SUCCESSFUL VENTURE.

BRENDA RECALLS: "I love when I stop at a store somewhere across Canada and a retailer tells me they love our magazine; they find lots of useful information in it. I've always said that if my business doesn't help their businesses grow, then my business won't grow – and then I've failed." Some of Brenda's favorite memories include:

Working with the Korean Businessmen's Association and being taken to Korea for a week.

Partnering with some great organizations like the WCSA (Andrew Klukas & Wayne Hoskins).

Working with the WPMA, OCSA, and organizing the WCSA golf tournament for nine years.

Most of all, gaining the trust of retail chains and retailers across the country.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Starting events that serve the community has always been a passion for Brenda. Early on she realized that women in the industry needed more recognition and opportunity to network. This month, the second *Women In Carwash Conference* will be held in Arlington, Texas, followed in June by a Canadian venue in Niagara Falls. After that, stay tuned for more publishing innovation from Johnstone media. If you want more information on the conference, please visit www.womenincarwash.com.

As I write this article, I recall my time as editor of *Convenience & Carwash Magazine* ending in 2016. I enjoyed my time working with my friend Brenda and learning from her. I was always impressed with her ability to visualize an idea and follow through with it by collaborating and gaining support from the industry. During that time, I saw the world through her lens, and anything was possible. It still is, and I can't wait to see what new conferences and issues that will come out in the future.

Congratulations to Brenda and her team for great success in winning these awards!



1. Meline Beach (senior writer) Gord and Gene Johnstone (Brenda's dad & step-mom), Susan Stots, (Brenda's best friend) Brenda, Cody Johnstone (son and sales) and Doug Coates (design production manager, Edge Advertising).
2. Andrea Ginter and Cody Johnstone
3. Gord, Gene and Brenda Johnstone celebrate.
4. COPAwards event organizer Martin Seto.
5. View of the COPAwards banquet in full swing.

