

BUSINESS

MATT WELCH/THE WINCHESTER STAR

Doug Rinker, longtime president and CEO of Winchester Equipment, stands in front of the store at 121 Indian Hollow Road in Frederick County. He is retiring. Saturday is his last day.

Rinker retiring from Winchester Equipment with a ‘proud smile’

By MATT WELCH
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — One night about 30 years ago in between commitments for his vocational agriculture teaching job at a local high school, Doug Rinker’s 4-year-old daughter tugged on his pant leg and begged him to stay home with her.

A self-described “workaholic” who was working 80 to 90 hours a week, Rinker immediately began looking for a new job that would allow him to slow down and see his family a little more. He took a position at Winchester Equipment and quickly worked his way into management.

Three decades later, Rinker is retiring as the business’s CEO and president.

He’s calling the transition a “repurposing.”

“At 61, I’m too young to think about not doing anything,” Rinker

said with a smile. “My wife and I have been very thoughtful and prayerful for a number of years about having only one life to live and figuring out what we’re going to do at the end. I am a professed workaholic, so I’m not just going to sit around.”

Rinker said he will continue to serve as chairman of the business’s board, but he knows Winchester Equipment is in good hands with Scott Carnell as the new president and CEO.

Winchester Equipment started in March 1957 with a couple of apple growers and farmers who needed an equipment company to “take care of them,” Rinker said. It’s since grown to include five locations — Winchester, Harrisonburg, Bristow, Richmond and Virginia Beach.

Rinker said that growth is due in large part to the people that the company has invested in.

“It’s serendipitous when you start thinking about how we’ve been so

blessed to attract so much talent and experience here,” he said. “That really helps build the footings. The greatest pride I’ve had is the quality of the people we have here and their integrity and desire to do the right thing.”

Early on, Rinker said Winchester Equipment adopted a core value of building “customers for life.” That, he said, has helped grow the company 3,614% over the 30 years that he’s been with the company.

“It’s grown more from being an [agriculture] company to being a multi-industry, customer-centric business,” he said. “That’s one of those feelings like you’re a really proud parent watching your child grow into something you can really be proud of.”

Personally, Rinker said he’s always strived to “tell our story, serve our customers, build a great team,

See **Rinker**, Page **A7**

Rinker

From Page A6

be a role model and practice the Golden Rule."

"I've not been 100% perfect at any of those, but what I'm most proud of is building a great team," he said.

Doug Ombs, branch manager for the Winchester location, praised Rinker for his ability to adapt and grow over the years.

"It's been all about him leading us through transition and about how his stability and his leadership has really brought us from the end of the 2010s and into the future," said Ombs, who has been with the company for eight years. "Now, it's more tech driven and more about data analyzing, and it's turned into a whole different complex business. He's adapted well and run with it, and in the last few years we've seen some major successes."

Rinker said he's always kept an eye on the shift in the client base. Thirty years ago, customers didn't have much need for a service department because they knew

how fix their own equipment. Now, however, the business has expanded to provide more products and more services to reach more people.

Omps said he's been impressed with how well Rinker and the management team have handled changes over the years and how they've positioned the company to be in a state of constant growth.

"It's always been 'go, go, go' — we'll put all the pieces together as we go toward the next newest big thing. He's a very early adapter, which means the company has been an early adapter," Ombs said about Rinker's leadership. "We're able to jump on trends and get to them before others and make our mark first. That's just one of his many, many contributions to the company, but it's what I'm most impressed by."

Rinker is credited for always being approachable when it comes to leading staff and meeting the needs of customers.

"We'll definitely miss his presence here in this branch," Ombs said. "He's always been

one of those levelers — anyone can go see him and he can bring them back to center and focus them. He's a huge asset to everyone in this branch because of that."

Rinker's last day is Saturday.

In retirement, he said he plans to spend more time being involved at his church with his wife, as they both look forward to what's next.

Rinker said he will leave Winchester Equipment with a "proud smile."

"I think, for me, what's exciting is that the business model is sustainable and we have wonderful people. I couldn't be more blessed to have been associated with a company that cares about its people. I've had a role in that, but I'm not the only one," he said. "It's easy for me to talk about repurposing and what I'm going to do with my next 10 or 15 years because I can leave the organization and not look back and be concerned or worried."

— Contact Matt Welch
at mwelch@winchesterstar.com