

# Auto Dealer

The Magazine of the  
American International  
Automobile Dealers

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1  
SPRING 2008

## DEALER SPOTLIGHT

CHARLES BARKER CONTINUED

of the Year award. Those recognitions are the culmination of a lot of hard work by my entire organization, not just me.

### Who was the biggest influence in your career?

My wife. She is always pushing me to change and try new things. Also, my first partner Josh Darden taught me many things; most importantly how to do business with integrity and professionalism.

### What is the biggest issue affecting your business?

It's always been attracting, hiring, and training the right people for the right job.

### How are you active in your local community?

There are too many organizations to list. We give back in a big way, especially to children in our community. I have a foundation, "Champions for

### Dave Wilson Wilson Automotive Group Laguna Beach, Calif.



Dave Wilson is the owner and president of sixteen automobile dealerships — employing nearly 2000 people. Sales for these corporations now total just under \$2 billion annually, making the Wilson Automotive Group one of the ten largest dealership chains in the nation. He received the *Sports Illustrated Dealer of Distinction Award* in 1988, and the *Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award* in 1991 and again in 2004. In 1998 he was presented with the AIADA All-Star Dealer Award for his commitment to the community and work with

charitable organizations. David and his wife Holly live in Laguna Beach with their two children Alexandra and Cameron. His two adult daughters, Christine Francis and Logan Tass, live in Arizona with their families.

### What first got you into the auto retail business?

When I was in college, I was working nights at a dealership changing oil filters. I decided I could make more money selling cars than repairing them. So I approached the dealer and sold him on the idea. By the time I was a junior in college, I was selling cars. I became a partner at Covey Lincoln Mercury in Arizona in September, 1975. I then became a partner at Toyota of Orange in January, 1983. The first dealership I owned on my own was Toyota of Orange, when I bought out the 75 percent owner in August, 1985.

### Who was the biggest influence on your career?

The dealer that first hired me, Dick Gray. He introduced me to "The Power of Positive Thinking." Actually, he didn't just introduce me — he drilled it into me. His long-time mantra has now become mine: "Whatever your mind can conceive and believe, you WILL achieve."

### What makes a great auto dealer?

Probably a well-rounded person. Someone who is concerned not only with his business, but also with his customers — and most of all, his employees.

### What is the biggest issue facing your business?

Today in Southern California it is the mortgage meltdown and housing slump.

### How are you active in your local community?

I have always been partial to children's charities. Since I first came to California I have been very involved with Orangewood Children's Foundation, a home for abused and abandoned children in Orange County. I am also the chairman of the annual Boy Scout Toyota/Lexus/Scion golf tournament, which raises nearly \$200,000 annually for scouting. In 1999 I contributed \$1,000,000 to my alma mater, the University of Northern Iowa, to endow a Chair in Business Ethics. And if you visit Chapman University in Orange, you will see Wilson Field, made possible by my and Holly's donation.

### When did you first get involved in AIADA and why?

In the mid 1980s, we attended the AIADA conference in D.C. because at that time there was a voluntary restraining agreement on the number of Toyota's that could be imported to the U.S. In addition, there was a feeling in Congress that Detroit's problems were caused by American dealers selling Japanese cars.

### How does legislation impact your business?

Obviously legislation affects us somewhat. However, thanks to the efforts of AIADA, it doesn't affect us nearly as much as it used to.

### Any new additions to your business or new dealerships that we can highlight?

The new Toyota of Huntington Beach opened on December 1, and Toyota Puerto Vallarta opened on December 18. The \$19 million state-of-the-art Huntington beach store covers nearly 200,000 square feet, and will stock over 800 vehicles under one roof.

