

Maxwell Stock 47

At 84, he's too young to retire *By Alejandra Navarro*

Last year, Maxwell "Mac" Stock's son asked him when he was going to retire.

"Robert, that word isn't even in my dictionary," recalled 84-year-old Stock '47, CEO of Eagle Leasing, based in Orange, Conn. His son, then a lawyer in Massachusetts and 22 years his junior, replied, "Good. I plan to retire in December and I always wanted to retire before you."

"And he did," said Stock with a chuckle.

While his son sees Europe, Stock continues to run the multimillion-dollar trailer and container leasing company as he has done for 30 years. Every day, he arrives at 7 a.m. and stays until about 6 p.m. When the weather's nice, he spends Friday afternoons on the golf course.

"I'm too young to retire," says Stock, who on this day is juggling several meetings with employees and the first selectman of Orange, Conn. He keeps track of his contacts with his iPhone and uses the camera feature to add their pictures. Comfortable with technology, he also has a Facebook account, but mostly to keep up with his three grandchildren.

Stock easily rattles off dates and details of events. An accountant by training, he's always been a numbers man. Pointing to a picture of Lou Gehrig on his office wall, the Brooklyn native says, "July 4, 1939. I was there. I took a subway from Brooklyn to Yankee Stadium in the Bronx and cried. My idol was giving up baseball."

He smiles when he recalls 1945. World War II ended three weeks before he finished training to be an Army Air Corps B29 flight engineer, saving him from seeing combat. More important, it was the year he met his future wife, Elaine. "I'm one of these fortunate guys who met the right girl at the right time," he said.

He earned an associate's degree in accounting from Quinnipiac in 1947, then the Junior College of Commerce, and with his wife's encouragement, earned a bachelor's degree from City College of New York. In 1952, the year he became a certified public accountant, he also began teaching at Quinnipiac—a position he kept for nearly three decades.

In 1959, he partnered with fellow Quinnipiac instructor Harold Gessner to run an accounting firm until he joined Eagle Leasing in 1979. Balancing teaching and a profession became difficult. Being an accountant gave him the flexibility to spend more time with his two children, Robert and Linda.

Stock had done taxes for the Eagle family since 1951, and became the outside auditor and accountant when the family began Eagle Leasing in 1967. When the business faced challenges, the family asked him to join.

He headed the company's expansion from a few thousand trailers to more than 13,000 and added two offices in Southboro and Oxford, Mass. When the state adopted a bottle bill, requiring a refundable deposit on beverage containers, he sold retailers on the idea that they could store bottles in Eagle containers. He recently built environmentally sound painting bays for trailers. When the economy tumbled, he opted to freeze wages and cut hours to avoid layoffs. His 135 employees are like family, he says.

"Being in a partnership is not easy, be it business or marriage," Stock explained. "You have to make tough decisions. You have to learn to compromise. You have to admit when you're wrong."

And, it's good to have a sense of humor, which he says is one of his wife's best qualities. "Ask my wife how many times in 63 years I have been right... She'll tell you never," says Stock with a smile. To compromise, he agrees.

