

Monir “Lou” Sobh

2233 Grady Ridge Trail Duluth, GA 30097

The following is a brief history of the life and experiences of Lou Sobh. I was born in Torreon, Coahuila Mexico in 1944 where I went on to attend grade school and high school. As a result of the poor economy in Mexico, my parents sought a better opportunity for my four brothers and myself by moving to Gary, Indiana in 1960. After we moved to Gary, I faced the challenge of learning the English language and seeking employment.

I started working as a janitor in a Shoppers World department store. At the same time, I worked as a busboy in a local restaurant. My family and I (a total of seven people) lived in a two-bedroom apartment in Gary, Indiana. While working as a janitor, I continued to teach myself English. As the result of hard work, self determination and the example set by my father who worked 15 hours a day, 365 days a year in his grocery store, I learned English well enough in six months to be promoted to a department manager at Shoppers World.

I continued to work at the department store for two years. However, I was in a town where steel mills provided good-paying jobs. In 1962, I was employed by the Inland Steel Company in East Chicago, Indiana. I worked there for approximately three years as a steel production worker. U.S. Steel Tubeworks gave me an opportunity to move up in the organization as a Foreman Expediter. I worked for U.S. Steel for approximately eighteen months.

In 1966, a former colleague of mine from Shoppers World asked me to join him in opening a new Spartan’s Department store in Gary, Indiana. I joined him as one of the Assistant Store Managers.

In 1967, I started as a salesperson at McAnary Ford in Gary, Indiana and became top salesman in three months.

I joined the United States Army National Guard and in 1969 I began active duty. In the Army, I served in Germany and was promoted to the rank of Specialist 5th Class serving in a job requiring top security clearance. During my time in the Army, I married my wife, Georgia. In 1970, I was honorably discharged from active duty.

In 1970, I returned to McAnary Ford as Assistant Sales Manager and within six months became General Sales Manager and partner of a dealership that sold 500 units per month.

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In 1980, I sold my interest in the Ford dealership and started a “high-end” retail furniture store in Torreon, Mexico. I moved my wife and two children to Mexico and we were very successful until the devaluation of the peso. Since my business was capital intensive, the devaluation was a disaster so my family and I moved back to Indiana in July of 1985 and I decided to return to the automobile industry.

I dreamed of owning a dealership of my own and pursued that dream with my family. After a successful relationship with Gurly Leep Buick Mercedes Benz in Mishawaka, Indiana, General Motors recognized my ability and gave me the opportunity in 1990 to own my first dealership, a General Motors - Motors Holding Investment in Conyers, Georgia.

We were successful in making a closed, bankrupt dealership into an award-winning success for General Motors and myself. That success gave me the opportunity in 1996 for a Pontiac, Buick, and GMC truck dealership in Duluth, Georgia. We acquired the land, built the facilities and created a successful award-winning organization. Again our success earned us the opportunity in 1999 to acquire a Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick, GMC truck dealership in Lithia Springs, Georgia. We gained control and immediately made it a successful enterprise.

At the beginning of 2000, we purchased an Isuzu dealership in Duluth, Georgia. In 2001, we were the largest retail volume dealer in Isuzu’s Southeast Region. In 2002, we were the leading Isuzu retail dealership in the United States.

During 2001, our successes earned us additional opportunities. In February of 2001, Ford Motor Company allowed us the opportunity to acquire a Ford dealership in Decatur, Georgia. In November, Saturn Corporation gave us the opportunity and we acquired Saturn dealerships in Dundee and Schaumburg, Illinois. We were also awarded a new Hummer franchise in Atlanta.

We have continued to strive for excellence. I am proud of the fact that for 2001, 2002, and 2003, Lou Sobh Pontiac Buick GMC, Inc. received the General Motors’ President’s Leadership Award recognizing us as one of GM’s highest achieving Mark of Excellence Dealers. We were one of the top 100 of 7400 GM dealers for those years. Saturn Corporation also awarded us with their highest honor for 2002 and 2003 giving two of our Saturn dealerships the “Summit Award”. Only eleven dealerships received this award nationwide.

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The foregoing success earned us new opportunities in 2002. We acquired a Chevrolet dealership in Milton, Florida, six Saturn dealerships located in Cerritos, Santa Ana, Huntington Beach, and Anaheim, California, and Saturn of Lake Barrington and Saturn of Elmhurst in Illinois. In 2004, Honda Motor Company gave us a letter of intent for our first Honda dealership in Jacksonville, Florida, which has been in operation since 2006. The Honda dealership became number one in sales in its first year and has stayed number one for the past 10 years.

I received the *Hispanic Trends* magazine “Best in Business Award” for 2003 and was nominated for the *Time Magazine* “Quality Dealer of the Year Award” in January of 2004. In February of 2003, the Gwinnett division of the American Heart Association awarded me with the Corporate Honoree award; I also received the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce “Hispanic Businessman of the Year” award for the Southeast region in 2002; and the “Champions of Life” award at the Mobile Bowl in December of 2002. In June of 2005, *Hispanic Business* magazine, based on total sales revenues, ranked Lou Sobh Automotive as number 11 out of 500 Hispanic businesses for 2004. Fleet does not account for a material amount of our sales. I look forward to continued success both personally and professionally.

General Motors recognizes our ability, and at one time we had thirteen dealerships. We were the largest Saturn retailer in America; one of the top twenty five Hummer dealers; and one of the highest selling Pontiac retailers. Unfortunately, GM’s bankruptcy resulted in the termination of the Saturn, Hummer, Pontiac, and Oldsmobile nameplates. As a result, we lost eleven of our locations. In spite of these events and the current economic downturn, we continue to persevere and thrive.

In 2010, we opened a Kia dealership in Cerritos, California. We are currently the third largest volume Kia dealership for the third consecutive year and also the largest volume dealership to have won the President’s Award three years in a row with sales over 5,000 new and used.

Honda recognized the job we are doing for them, and as such, awarded us a new point in Cumming, GA. Our first year’s performance resulted in being sixth in New Vehicle Sales Volume in our market. We also were Number One, in district, for Dealership CSE! The dealership was profitable in our first year of operation.

In 2015 we opened our second Kia dealership in Cumming, Georgia built to Kia’s Gallery Image design 1 of only 5 stores in the state of Georgia and 4 in the Atlanta Metro market.

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I have lived in the Atlanta area since 1990 and have been fortunate enough to live the American dream twice. I came to the United States in 1960 financially poor with a great deal of hope and energy. I am proud to say that thanks to this country, I have gone from earning ninety cents per hour as a janitor, to owning a business that had sales revenues of \$257,000,000 in 2001, over \$400,000,000 in 2002, over \$497,000,000 in 2003, more than \$445,000,000 in 2004, and over \$409,000,000 in 2005.

As a successful automobile dealer, I have been selected and served in various positions for my peers including: Chairman for the Georgia Buick Dealers Association from 1992 to 1996; President of the Pontiac GMC Truck Advertising Association from 1995 to 1999; Board Member and Chairman of the General Motors Minority Dealer Advisory Council from 1994 to 2007; Board Member of the Pontiac GMC Truck Southeast Regional Dealer Council from 1999 to 2000; Chairman of the General Motors Minority Dealer Advisory Council from 2001 to 2003; Board Member of the General Motors President’s Dealer Council 2001; Board Member of the Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce from 2001 to present; Board Member of the National Council of La Raza in 2003; and Board Member of the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers from 2004 to present.

In 2002, I was invited by President George W. Bush to the Economic Summit as a panel participant for “Economic Recovery and Job Creation.” I was honored to be among fellow participants such as, Martin Feldstein, Professor of Economics at Harvard University, Thomas J. Donohue, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, and Paul O’Neill, former United States Secretary of Treasury. In June 2005, I was honored again by President George W. Bush when he recognized me at the White House as a successful immigrant, who represented living “American Dream.”