



Hugh Breeding – President and Founder, Hugh Breeding Inc.

Hugh Breeding was born on May 6, 1890 on a farm just north of Green Forest, Arkansas. He was the third child born to Huston Breeding and Belle Wilson. Hugh dropped out of school when he was in the third grade to help with the family's farm and never finished school.

In August 1906, Hugh's life turned upside down as he witnessed the murder of his father as the hands of a man who had married his older sister, Mary Lou. A couple of years later in 1908, his mother passed away and his family was forced to scramble in order to take care of the younger brothers and sisters left behind by their parents' deaths.

On May 9, 1909, Hugh married a local girl, Maude Cunningham. They had been raised up together and Maude was also close with Hugh's younger sister Jennie. Maude Cunningham was born on July 1, 1891 in Timbo, Arkansas but she spent her childhood mainly in the Green Forest area. She had progressed up through the 8th Grade at a local school in Green Forest, which was the highest level most children went through in those days.

After getting married, Hugh grew ever worried that Denton Baker (who had killed his father and was later pardoned by Arkansas Governor XO Pindall) would bring harm to him and his new wife. When his father had been shot, the "mean man" had threatened Hugh that if he had said anything to the law that he would kill him too. To further add to the tension, Hugh had also counseled his older sister during her breakup from Baker, even going so far as to represent her during her divorce from Baker.

Due to this persistent threat, he moved his new wife and younger brother he was caring for (Delson) to escape "out of harm's way." In the summer of 1909, the family set off on the Oregon Trail and eventually settled in East Cottage Grove, Oregon. It was there that the two brothers worked as laborers in the local logging camp and lumber mill. While they were in Oregon, Hugh's wife Maude gave birth to their first son, Lyle Densel Breeding on May 7, 1910.

Around 1912, when Hugh was alerted of Denton Baker's intentions to travel to the Pacific Northwest, he and his family soon returned to Green Forest, Arkansas where he ran the family farm. While they were living there in Arkansas, Maude gave birth to their second son, Lionel Anson Breeding, on May 14, 1912.

By 1914, he first started hauling oil field equipment with a team of horses and mules in the Haskell, Oklahoma area. JP Getty had made a rather large oil discovery in that area at the time. It also was there that their third son, Cecil Odell Breeding was born on August 30, 1914.

Then when the first trucks were made they were solid tired trucks. He bought his first truck in 1918 and began working an oil field carrier, making all the Oklahoma and Borger, Texas oil booms.

During the Depression he couldn't get oil field hauling so he left the oil fields he went to Oklahoma City in 1929 and started hauling automobiles. He designed and had the first automobile trailer built in 1929. The unit being 78 feet long was long enough to haul 4 cars and a long wheel base truck, all in a row. But it wasn't long before the state of Texas cut the length to 60 feet. It was about this time when Hugh Breeding Transport Company began. The company's first headquarters were housed in an office at 619 West Grand Avenue in Oklahoma City.

In 1931 he bought two gasoline trailers and hauled gasoline from Phillips Petroleum Company in Okmulgee to Oklahoma City. This was the beginning of his hauling of his gasoline. Later he had some trucks working out of Oklahoma City and also a few out of Baxter Springs, Kansas. He has had part ownership in Continental Drive-A-Way Company in Duncan, Oklahoma since 1935.

The Hugh Breeding Transport Company was one of the best known business institutions in the state. Hugh hired a lot of people and paid good wages. They had a number of drivers and quite a few trucks. His business had the ability to pick up cars from Michigan, Illinois and Missouri and move them to Oklahoma and Texas. Hugh even hired quite a few relatives – mostly leveraging his nephews as drivers as well as some other relatives serving in administrative capacities for the company. His oldest son, Lyle, soon stepped right in when he was old enough to work for the company and he would be followed by the other two sons, Lionel and Cecil, when they were old enough.

In August 1938, he sold the Automobile Transport Company to a group located in Detroit led by DJ Hutchins and Robert B. Johnson. The assets of Hugh Breeding Transport were subsequently integrated into United Transports, Inc. on April 11, 1939.

Around this same time, Hugh Breeding had some bulk gasoline authority with six trucks and trailers operating on the side, so he and Jeff Boucher decided to organize a new corporation, which they did in August 1938. This was known as Hugh Breeding, Inc. The company's main headquarters was originally located at 1914 E 7th Place in Tulsa.

Hugh Breeding had become acquainted with Boucher when he hauled gas for the Barnsdall Refining Company and Boucher had been Vice President of that firm. Boucher's main expertise was in marketing and the operations of service stations. It was a partnership that clicked right away and paid dividends during the formative years of the new company.

During the formative years for the new company, Jeff Boucher was critical to the success of the firm and helped establish a blueprint for success for many years to come. At the outset, Boucher had a lot of contacts with the oil companies which became great long-term clients. He also originated the long running company slogan which was supposed to have read: "A Rubber-Tired Railroad Pulling for the Oil Industry." The slogan was meant to stress exemplary customer service along with a focus on the oil industry as an alternate and dedicated means of transportation. However, the slogan was eventually shortened to "Pulling for the Oil Industry" and it would be part of the overall brand that was recognized throughout the United States for many years.

During those first few years of operation, Boucher would cement his legacy in the firm for many years to come by negotiating the continuation of a "grandfather clause" with the Interstate Commerce Commission. This clause would allow the new company (Hugh Breeding Inc.) to haul product as a common carrier in many of the same states that its predecessor (Hugh Breeding Transport) operated when they were hauling automobiles during the 1930's. The "common carrier" designation meant that Hugh Breeding Inc. could haul for any shipper without restriction.

By 1940 in their second full year of operation, Hugh Breeding acquired the operating rights and property of M.B. Schofield of Oklahoma City, for \$1,000. This acquisition would permit Hugh Breeding Inc. to integrate dry-box units into their operations and would also allow them to address unprofitable issues associated with dead-head hauling on their backhauls. Now, when the company hauled packaged oil products to a destination, they would be able to transport some other commodity (that would make some type of revenue) on the backhaul.

During World War II, there were only two carriers in Oklahoma that had qualifications to move government traffic on government bills of lading. Hugh Breeding, Inc. was one of these companies. Boucher's deal making was indeed critical for positioning the Hugh Breeding firm to be successful during the War years. To illustrate: during the early years of the War, trucking companies would have to go to the refineries to pick up gasoline products. Many times, there was a long line for the truckers which meant long wait times. In order to solve that issue, Boucher made a deal with a Department of the Federal Government where they would institute a process whereby flags would be issued when the truckers arrived at a refinery to load up and carry gasoline. Of course, the agreement was favorable to the Hugh Breeding firm and their trucks would be able to bypass the long lines. Simply put, delivery of gasoline at that time was vital and they didn't want to wait around for gasoline. The drivers got the necessary authorization with these flags to not have to wait in line

and they always had gasoline to run their hauling vehicles. This decision by the Federal Government was instrumental in the company expanding during the War years.

After World War II, Jeff Boucher left the company and went into the propane business. He started a company called Standard Fuel and Appliances. Hugh Breeding also soon made the decision to leave the business in the capable hands of his son, Lyle Breeding. Hugh would enter into quasi-retirement by moving to a farm in Maysville, Arkansas, which consisted of 503 acres of land and three houses.

Hugh would do his own farming and raised Hereford cattle but he also still held a very active part in his company. Often, he was unable to stay away, and he made frequent trips to Tulsa to see about the company. In 1951, when a new terminal was being built in Tulsa, Hugh would build a little house at the back of the new terminal building, which was later used as the Safety Office. He and his wife would stay there on each and every visit.

It was also after the War that much of the traffic that moved during the War, had been diverted to pipelines and to proprietary carriers, and Hugh Breeding, Inc. had to diversify its business. As a result of this diversification, Hugh Breeding Inc. became equipped to give good and efficient service on all the commodities manufactured and distributed by the oil industry. The company soon began to haul jet fuel out of Colorado, Petroleum Products out of Beaumont, TX and asphalt to Missouri.

In August, 1960, Hugh Breeding, Inc. pioneered, as far as the common carrier industry is concerned, in the transportation of missile propellants and missile fuels. When the company began hauling missile fuel, it meant an entirely new set of protocols and procedures the drivers would need to follow. Each shipment would always have two men. A driver always had to be with the truck and trailer at all times. If they stopped to eat, one man would have to stay behind in the truck. Now trucks would come equipped with sleeper units and the drivers would take turns getting up in the sleeper – they never got a room until the load was delivered. Although this operation placed an enormous strain on drivers, who had to develop trust with partners and tolerate the discomfort of life on the road, it offered greater flexibility and quicker delivery times.

In the summer of 1967, Teamster Local 523 in Tulsa added a 145-man bargaining unit to its ranks when the employees of Hugh Breeding, Inc., voted overwhelmingly for Teamster representation. The new Teamsters consisted of truck drivers, mechanics, janitors, tire service men, recap men, gas operators and helpers.

Over the years, the company grew from 6 units in 1939 to a size of 290 pieces of equipment in 1965 and to ultimately 397 pieces of equipment and employing 205 people by 1973. Its major terminals were located in Ponca City, Okmulgee, Ardmore, Mt. Vernon, Missouri, Hannibal, Missouri, Baxter Springs, Kansas, Ft. Smith, Arkansas and Nederland, Texas. Each of the terminals handled different capacities and usually was located near a very large customer. Annual revenues eventually reached over \$4.3 million by 1972. Expansion and the financing of that growth were a frequent topic of discussion in management meetings.

On November 1, 1972 the Breeding's sold the company to a consortium led by Breene Kerr, William E. Howell and Levoy Ellsworth. Ellsworth served as President and General Manager of the acquired company. On January 15, 1974, the Hugh Breeding, Inc. trucking company changed its name to Ellex Transportation, Inc.

Hugh would pass away on April 20, 1982 at the Gravette Medical Center Hospital. He was buried next to his wife Maude at the Maysville (Arkansas) Cemetery (Hugh's wife Maude passed away in 1976).



Hugh Breeding Seminole Trucks



Lyle Breeding with Dan Daniel
1961



Hugh Breeding Truck Yard 1951



Hugh Breeding's Trucks.
Seminole, Okla.



Hugh and Lyle Breeding



Hugh Breeding Truck Yard Late 1960's



Hugh Breeding Terminal at Baxter Springs

A special thank
you to
Bret Breeding for
sharing this
history with OTA!



Tom Cook Truck July 1954



Truck at Phillips 66 Station in 1950



Don Lester –
Far Right at
Hugh Breeding
Transport
around 1935



**Lyle Breeding – Executive Vice President,
Hugh Breeding Inc. and
President of the Oklahoma Trucking Association
1960-61**

Lyle Breeding was born on May 7, 1910 at a logging camp in Dorena, Oregon. As the son of a pioneer in the early US trucking industry, Lyle moved around from town to town as a youngster while his father made all the Oklahoma and Borger, Texas oil booms. Lyle spent some of his lower school years in both Haskell and Council Hill, Oklahoma. He attended Shawnee High School as a 10th grader before eventually enrolling at Seminole High School in 1929 for both his junior and senior years. He was the first in his family to attend high school.

Lyle learned early on that it took hard work to succeed in life. He did what he had to do for a few spare bucks, including getting out of bed at 3 a.m. to go to work making doughnuts and he often worked after school washing, changing tires and refueling trucks for his father's firm. Even though he was a member of the Hi-Y Club at Shawnee High School and enjoyed participating in the Science Club at Seminole High School, Lyle spent many hours gaining invaluable hands-on experience while working for his father. His commitment to helping in the family business left little time for indulging in the activities of a typical teenager. However, the lessons he learned in his formative years at Seminole High School were still applicable throughout his business career. He learned early on that to succeed in life and business, it would take an excellent work ethic combined with a positive attitude.

Lyle graduated from Seminole High School in 1930 and reported to work full time at his father's business in Oklahoma City the very next day. Unfortunately, at the start of his career, the Oklahoma oil bust and Great Depression had started and his father's firm couldn't get any oil field hauling in what was considered a horrible market. His father, Hugh Breeding, then designed and built one of the first automobile trailers. It would be the end of the Hugh Breeding Convoy Company but the birth of the Hugh Breeding Transport Company. Although he had entrepreneur leanings, Lyle had little to no business background when he started his career. However, he was willing to work hard, take some business classes at the local college and put in the hours to make the best of his opportunity. Lyle would start at the bottom in his father's company learning the business from the ground up. During the first decade of his career, he moved through the ranks of the firm in a variety of positions ranging from Yard Helper to Driver to Rate Clerk, Office Manager, Secretary-Treasurer and ultimately, he was named Vice President.

His father sold the automobile transport company in 1938 to a consortium led by Roy Woods and then proceeded to co-found a petroleum and gasoline transport firm with Jeff Boucher. Lyle would make the move to Tulsa and work as a company executive for a couple of years before embarking out to start his own firm.

In 1941, Lyle enlisted two business partners to help raise capital to start a new business and do hauling for Gates Rubber in Denver – moving products to Oklahoma and hauling some other commodities back to the Denver area. The company did very well for a short while, but the timing couldn't have been much worse as World War II broke out. As the war time economy ramped up, all of Gates' products had to be diverted toward the War Effort. Lyle then returned to work at Hugh Breeding Inc. re-joining his father's trucking company as Vice President.

During World War II, Jeff Boucher, Vice President and co-founder of the firm who also worked as a regional representative in both the Office of Defense Transportation and the Office of Price Administration, functioned as Lyle's mentor in preparing him to eventually run the Hugh Breeding trucking company. The mentoring with Boucher, also a pioneer in the liquefied petroleum gas industry, provided Lyle with not only a personal but a professional friendship that continued for many years to follow.

During the War, Hugh Breeding Inc. was wildly successful as it leveraged government connections to become one of only two carriers in Oklahoma that had the qualifications to move government traffic on government bills of lading. From this point on, it would regularly make the Top 25 rankings of the largest national tank truck carriers in the United States. As the War concluded, Lyle's father retired from the company to move to his ranch in Arkansas. Jeff Boucher then founded his own company which left Lyle to run the firm.

In 1945, Lyle also rose to national prominence as he was named regional director and Oklahoma state chairman for the National Tank Truck Carriers, Inc. which was a group of tank truck operators representing 45 states and the District of Columbia. Lyle was chosen as Director of the eighth region, comprising Oklahoma, Missouri and Kansas. It would be the first of several industry leadership positions that Lyle would be elected to during his storied career.

In the late 1940's, the trucking industry underwent massive change and much of the traffic that moved during the War was being diverted to pipelines and to proprietary carriers. This meant the firm now had to diversify its business and haul many new types of commodities manufactured and distributed by the oil industry, including asphalt.

1960 was a landmark year for Lyle Breeding, his company and the industry. During this Sputnik and Apollo era, under Lyle's direction, the firm invested significant resources to become a pioneer in the hauling of missile propellants and fuels for the US federal government and later NASA. Additionally, that year, Lyle was recognized for his superior accomplishments in the transportation industry and was elected President of the Oklahoma Motor Carriers Association at their annual convention.

Lyle's leadership extended 30 years, and during that time his company grew from six units in its early days to a size of 397 pieces of equipment while employing nearly 300 Oklahomans. It had trucking terminals in Okmulgee, Ardmore, Ft. Smith, Oklahoma City, Nederland, Texas, Baxter Springs and El Dorado, Kansas, and Hannibal and Mt. Vernon, Missouri. In due course, the firm became one of the largest haulers of gasoline, propane, chemical and allied products in the southwestern United States. In 1972, Lyle and the Breeding family sold the industry leading trucking firm to a consortium headed up by Breene Kerr, William Howell and Levoy Ellsworth.

A humble leader, Lyle always believed in helping promote others throughout his career. In 1959, he and the company's Safety Director, Jack Holland, took a leading role in nominating one their drivers, [Carl Crim](#), to become Driver of the Year in Oklahoma. That award eventually parlayed itself into the American Trucking Associations' National Driver of the Year award for Crim, and ultimately meetings with such noted celebrities as Vice President Richard Nixon, FBI boss J. Edgar Hoover and Yankees legend, Mickey Mantle.

During his storied career, Lyle was also involved in many organizations in the community. He served in an executive capacity at the Tulsa Transportation Club and he was also a member of the Tulsa Petroleum Club. He served as a member of both the Motor Freight Committee and Public Affairs Forum at the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce. He became a Scottish Rite Mason in 1945 at the Valley of McAlester. He transferred his membership to the Valley of Tulsa in 1958 and was one of the Charter Members. He was made a Master Mason in the Siloam Lodge #276 at Oklahoma City. And while he didn't get involved in too many political causes, Lyle (and the Oklahoma trucking industry) did actively support the "Truckers Need Mike Monroney in the US Senate" campaign during 1962.

Upon his retirement, Lyle enjoyed golfing, watching OU football games, occasionally eating out at Goldie's and the Coney I-lander in Tulsa and doing yardwork. He always found time to visit with old friends from the trucking industry as well as drivers from the firm that happened to stop by his house for visits.

Lyle met his wife of 56 years, Lorraine Nordstrom in 1936, when he made a local delivery to a car dealership where she worked. They would have four children: John Thomas, Lyle Densel Jr., Mary and Paul. Lyle Breeding passed away on April 3, 1992.

In 2018, Lyle Breeding was posthumously elected into the Seminole High School Hall Fame.