

## Broadview Heights Historical Business Spotlight: CC Mitchell



As we continue to honor the oldest businesses in Broadview Heights in our 90<sup>th</sup> year, we talk with Jerry Mitchell, owner of C.C. Mitchell! Did you know Jerry Mitchell is not only a classic businessman, but also is the man behind many of Broadview Heights' properties? Read on to learn more about this interesting story of a real Broadview Heights-ian!

**Q:** How long has C.C. Mitchell been around and how did it get started?



*C.C. Mitchell Appliance's Headquarters*

**A:** We actually got our start in 1951 at the corner of Pearl & State, in Cleveland. My father, Calvin Mitchell, started the business. He sold incinerators and home appliances to home builders. I've been doing this job for a long time, so long I can hardly remember...maybe since age 10? I briefly worked as a mailman during college, but otherwise I have always worked here, running the company. I took the business over for my father when he passed away.

**Q:** Tell me a little about C.C. Mitchell's business and business model. What do you do today?

**A:** We sell commercial appliances to apartment owners, management companies and home builders. We sell all kinds of appliances. We have a nice showroom downstairs and we sell all of those products, but, also many other custom items. Our annual sales are generally around 40,000 appliances. We are a major supplier in the industry.

Our main competitors are Lowes, HH Gregg and B&B Appliance. Out of those competitors, we are the smallest. However, we have the largest market share in Ohio. Our business model focuses on building strong relationships, having quality programs and being hands-on with our customers. Until this day we don't consider a sale complete until an order is delivered, paid for and the customer is happy. We truly care about our customers and as a result, we service them more and go out of our way to make sure they are happy. We've really relied on that business model to be successful.

Our Broadview Heights location is our Headquarters. Within it we have our warehouse, showroom, both sales and executive offices, and the base for our field operation.

**Q:** How did your business come to Broadview Heights?

**A:** It was early 1977. I wanted to move the business to an industrial park in North Royalton, but, Mayor Don Faulhaber and his staff got a hold of us. The Mayor came to our office and told us that he couldn't give us any monetary incentive, but he could promise to treat us fair. I-77 had just gone in. We were sold on Broadview Heights being a central location and close to everywhere we did business. I really liked the Mayor and administration; I felt they were honest people working hard to sell us on the City. Now we have been here so long we are a landmark on Route 82.

We were really interested in proximity to the highway. We cover a lot of area – back then we were covering Cuyahoga and Medina Counties. Today we go from Toledo to Pennsylvania, Akron Canton Massillon, Niles, Youngstown. The location has been ideal to help us grow over time.

**Q:** It sounds like your business philosophy is customer-centric, revolving around building and maintaining longer term relationships with repeat customers. Was that intentional?

**A:** Yes, and that is what sets us apart from our competitors. My father built the business on keeping integrity to his business deals and relationships, on being

knowledgeable about his products

and on being dependable. For example, we have a local developer who is now running the developer business his father started, just like me. His father was a customer of ours since 1957. Today they are still our clients. One day, after my father passed away, the developer's father was driving by our offices and locked up his brakes to pull onto our property. He came in to see me and said he just wanted to tell me that ever since they had been in business they had never bought an appliance from anyone other than CC Mitchell, and they never would. The son was close to his father, just like I was. Years after that the son told me that his Dad told him that our Fathers had been doing business together for 50 odd years and in all that time hadn't had any disputes. That doesn't happen with people these days. Their word was their bond, a deal was a deal and you didn't need a contract, just a handshake. That's how we operate.

**Q:** What has kept your business in Broadview Heights over the years?

**A:** Proximity both to our residents but more importantly to the customer base. Broadview Heights is after all a reasonably central location to cover northern Ohio. I-77 gives great access to the Turnpike, I-480, I-271 – we can get anywhere easily.

We carry these major brands



*Commercial appliance brands carried and on display at C.C. Mitchell*

**Q:** How have you seen Broadview Heights change over the years?

**A:** Just look at Route 82! When we moved here you didn't have to look both ways to cross the street. Now we can't even get out of our lot, it's so busy.

**Q:** How do you feel about the upcoming widening of Route 82?

**A:** It's a good thing. Progress is always painful. Route 82 needed to be widened years ago. Did you know that Route 82 was a Works Progress Administration project during the Great Depression? Originally, in order to maximize labor and employ folks the roads were deemed to be made of brick. Route 82 was not designed to handle the capacity it does today.

**Q:** As the business was passed on to you from your father, do you have any other family members who work for you?

**A:** Yes, my daughter Chris, my son Todd and now my granddaughter, Amanda. Todd is the Operations Manager while Chris and Amanda are in Customer Service.

**Q:** And how many employees do you have?

**A:** We employ about 38 people full time. They all operate here; this is our World Headquarters.

**Q:** What is your biggest achievement as a business owner?

**A:** Well, we are 66 years old, and after 66 years our reputation for reliability and integrity are the most important thing. We are proud to still be in business. Just last week Jeff Blumenthal decided to close B&B, a business that's been open since 1924. That same week HH Gregg went bankrupt. And we are still here.



*Broadview Commons Plaza, originally built by Jerry Mitchell*

**Q:** Tell me about your biggest risk you have ever taken as a business owner.

**A:** Building the Broadview Commons Shopping Plaza.

**Q:** Tell me about that – I heard that you were responsible for building that property! How and why did that happen?

**A:** Well, we actually had a number of other properties at the time in the City. First we built The Atrium building (on the north side

of Route 82, just west of Ohio CAT). I fell in love with dirt and was looking to build properties. How did it come about? The owner of the property, Alice Cunningham, had two homes there. Mrs. Cunningham was the mother-in-law of Don Larsen, the owner of Larsen Lumber in Brecksville, who was a friend of mine. We all got to talking and she decided to sell me the property to build the Commons on it.

People say build it and they will come. I was a wild man back then – crazy. Didn't finish one deal and was looking to do three more. I built it, it was tough. Our first tenant is still there today, Huntington Bank. I envisioned retail and restaurants. Some of the original tenants included Cheeburger Cheeburger Restaurant, Gambino & Rocknich Insurance, Jerry's Wine, Edward Jones, and many others.



*The Office Atrium Building, originally built by Jerry Mitchell*

piece of dirt and turning it into something more. They were kind people back then – it was different times. Thinking if we took care of tenants needs in real estate, ultimately they would take care of us, and it worked.

**Q:** How would you find your tenants?

**A:** Some of them came to us. We had the Atrium building, we had a reputation for taking care of folks and I would network with other people. I guess it was a natural progression; I sold appliances to builders and I admired builders for taking a

**Q:** So you were deeply involved in the local real estate market at one time?

**A:** Yes – I like playing in dirt. Guess when I was a young kid I never had the chance to do that so I did it later in life! At one time we had the CC Mitchell property, the Atrium building, Broadview Commons Plaza, and also the Corporation Center properties on Edgerton. We worked hard on attracting businesses to Broadview Heights and I ended up with my own property management firm to help.

**Q:** So, in a way, you did economic development for Broadview Heights?

**A:** Yes. The Atrium was a good property for us. When we owned it we had a waiting list for people to get in the building. Dennis Insurance was the original tenant there.

Also, we liked to work with our tenants on helping them find the right space fit and if they needed more space they could go to one of our other properties. We also had our own management firm on the ground, CC Mitchell

Tennant Service Group, headquartered out of The Atrium. We did everything for all of our properties – irrigation, grass cutting, snow plowing, tree planting, yard lighting, etc. We started that group because



*Corporation Center, originally built by Jerry Mitchell*

we wanted to keep our tenants happy and make sure they got a return on the rents that they paid, again giving a serious value to customer service.

One of the reasons we had this service group was so that we had control over the services being provided and also so that we would have people on the ground who would see what was going on. For example, we had a tenant, Reynolds Metals, who had a maintenance call out. A few days later, I was in the building for a meeting and stopped in to check on them when I ran into the local employees who told me not to worry about it, since they were going to be moving anyway. I asked them what had happened and they told me that their boss was in town and decided to consolidate them to Richmond, Virginia. I went and met with the boss and was able to show him one of the available Corporate Center spaces, and retain their business. Also, they needed to be in to their office space sooner, so the City worked with us on their building schedule so they were able to get in to their space timely. It worked out perfectly.

**Q:** It sounds like your business is poised to stay strong. What does 2017 look like for CC Mitchell?

**A:** Good. We are growing and adding more people to our staff. In the recent past we've made a lot of investments in trucks and lifts. Now we are focusing on the future generations in our employees and on investing in our human capital.



**You can find C.C. Mitchell at:**

3001 East Royalton Road  
Broadview Heights, Ohio 44147

440-526-2040

<http://www.ccmitchell.net>