

## people to know

# SPRINGFIELD'S STEEL SIBLINGS

Two brothers keep the family steel business running in Illinois' capital—and have fun doing it.

**YOU COULD SAY** that Mark and Tony Selvaggio are big supporters of their state government—or at least their state government buildings.

Politics aside, the brothers' company, Selvaggio Steel (an AISC member and AISC Certified Fabricator), has been the primary fabricator for numerous projects in their hometown of Springfield, Ill., including several state-owned buildings. Such projects have offered some rather unique experiences—such as an impulsive, self-guided tour to the highest reaches of the State Capitol.

“On one project visit to the Illinois State Capitol building, while we were looking for the foreman, we took the opportunity to go through the main dome and climbed up the winding stairs to the smaller dome on top that supports the U.S. flag,” recalls Mark, who is the company's president and CEO. “Being adventurous, I convinced Tony to climb the exterior ladder to the small dome to see what was in there. We went in and saw a hatch to the outside of the small dome. This led to another ladder, all the way on the outside of the dome to the flag pole above. Tony is slightly afraid of heights, so it took some nudging to get him out on the ladder (only supported by brackets at the top and bottom of the small dome) and climb it to the top. Once there, we took turns on the ladder, looking out over Springfield on a beautiful Friday in July.”

There are also interesting opportunities on the ground in Illinois' capital city, particularly in the form of rubbing elbows with state and national politicians. “All of the politicians throughout the state work here several times a year, and it's not uncommon to be out on the town and see Mike Madigan [Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives] eating two tables from you,” says Mark. “Senator Dick Durbin and former Governor Jim Edgar live nearby, and you'd see Obama at some of the local drinking establishments during his years as an Illinois State Senator.”

Selvaggio Steel has been a Springfield fixture long before any of these public servants. The company was founded by Mark and Tony's father, Joe, who trained in welding and management while serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps (now the Air Force) during World War II. After the war, he worked his way up to a foreman position with a local steel company and eventually founded his own fabrication company in 1957, specializing in both structural and ornamental steel. Mark and Tony started as teenagers with the company in entry-level positions, learning the business from the ground up as welders, machine operators and painters, often working after school and weekends as needed. Their sister Michelle eventually joined the business as well, serving as the comptroller for several years.

Joe passed away in 1985, and the younger Selvaggios stepped in where their father left off, growing the company from a five-person operation to a workforce of nearly 30. Today, Mark runs the business side of things and Tony is the vice president and in charge of the shop floor. “He's the brains and I'm the brawn,” laughs Tony.

Tony's know-how on the shop floor stems from his childhood love of building things. From a young age, he's been putting together model cars, tanks and train sets. He started with small train sets and dioramas and has worked his way up to building model locomotives. One of his favorite accomplishments is a sixth-scale model, remote-controlled German King Tiger Tank, complete with sound and smoke.

His love of trains even translated to one of Selvaggio Steel's projects. Springfield's Memorial Medical Center Foundation holds an annual fund-raiser, the Festival of Trees, and was in need of a new depot for a small-scale amusement train that runs during the nine-day event at the Orr Building at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. Selvaggio Steel was asked to replace the wooden depot with a steel one.

“I accepted the job without really asking my brother, because I knew he'd say yes,” Mark recalls of the project, for which Selvaggio donated the steel and fabrication work. “It was only when we needed to start the project that Tony was asked to help.” And of course, he did. Named Greenwalt Station, in honor of the family that organized the annual train ride fund-raiser, the depot delights visitors young and old—including Tony—who every year look forward to riding the train.

Both brothers bring something different to every project that comes through their shop and, much like the political goings-on in their hometown, they challenge each other but also keep each other checked and balanced.

“Working in a family business and continuing the family name and reputation with your brother and sister is truly an art,” says Mark, “but also an honor.”

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- The Selvaggio brothers (Mark and Tony) in front of their fabrication shop in Springfield, Ill.

