

Bicycle Enthusiast Realizes His Dream in Difficult Times

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EDITORS NOTE: This first-person account of changing careers and starting a business is one in a series of eight first-hand stories shared by Next Avenue readers. The full collection is available [here](https://www.nextavenue.org/career-shift-stories/) (<https://www.nextavenue.org/career-shift-stories/>).

By David Sperstad

I've wanted a bike shop since I was 13, which was about 1976. I heard about some people riding their bikes across the country. I wanted to do that ever since and I just got excited about bikes. It was called Bikecentennial '76. Now it's [Adventure Cycling](https://www.adventurecycling.org/) (<https://www.adventurecycling.org/>).

When I was a pastor in the church, people would ask me about bikes or ask how to fix them. Then I lost my job. I was fired because I had an affair. The very next day I started working at a bike shop in Brainerd, Minnesota. Knowing that I always wanted to own a bike shop, my wife Susan and I, we just said let's do it. [Tourright Bicycle Shop](https://tourrightbicycleshop.com/) (<https://tourrightbicycleshop.com/>) is a dream.

We stayed in Little Falls because we believed it was a good community to have a bike shop. There are two cross-country trails that cross here — one north and south (the Mississippi River Trail Bikeway) and one east and west (the SOO Line Trail).

I believe we're a relatively active community. I felt like it would be a success. Also, we're 30 miles from the nearest other shop. And I knew I would work my tail off to make it successful.

There was some fear, I suppose. But my wife Susan has the mentality that when you jump off a cliff you can't get back on. And being a pastor for so long, my whole life was about building relationships.

Online retailers can be a problem if people are only shopping based on price. I know that some people compare my prices to online prices, and some just buy

online without talking to me. I will match prices to a degree because I am interested in building a community. We genuinely care about riding bikes and want to help you ride a bike.

We had a woman in yesterday looking at this particular brand of bike and told us she had been over to (a sporting goods chain store in a nearby town). I said, "Well, did you get to talk to anybody about it?" I wasn't asking because I thought she didn't get help. I just wanted to know if she had sat on the bike that she was looking at here. But she said there was nobody around to help (in the chain store).

I've gotten a lot of helpful business advice from [SCORE](https://www.score.org/) (<https://www.score.org/>) as well as the National Bicycle Dealers Association. We sell kids' bikes, but not as many as sometimes I think we should. If someone can go to Walmart in town and buy one for \$90 why spend \$300 with us? So we started a trade-up program. You buy a kid's bike from us, and when they outgrow it, we will give you half the purchase price toward the next bike. That came from the [National Bicycle Dealers Association](https://nbd.com/#!event-list) (<https://nbd.com/#!event-list>).

Giant (a bike manufacturer) recently pulled our dealership because we didn't sell enough of their bikes. It's upsetting because I have to tell people I can't do warranty work on Giant bikes because I'm not a dealer. But we're working through it. People don't come to me because I'm a Giant dealer. They come to me because they trust I will take care of them.

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