

## PM SLEEP CENTER

PM Sleep Center (PM) was started in 1981 as PM Waterbeds of Eau Claire by Pat and Mike Bloss. The business is located in Eau Claire, WI and is the only major 100% owned and operated, non-franchise seller of mattresses, bedroom furniture, futons and specialty sleep products in the Chippewa Valley. They offer quality sleep products at discount prices.



Mike started in the bedroom furniture business in 1971 where he worked as a store manager for Happy Sleeper Mattress Company in St. Cloud, Minnesota and later as operations manager with the company in Eau Claire. Mike worked for Happy Sleeper until 1981 when he opened PM Waterbeds of Eau Claire. Mike cashed in the modest retirement he had built up while working for Happy Sleeper to start the business. He purchased some floor sample waterbeds, signed a lease on a store, and was open for business.

The beginning of PM was quite a struggle for Mike and his wife Pat for several years. With not enough money to hire employees, Mike and Pat did everything from deliveries to set-ups in the evenings in their 4,000 square foot store. Mike and Pat managed to eke out a modest living until 1985. By then, several competitors had opened in the area and PM's store was in a very poor location. They were overdrawn, owed everyone, and were thinking about filing for bankruptcy. They decided that one of them would have to get a job outside of the business to pay for health insurance and maybe that would help pull them through. Mike found a job as a wholesale representative for a mattress manufacturer where he worked for a year and then returned to run the business full time. Now it was Pat's turn and she went back to school, received a degree in accounting, and took a job with the Elk Mound School system that provided reasonable pay and health insurance.

In 1989, the name of the business was changed from PM Waterbeds of Eau Claire to PM Sleep Center and, by 1990, the business was back on its feet and a new 6,000 square foot building was purchased. In two years, another 3,000 square feet were added and a new 6,000 square foot warehouse was built in 1994. Both buildings were paid off in 2004. 2007 and 2008 brought a nosedive in the economy. Three furniture stores in Eau Claire closed and a new major retailer opened. Mike had to decide to either expand or shut down. Having gone through his hardships in the 80's, Mike promised himself he would never go through that again. Mike's decision was to expand the business.

His first step was to work with a developer who helped him get full market value on the sale of his two Fairfax buildings. Mike's next step was to utilize SBA's 504-loan program to change locations for better visibility and more showroom space.

Because of the SBA loan, PM moved to a new location, DOUBLED their business in the first three months at the new location, re-hired an employee they recently had laid off and hired two more employees. PM went from five employees to eight employees because of the loan.

With the elimination of the SBA loan fees, Mike realized a savings of approximately \$19,000.

One very important part of the PM story is that PM Sleep Center is named after Mike's late wife Pat and himself, Mike (thus PM). Pat, who passed away in 2003, was Mike's partner. Mike says, "Pat supplied 80 % of the brains to the business and I supplied 80% of the brawn." Mike had a real hard time going to work for a couple of years, missing her expertise and wisdom and it took him a long time to function without her. In 2005, Mike married a wonderful woman named Debra who has also made valuable contributions to the business.

Mike wants to mention his long time manager, Alex Nelson who has been with PM almost from the beginning and through the 80's, when the business had to scramble to make sure his paycheck cleared. Alex manages all the day-to-day operations. Mike also mentioned that PM has had dozens of good employees over the years. One, Arvid Huth, wanted Mike to open a store in Milwaukee but he opted not to. However, in the early 90's, Mike did enter into a licensing arrangement with Arvid and his brother Ben. They opened a small waterbed store in Milwaukee and from there, have expanded into three major locations in Milwaukee and three in suburban Chicago. You may know them as PM Bedroom Galleries. Another Huth brother and another former PM employee opened two stores, one in Blaine, MN, and another in Woodbury, MN. Mike also has another licensed store in La Crosse. He now has nine locations using the PM name. Though the metro stores are more focused on handcrafted bedroom furniture, they all adhere to the solid philosophy of customer service and quality products. In a business world where over half of new start-ups fail, not a single PM store has shut its doors. A great legacy.

Mike has been a long time member of the Chamber of Commerce in Eau Claire and is a "Big Brother," mentoring a 12 year old boy. The business participates in several charities and they donated all the mattresses for a homeless shelter. They also help with Special Olympics and numerous other causes including fund raising for breast cancer research.

PM has acquired the success it now enjoys through sacrifice, hard work, and perseverance when the odds were against them. Their continued commitment to quality products and great customer service makes SBA proud to have been of assistance to Mike and PM Sleep Center.