

Dan Murphy – Mid-America Piano

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Let's sit down at a piano keyboard. As fingers start to move across the keys, a beautiful sound is generated from the heart of the piano. Where does this piano come from? Today we'll learn about a remarkable Kansas business which is selling pianos across the nation and beyond. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Dan Murphy is the founder and owner of Mid-America Piano in Manhattan, Kansas. He grew up near the rural community of Keats, in Wildcat Township which has a population of 834 people. Now, that's rural. Dan's grandparents were dairy farmers and apparently that work ethic stayed with him.

Dan grew up in a musical home. "I played piano since I was a little kid," Dan said. "My grandmothers and my mom played piano, my dad played guitar, and my sister played the saxophone," he said. "Sometimes we'd go play music at the nursing homes in the area," Dan said.

After graduating from Riley County High School, he attended Cloud County Community College where he played trumpet in the jazz band. His plan was to attend K-State, but he also wanted a part-time job.

"There was a 'help wanted' ad in the Manhattan Mercury," Dan said. "A piano company was looking for a salesman. I applied and started work the same day," he said.

Dan found he enjoyed the piano business. The company he worked for primarily sold new pianos, and Dan thought there was a niche selling pianos in the used piano market. In 1986, he went out on his own. He called the business Mid-America Piano.

"I rented a little hole-in-the-wall place on the west side of Manhattan," Dan said. He began with three used pianos, a worn-out church van he had bought at an auction, and a 900 square foot facility. "I figured I'd be in there five years," Dan said. "We outgrew that space in six months."

The business continued to expand through the years. In 1987, Dan moved his business to Poyntz Avenue in downtown Manhattan. In 2002, Mid-America Piano moved into its current location in an 11,000 square foot building on Highway 177 south of town. This provided more room, higher visibility, and handy access to the interstate.

Today, Mid-America Piano is one of the leading suppliers of pianos across the nation. The company specializes in high quality, previously owned pianos that can be resold or restored as needed. The goal is to provide a quality piano at an affordable price.

The company literally sells pianos coast to coast, border to border and beyond. "I've been to every one of the 48 (continental) states multiple times," Dan said. The company has even shipped pianos to Canada, Mexico, Great Britain, and Africa. Wow.

Mid-America Piano offers everything from starter pianos to concert grands, and from new pianos to vintage instruments. There are grand pianos, uprights, digital pianos, organs, automated player systems and more. Product

names include Steinway & Sons, Baldwin, Yamaha, and others. The company provides national pickup and delivery.

Along the way, Dan also picked up some extra special pianos – even one-of-a-kind treasures. Called art case pianos, these include an ornate 1900 Steinway, a 1913 swan grand Steinway, a 1905 Louis XV Steinway, and more. These are on display at the company's showroom. The finest collection of art case pianos in the world just might be in Manhattan, Kansas.

The company also offers organs for sale. Mid-America Piano is said to have the largest pre-owned Lowrey organ gallery in the U.S.

Dan's travels have taken him from Seattle in the Pacific Northwest to Key West in Florida. "I love meeting people, and music is the universal language," Dan said. For more information, go to www.piano4u.com.

The fingers flow across the keyboard as the piano produces beautiful notes. It's an example of the fine products at Mid-America Piano. We salute Dan Murphy and the staff of Mid-America Piano for making a difference with entrepreneurship in the piano business. Their niche in the market strikes just the right note. For customers who are seeking a good value in a piano, they can work with Dan Murphy and make beautiful music together.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.