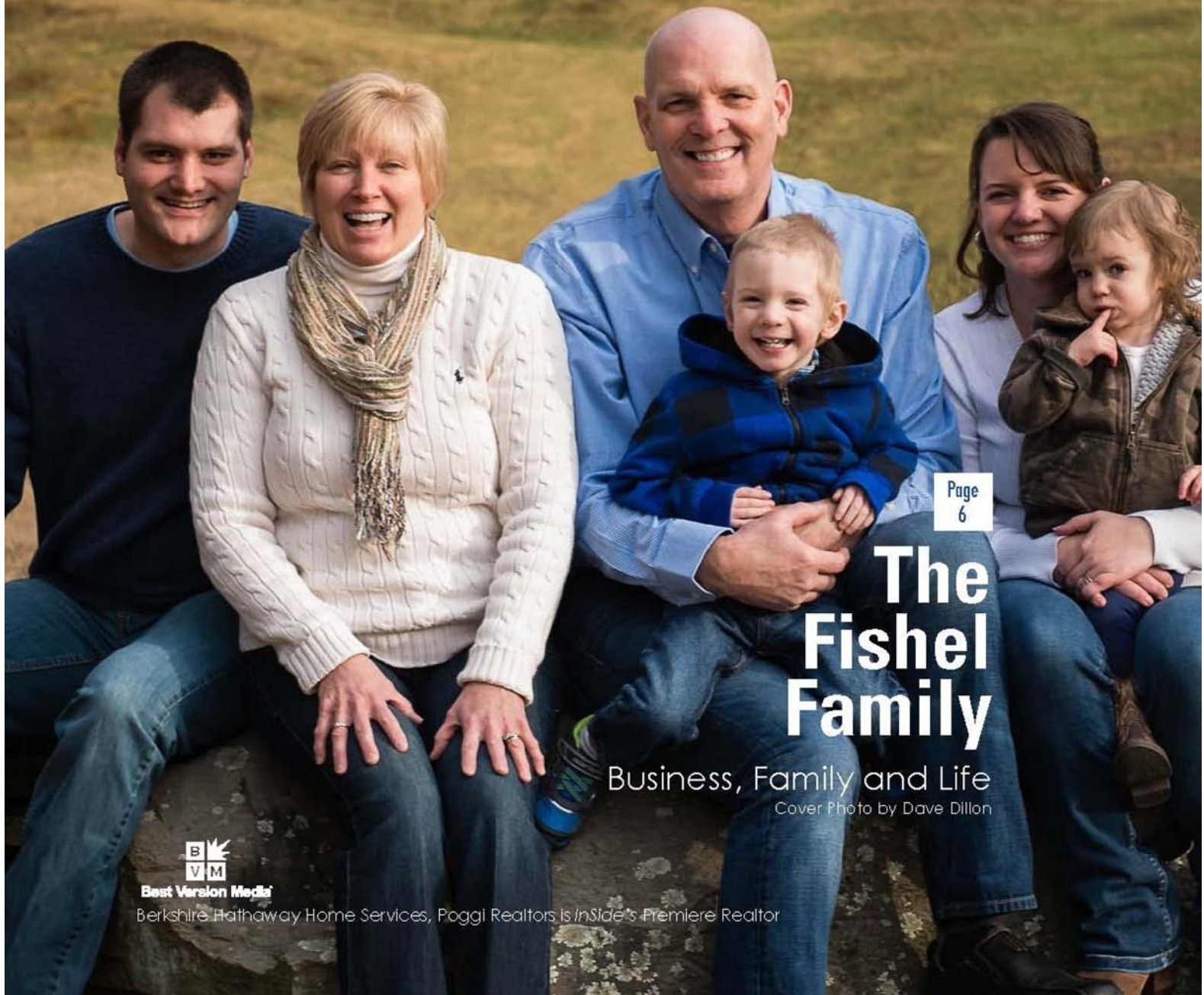


InSide The Back Mountain

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The Fishel Family

Business, Family and Life

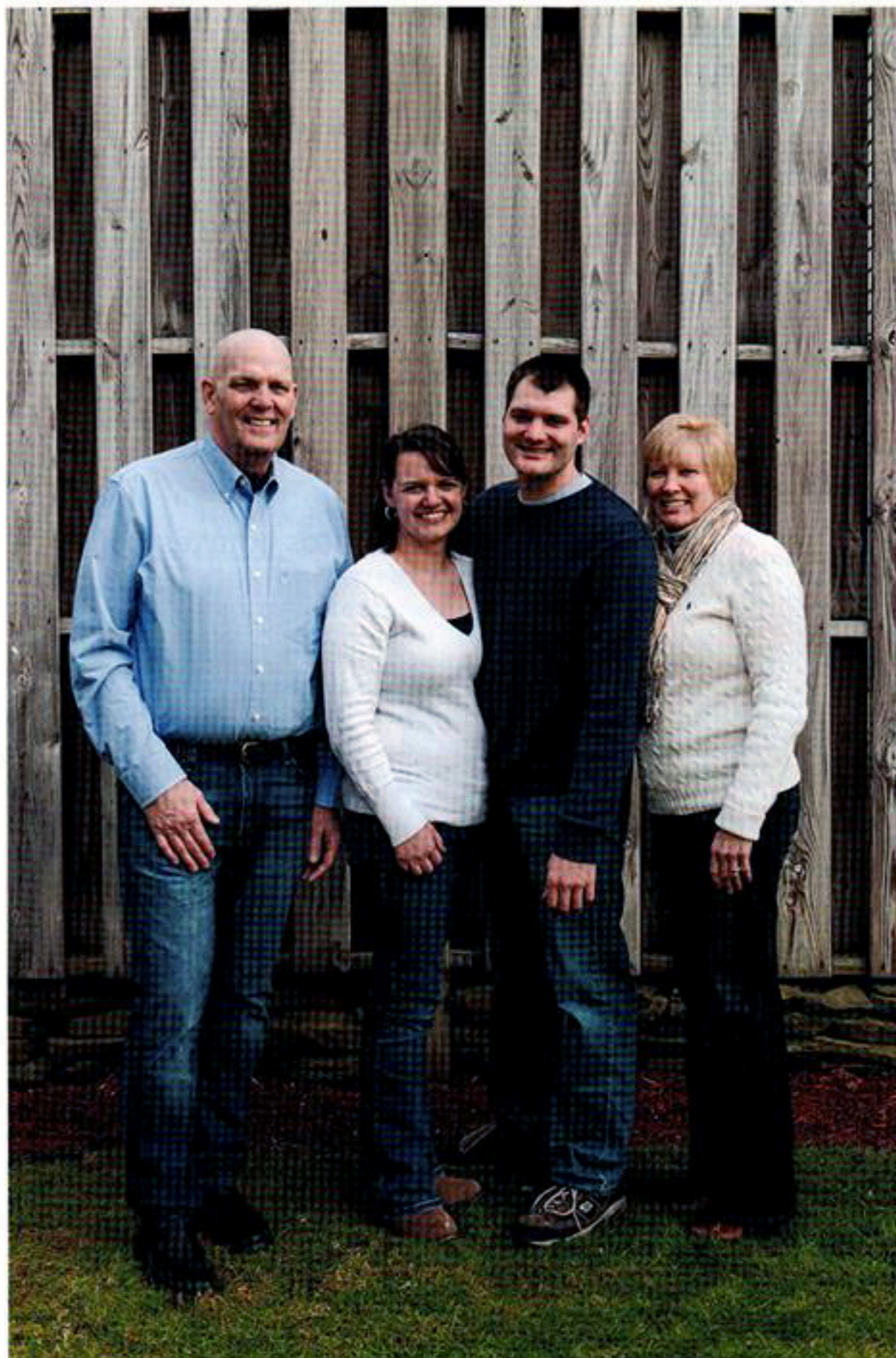
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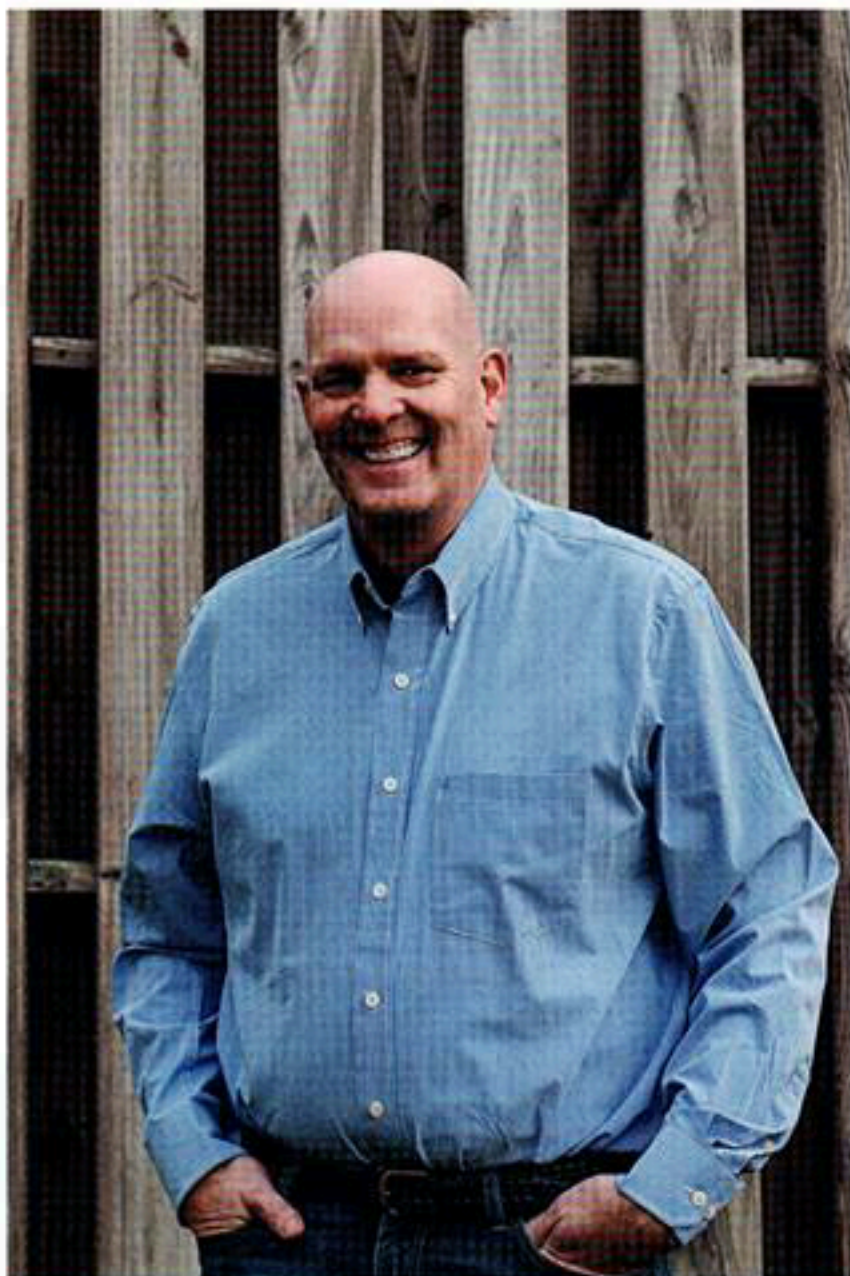
The Fishel Family: Business, Family and Life

By Clare Parkhurst | Photos by David Dillon, Photography



“CEO Joel Schechter of Honora Pearls whose father started the Honora Pearl Empire, will tell you the real competitive advantage of a family business is: family. Schechter’s sons, sisters and other family members work in the business. In an interview, Schechter shared some benefits to running a family business. 1. Speed. ‘In a family business, we can think about something in the morning and begin working on it in the afternoon,’ says Schechter. 2. Solidarity. ‘Competing agendas make for harsh office politics. Fights happen in the family, too, but when the goal is to help the family business win, turf battles diminish.’ 3. Nature plus nurture. ‘Some of us are just born to entrepreneurial risk-taking — so it’s likely our kids are, too. When kids grow up in the business, they absorb the skills it takes to succeed.’ 4. Authenticity. ‘Family is the place where you can let things fly. We laugh more here,’ says Schechter. ‘And we yell more here.’ 5. Trust. 6. Control. ‘Family businesses control their fate.’ 7. Next-gen ingenuity. ‘Companies can lose their competitive edge when leaders lose touch with the youth market.’”¹ Geoff Fishel and his family can attest to these benefits. This is *InSide The Back Mountain’s* follow up to our friends at All Mechanical, a Shavertown-based heating and air conditioning company who will be celebrating 27 years in business this month.

On day one at All Mechanical, there was just one employee, Geoff Fishel, owner. He wore all hats. Geoff was CEO, CFO, marketing manager and the sales force. As the years passed, that changed. There are now 4 family members working for All Mechanical. I asked Geoff; his wife, Maggie; son, Geoff II; and daughter-in-law, Tasha, to offer their experiences and insights into entrepreneurship and working together for a family enterprise.



Geoff Sr., explained, "The ups of being an entrepreneur is that you set your own destiny. From a little boy I think I always wanted to be in business and be my own boss. As a kid, I was always looking for ways to make money. From looking for old pop bottles to return for the deposit monies to searching for lost golf balls at a local golf course and then selling them back to the golfers, it's always been in my blood.

The downs, however, are many. One thing that comes to mind is working out of your own home. You're never off and are always working. People say to me that it must be nice to walk across the driveway and be at work. I always tell them NO... it's not fun at all! Then start to tell them that I have very little time away from my business. I cannot and have never just taken a day off and stayed home without spending some time in the office to make sure things are going to run smoothly that day. That's why cruise vacations are so important to Maggie and me each year. It's important to just get away from it all." Geoff and Maggie have cruised to the Caribbean and Europe and have made plans to cruise to Alaska and Panama.

"Being the President, CEO, or the 'Kingfish' has its ups and downs. Everything rolls down hill and you're always on the bottom to stop it! 'The buck always stops here,' is a true saying when you're the leader and the last decision maker. Firing people is also on the top of my list of difficult duties when you're the 'Big Cheese'. It is a very difficult task and I'm the one that always has to do it. I always have deep remorse for a few days after I do this difficult task. However, I have learned over the years to 'hire slow and fire fast.'"

Maggie Fishel backed her husband Geoff's decision to start All Mechanical and was part of the process from the beginning. "I believed in what he wanted to do, however, his mother was anxious and very apprehensive. I considered myself a silent partner. At that time, I was working for a cardiologist until my daughter Sheryl was four." (Sheryl, the Fishel's oldest, is a Landscape Architect who graduated with her masters from Louisiana State University. She was married in August of 2015 in Seattle, Washington, and now lives with her husband, Chris, in Gaithersburg, Maryland.) After Geoff II was born, both Geoff and Maggie decided that it was important for their children to be home with their Mom. Both Maggie and Geoff believed that this decision was the right decision based on their belief in making sure that their children were properly educated and on the path to a successful life. After both their daughter, Sheryl, and son, Geoff II, were of school age, Maggie became more involved with Geoff's business. She eventually became All Mechanical's dispatcher, a position she holds to this day.

Geoff Fishel II (G-2) is a graduate of Lehman High School and Tasha Fishel (Natasha), Geoff II's wife, is a Dallas High School Graduate. Geoff II and Tasha met at a mutual friend's high school graduation party in 2007. Geoff II and Tasha look back and view that first meeting the same way. They never imagined that night that they would end up spending the rest of their lives together. They were married on May 21, 2011.

Geoff II, who is sometimes referred to as "Fish" by his wife, began working with his Dad at All Mechanical from the time he was twelve

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years old. Geoff Sr. recalls his son and his interest in the business as, "Geoffrey always wanted to follow in my footsteps. As a toddler, just learning to speak and walk, I would take him on service calls. By the time he reached the age of twelve, he had amassed enough knowledge of the trade that I was confident he would be interested in working with me. After graduating from Lehman, he came on board. As the years passed, I was also thinking about the future of this company and thought that Geoffrey would someday want to take over ownership of All Mechanical."

When Tasha and Geoff II married, she was working at a local M&T bank branch as well as working at Weis Markets as a bookkeeper, customer service representative and in the Weis human resources department. Her goal was to work her way to a management roll with Weis. But, Geoff Sr. saw her skills as an asset to the family business and wanted her to be part of the All Mechanical business family. Geoff Sr. had very deep reservations at the same time. "Do I bring on another family member? What if she doesn't work out and I need to fire her? I was very apprehensive about what the outcome may be. But, as it turned out, Tasha is the best! She now manages customer service and is the general office manager. I have told my son, Geoffrey, 'I will fire you before I fire Tasha!' " Tasha and Geoff II now have two children, Leo and Emily. Leo, Tasha and Geoff's first child, was a premie. This experience was difficult for them to say the least. But, today Leo is thriving and Tasha and Geoff II have given back because of their experience. They started a fundraiser called, "Walk for Leo" through the March of Dimes. Tasha and Geoff II wanted other couples who have premature infants to be supported in a time when they are faced with delivering premature babies and the trauma that parents experience during those days and months following the birth.



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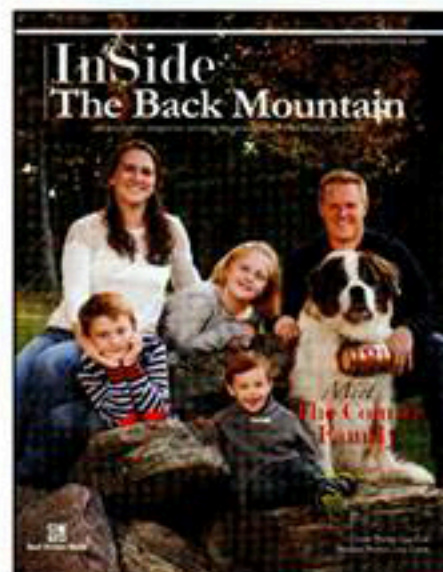
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For the Fishel Family and All Mechanical, there is a definite consensus on working in a family business and making it work. It is a balancing act. Each family member has unique rolls. Geoff Sr. remains at the helm. Maggie manages all aspects of dispatching. She also provides for the care of her grandchildren each day. Geoff II continues his duties as a service technician as well as being groomed to take over the business. Tasha continues to manage customer service and is officially the office manager. All four of the Fishels admit they have their differences about how aspects of the business should operate sometimes. They have their battles but when the goal is to help the family business win, turf battles diminish. This is a family that makes a business work and, more importantly, allows a family to work together.



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