

# Built for Success

## TAN PRO's Rob Quinn

By John P. Ribner



AS Vice-President and co-owner of TAN PRO USA, Rob Quinn guides the thriving salon chain he and his business partner built from the ground up. Of all his duties, he most enjoys resolving customer issues that go beyond the store where they originated. Here, he's able to utilize everything he has at his disposal to resolve the situations and retain clients. Given this success, it's easy to see that Rob has many skills – or tools, as he calls them – to help him along the way. Where this multi-faceted tanning industry veteran developed them is something *ist Magazine* had to find out ...

Dedicated, organized and hard-working, Rob Quinn has enjoyed many accomplishments and plans on

achieving many more.

With salon chain owner, former mayor and avid pilot numbering just a few of his many accomplishments, Rob Quinn's life is as successful as it is adventurous. Even so, he'll be the first to say that his life's path has had its share of setbacks and significant hurdles. He overcame these challenges by looking upon them as learning experiences, and credits his father for helping him develop this mindset. Even today, Rob's desk proudly displays a screwdriver from a toolkit he received as a Christmas gift when he was in the fourth grade. For him, that simple item symbolizes the "giant toolbox of life" handed down from his parents, and which he still uses today.

### Strong Traditions ...

Robert Joseph Quinn was born September 11, 1963 in Fairview Park, OH to Robert and Martha Quinn. While Rob's mother was a homemaker, his father's entrepreneurial drive provided the family with some cross-cultural experiences. "We moved to Toronto in grade school because of my father's job," said Rob. "A few years later we returned to Huron, OH where my dad purchased a lumberyard." Becoming an instant Canadian exposed Rob to the country's national obsession – ice hockey – and he was hooked. He attempted to pursue this interest back here in the states, but the nearest league was 45 minutes from home. "After a year of getting up at 4am each morning to drive to Cleveland for practice, it got a little old," he said. Today, Rob allows the next generation of hockey enthusiasts to skate and play the game on his backyard pond, complete

with a home-made Zamboni and professional ice-skate sharpener in his garage. "It's been a great year for ice," he added, "and we've been skating since before Christmas with no end in sight!"

Beginning in eighth grade, Rob took a job at his father's lumberyard, a move that would well serve the future business owner. It gave him the opportunity to learn every aspect of the business, from office work to driving the forklift, and also allowed him to spend more time with his father. By the time Rob was in high school, his dad challenged him to a bet that has become a Quinn family tradition of sorts. "When he was that age," Rob said, "his dad said he'd give him \$2,000 if he didn't experiment with alcohol or tobacco until he was 21. He made the same bet with me and I was excited about winning the money." While there were times Rob was challenged with peer pressure, he graduated from high school in 1981, alcohol- and tobacco-free.

### Building a Life

In 1986, a haircut dramatically changed Rob's life and helped set the course for his future. At the time, he had just graduated from Bowling Green University with a degree in marketing and management and had his whole life was in front of him. "I was getting a haircut at a salon that had a few tanning beds," he said, "and the manager who was a friend of mine asked me if I would be interested in changing the sunlamps. She told me to change the lamps and give her a bill and they paid me on the spot." What started out almost as a favor grew into a career for Rob, servicing all the stores in one of



The Quinn Family includes Heidi, Rob, Robbie & McKenzie, who all enjoy a sunny beach vacation together whenever possible.



the chain's 28-store districts. He formed the company Commercial Services and soon was servicing all of the chain's 200+ stores in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

While Rob's father inspired him to become an entrepreneur, his mother also influenced his professional direction. When he and his business partner purchased some hair salons and converted them to tanning facilities, Martha Quinn was operating Sunbelievable Distributors. Rob and his partner eventually purchased the business and, after adding a 17-unit working salon-showroom, converted it into the first TAN PRO, salon. It wasn't long before this new venture was flying along, just like its vice president. "During that time in my life, I had the opportunity to purchase a share of a friend's airplane," Rob said. "Since he was asking a very good price for a good plane, I bought it and started taking flying lessons." A licensed

pilot for many years, Rob flies to mainland Ohio each day from his home on Kelly's Island, a small island in Lake Erie, and takes longer flights to the Florida Keys and The Bahamas.

While working in a tanning salon, Rob met Heidi Wilson, the woman whom he would eventually marry. "I was servicing some units in a salon that was attached to a gym," he said, "and Heidi was managing the business. I thought she was cute, but I didn't try to date her because her father was a powerlifter who set a dead-lift record of 880 pounds." A few days later, Mr. Wilson called Rob and asked if he was thinking about dating Heidi, which made the young tanning entrepreneur a bit nervous. As it turns out, Heidi put her father up to calling Rob because she was interested in dating him. On one of their early dates, Rob flew Heidi to his home, a bed-and-breakfast on Kelly's Island. "At the time, I needed help running the place," he said, "and she just jumped in and took control without being asked. That really impressed

me." The couple married in 2000 and have two children – Robbie (13) and McKenzie (11).

### The Sky's the Limit!

Rob's goals for the future of TAN-PRO are as ambitious as he is. After building an empire of 45 TAN PRO, USA salons, he's planning for continued growth. This passion for his business is matched by one to protect the tanning industry as a whole, which is evidenced by his dedication to the Indoor Tanning Association. "At the end of my term as mayor of Kelly's Island," he said, "I accepted the nomination as president of the ITA. It was a great honor to help lead the organization and I'm happy to continue my service as a member of the Board of Directors." One of Rob's biggest concerns is excessive industry regulation, particularly age restrictions. He believes lawmakers could attempt to enact under-21 bans similar to what is

being done to regulate tobacco sales in some states. "We can't give up this fight because there's too much riding on it," he added.

Travel and excitement will highlight Rob's plans for his family life. "I'd love to continue living on Kelly's Island during the summer," he said, "and spend our winters and holidays in the Florida Keys. We used to have a home in Marathon and enjoyed it a lot; but we sold it once our children got to the age where it was more difficult to be away from school and their activities. When they get a little older, Heidi and I plan to purchase another home in the Keys and spend more time there."

Tools were created by early humans to initially make their work easier. These crude devices soon advanced us as a species, and the civilization we have today remains testament to our ancestors' innovations. But as Rob Quinn's story clearly illustrates, not all tools are made of metal and wood. The best tools he owns are those that exist within his mind and have helped him to work smarter – not harder – at charting the course for his life and completing the journey. Now, it's simply a matter of watching and waiting to see what this salon owner/politician/pilot/father/husband and colleague will do next. We look forward to hearing more from you, Rob! ■

### What's Up with Rob?

**Current TV faves:** "Fox News," "House Hunters International" (love comparing values & features to the U.S.) "American Pickers" on The History Channel

**Listening to:** News mostly (not a huge music fan)

**Favorite Food:** Anything on the grill – fresh, grilled fish is a favorite

**Favorite Activity:** Daily 5:30 "Boot Camp" with Heidi

**"Pet Peeve":** Being interrupted when I speak  
**Weekend Stuff:** Big on outdoor fun – summertime boating, paddle-boarding, biking & wakeboarding; in the winter it's ice skating, always with the family.

**"Dream Vacation":** Done it a few times already. Fly to the Bahamas Out Islands & stay on the Sea of Abaco in the Settlement of Hopetown. Very laid back, crystal-clear waters & very few people. It's hard to get to, which makes it perfect.