

axles. Often, blowing snow would cover the ground under the canopies, forcing workers to shovel their bays before serving the next customer.

As the company began to grow, Halle and Von Voigtlander worked less in the tire shop and spent more time managing the business. Halle was fulfilling a promise he'd made to Dave Fairbanks, Al Olsen and others by creating the opportunity for advancement. Each new store became a reward for the new manager and an enticement for the next man in line: *One day, we'll build a store for you, as well.*

The big question, though, was where to build the next store. Michigan was a big state, and a company with five stores could grow for many years there without saturating its market or cannibalizing its own shops. At the same time, the Sunbelt states offered substantial promise. Rising populations meant more than simply increased demand for replacement tires. New residents to any state might have no particular loyalty to more-established retailers, which could create an opening for an upstart like Discount Tire.

Halle and Von Voigtlander debated the relative merits of Florida, Arizona, Texas and California, ultimately deciding to conduct some field research in Arizona. Halle had been to the state once before—a refueling stop in Prescott on his flight to Camp Pendleton in 1952—but neither partner had any real insight into the area.

What they did have was an appreciation for sunlight. When they got off the plane in April of 1969, the contrast between the climate they'd left and the one they were experiencing was nearly shocking. Both Halle and Von Voigtlander began to reconsider the character-building advantages of winter in Michigan, and each expressed a willingness to make the painful sacrifice of establishing a beachhead in a state without snow.

Halle, with 51 percent of the company, opted to make the move, assuming Gerry was willing. If she wouldn't move to Arizona, Von Voigtlander could do it. Bruce and Gerry flew out in June and made the decision to resettle—they bought their first home during their brief visit and moved to Paradise Valley a few months later.

"You do get a little lucky sometimes," Halle says today. "When I moved to Arizona and started opening stores, as opposed to Michigan,