



DOCTORS' EUNICE & JOE DUDLEY SR.

FOUNDERS, DUDLEY BEAUTY CORPORATION, LLC

What do you get when a “spicy, smart little lady” marries a “motivational visionary”?

According to Drs. Eunice and Joe Dudley, Sr., who describe one another in playful but earnest terms, “a lot of competition” and an even greater helping of success.

It turns out a large portion of that success was made right at home in their kitchen sink.

After years spent selling Fuller Beauty products door-to-door in New York and rising through the corporate ranks of the renowned Black-owned cosmetics company, the Dudleys opted to start their own Greensboro, N.C.-based Fuller Distributorship in 1967. A shortage of Fuller products in 1969 led the Dudleys to supplement their offerings with homemade skin and hair products, which meant “the kitchen was no longer for cooking,” explained Eunice. “It became our lab.”

Soon after, the couple purchased Rosebud Beauty Products in Richmond, Virginia, which carried seven products. While Joe conducted research for their expanding product line at the local library, Eunice put her expert typing skills to use and made the labels. Their children would then put the tops on the glass jars, which were collected from local beauty salons. “We made it by night, and sold it by day,” said Joe. “We didn’t take vacations; we worked.”

The products were so well received by stylists and salon owners that the Dudleys eventually bought the entire Fuller business, which they rebranded to Dudley Beauty Corporation. For years, the business made Black Enterprise Magazine’s list of the Top 100 Black Owned Businesses, with a sales force of 400 and revenues topping \$35 million. Today, the business is run by the Dudleys’ daughter Ursula Oglesby, who continues to safeguard the Dudley brand as the premier beauty line for the multi-cultural market.

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But success for Joe and Eunice did not come easily. Even from early childhood, Joe faced the hurdles of poverty and a speech impediment, which led his teachers to assume he was intellectually disabled.

“I had ambitious siblings who were at the top of their class. It didn’t sit too well with me that I was at the bottom of mine,” said Joe, who described himself as “the class clown” who got “whooped almost every day” for his antics at school in Aurora, N.C.

But like his siblings, Joe eventually kindled a fiery ambition to attend college and was accepted at North Carolina A&T University. He paid his own tuition by working in a local chicken processing plant in the 1950s—a job he describes as “filthy, but valuable” in helping him save money.

Eunice, an Alabama native who met her husband while selling Fuller products in Brooklyn during a college summer, gained wisdom through her work, as well. “We had to learn not to get frustrated. If [prospects] slammed the door, we said, ‘Thank you,’ and moved on to the next door.”

Her resilience served her well, especially when Joe considered abandoning the sales industry and returning to Aurora to become a hog farmer shortly after their marriage.

“I didn’t want to be a farm wife. But if that’s what was going to make him happy, I was going to do it,” she recalled.

Those plans never came to fruition. When Samuel B. Fuller, the owner of Fuller Products, heard that two of his top producers were considering such a move, he persuaded Joe and Eunice to stick with the business for the long haul.

Their work with Fuller Beauty took the Dudleys from North Carolina to New York and Chicago, but no matter their location, two things remained constant: an unwavering humility and commitment to service.

“We never worked for money,” explained Joe. “We cared about people.”

And it shows. The couple frequently loaned money to friends and bought cars for their needy employees, even though Eunice

lacked her own. Joe often visited local unemployment lines to recruit new sales representatives, knowing that sometimes, people just needed a second chance to succeed.

Passionate about opportunity and education, Joe also initiated the Dudley Fellows and Dudley Ladies programs at Greensboro’s Dudley High School, named after an unrelated former president of NC A&T. Both programs leverage relationships between Black-owned businesses and the school system to “encourage students to stay in school, improve academic achievement, enter college, and return to Greensboro as role models for other young people,” according to the Greensboro News and Record.



Drs. Joe and Eunice Dudley with Mr. S.B. Fuller, their mentor and founder of Fuller Beauty Products.

Perhaps most notable is that the Dudleys have funded more than 100 students’ full tuition at NC A&T, opening doors for rising leaders to maximize their potential. For Joe’s lifelong success and commitment to elevating younger generations, he eventually received an honorary doctorate from his alma mater.

Like her husband, Eunice stays involved in the community, as well. Having spent years engaging with the United Way

and leading mentorship programs at Bennett College, which awarded her an honorary doctorate in 1991, she now spends much of her time working with the Business and Professional Women of Greensboro, as well as the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro’s Housing Board.

When asked about their legacies, the business partners both expressed a hope that they’ll be remembered for their determination, faith, and impact on younger generations. “We never give up. We live by faith every day; it’s not just for Sunday school and church on Sunday,” said Eunice.

Those ideals have carried them far. From the seeds of a \$10 Fuller sales kit bloomed a 60-year business partnership, three successful children, a multi-million-dollar cosmetics empire, and a legacy of future leaders who have benefitted from the Dudleys’ mentorship and support.

That’s what we call a good return on investment.