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John Wheatley, owner of L&W Bedding, shows off the quality workmanship that goes into his mattresses.

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In the homologized corporate world of big box stores and overseas customer service, L&W Bedding stands out as refreshingly old fashioned. Their Illinois showroom, in Moline's Uptown neighborhood at 1211 16th Avenue, is fittingly located in a building that housed a mom-and-pop grocery store back in the early 1900s.

From the first minute, you are transported back in time. The walls are adorned with a vast array of memorabilia from the golden era of Hollywood to the original Little Kings restaurant menu. Portraits of John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe, golfer Jack Nicklaus and Elvis all keep watch over the 13 models of handmade mattresses offered by L&W. Some days you are even greeted by the sound of the owner and founder, John Wheatley, sitting at his sewing machine carefully making a cover for one of L&W's made to order beds.

"It's old fashion stuff, and that's what we do with our mattresses. I learned how to build mattresses in the late 70s and all through the 80s. In about 1988 or so, I went out on my own. I bought my own sewing machine, put it in my garage, and I started making beds for the hospital and nursing homes," said Wheatley.

After a year of working out of his garage, he opened up his Moline shop and has been working non-stop making his line of top quality mattresses.

Service and quality are the top priorities at L&W. They also never have "big discount sales" because they don't mark-up the beds in the first place just to discount them. "I feel like I'd be lying to my customers if I did that."

The first thing anyone who meets Wheatley will notice is his passion for his craft. His

mattresses are not produced in some impersonal factory which cuts corners on quality to stretch profits. He and employee, Jose Beltran, are artisans. No detail is spared when they are designing and constructing an L&W mattress.

According to Wheatley he had one complaint. After coming to the customer's home personally to figure out the problem, he realized that the mattress was breaking down because the customer was abusing it by regularly walking on it to dust the ceiling fan.

In contrast, "mattress in a box" manufacturers, according to John, have a 30-percent return rate on every mattress they sell. And returns usually mean it ends up in the landfill or as a donation to a local charity.

"The beds nowadays are basically mass-produced. They're not "flippable" and they don't sit on a boxed spring. I think in the late nineties. The big mattress companies started selling something called a foundation," said Wheatley.

The foundation is designed to look like a traditional box spring but doesn't offer any springs causing the mattress to wear-out



Meet the Quad Cities Best Mattress Store!

twice as fast.

"I'm probably the only person in the Midwest that still sells box springs. You could drive from here to Chicago, here to St. Louis and here to Kansas City and not find a traditional box spring."

When you come into one of L&W's two Quad-Cities showrooms (Moline and Bettendorf) John or one of his employees will walk you through each aspect of how their beds are made and answer every question you could possibly think of. They will show you how the box spring works in conjunction with the mattress. They will show you how the mattress is constructed.

"Why are we trying to make beds last for a long time? Because we can still do it. If Sealy wanted to, they could make a bed that would last for a long time without a problem, but they just elected to not do it because they make more money this way," said Wheatley.

"They intentionally designed their beds to fall apart. They're just designed not to hold up, so instead of buying two or three beds in a lifetime, you're going to buy six or seven possibly more."

L&W beds are made to last and keep their shape for a long time. They not only outdistance the competition on quality but they beat the competition on customer service.

"We are a local mom and pop shop so we can deal with any potential problems. We deal with the customer directly."

Wheatley arms his customers with knowledge before they spend a dime on one of his mattresses. "Before you give me 10-cents and you decide which bed you're going to buy, you're going to

know about every component in it, and how it works to give you a great night's sleep. We show each and every customer, why this bed is going to hold up and last."

Sitting on one of his beds he proudly shows off how the mattress and the box spring work together. He then gets up and walks into another room to show you what the competition's mattress and "fake box spring" do when you sit on it. The energy from the mattress has no place to go causing the springs to eventually tear through the materials which make up the bed.

Next, with unbridled energy and enthusiasm for his product, he explains how an L&W pillow top mattress is a "real pillow top" and how it is constructed versus the box store competition model.

Wheatley's knowledge of bed construction is encyclopedic and he shares it all for free. Even if you don't buy a bed from him he wants consumers to share in his wealth of experience.

"We try to provide an education. We are building a high-quality bed, like mattress companies used to do. We are an old fashioned bedding company. So that kind of goes back to those pictures on the walls. You start looking at the pictures from the old days and you just think about the quality from days gone by. That's what we are all about."

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MOLINE HOURS: Tuesday and Friday, Every Other Saturday
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Stop by L&W Bedding today and come home to comfort every night.

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