

MEL'S METTLE



THE ART OF AGEING

When it comes to getting old, there is an important similarity between manufacturing companies and mankind: keep active and don't let age get the best of you. For old fossils like me, it means staying alert and active both mentally and physically and for manufacturers it means constantly reinventing your products and marketplaces as well as your methods of production. As the old adage goes: "You don't stop dancing because you're growing old, you grow old because you stop dancing."

With this bit of philosophy in mind, I've been pondering the fate of three manufacturing companies: Evinrude Outboard Motors, Briggs & Stratton Corp. and Metal Forms Corporation. These companies once had a lot in common as each started business in the early 1900's; each company emerged in Milwaukee, WI; each company became known for one key product: boat engines (Evinrude), gas engines (B&S), and steel wall forms (MFC). Over 100 years later, only the least famous company is not bankrupt. Why?

Legend has it that Ole Evinrude came up with the idea for an outboard boat engine after rowing across an inland lake to get an ice cream for his fiance, Bess. Of course, the ice cream melted by the time he returned but Evinrude, inspired by the incident, was determined to design an engine that would replace the oar as a means of boat propulsion. Ole did just that as the name "EVINRUDE" became synonymous with outboard marine engines. What led to the sinking of the legendary boat engine brand? A couple of big missteps including falling behind in the "horsepower race" for bigger and more powerful engines. Perhaps even more damaging, Evinrude failed to abandon its antiquated "two stroke" engine design that required customers to add oil to gasoline.



Briggs & Stratton began in 1908 as a partnership between inventor Stephen F. Briggs and investor Harold M. Stratton. Their company became the worlds largest maker of gasoline engines for outdoor power equipment as it blossomed along with American suburbs dotted with single family homes and grass-covered yards. If you have ever pushed or driven a lawn mower, or weilded a snow blower down your driveway, chances are the power was supplied by a Briggs & Stratton. So why did the Briggs & Stratton engine run out of gas? The long spiral down began many years ago due to the lack of innovation which in turn led to failing revenues. Much of the sales decline was due to the pricing power exerted by mass merchandisers such as Home Depot, Lowe's and Walmart. Throw-in strong competition from big rivals Honda and Kawasaki and the Briggs & Stratton motor ran dry.

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METAL FORMS CORPORATION
SINCE 1909



Steel Forms



Plastic Forms



Concrete Finishers



Wheelbarrows

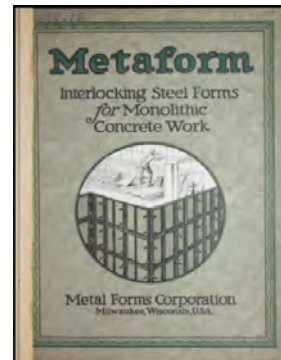
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(Mel's Mettle continued)

At the same time Ole Evinrude invented his boat motor and Stephen Briggs introduced his gas engine, a fellow by the name of August F. Reichert hatched the birth of MFC with a patented steel forming system for buildings concrete walls.



Unlike Evinrude and B&S, however, MFC continued to expand its product lines and marketplaces. The latest example of this innovative spirit is the introduction of a brand new concrete paving machine (See page 3). Looking back through the years, MFC has evolved from a company that once made only steel wall forms to a premier developer and producer of superior products for the concrete construction industry as a whole.

No matter the age or circumstances, the stronger companies emerge while the weaker ones falter to the perils of the times whether that be changing marketplaces, fickle customer preferences or the occasional pandemic. MFC has remained strong because it fights back Father Time with imaginative ideas and actions for employees, production, products and marketplaces.



I remember Walt Disney saying,

" That's the trouble with the world... too many people grow up."

MFC has taken Walt's sage advice to heart and, come to think of it, so have I since everyone my age is older than me!



<https://www.metalforms.com/concreteForms/OurHeritage>

NEW PRODUCT INTRODUCTION

SPEED SCREED® ROLLER

MFC is pleased to announce a brand new addition to our respected line of concrete paving finishers... The Speed Screenshot Roller.

The new machine is the result of a strong demand by paving contractors to complement our line of truss screeds with a roller-type model. We answered the call with the SPEED SCREED ROLLER which incorporate many features not found on competitive roller/paver equipment.



SPEED SCREED®

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

The term "screeding" is a familiar one in the building trades where it refers to the action of flattening out poured concrete into a smooth flat layer. Two types of power machines (truss-type and roller-type) are most often used in "screeding" concrete pavements in the construction of airports, highways and streets. There are distinct differences between a "truss" (A-Frame) screed and a "roller" (spinning) screed both in their use and method of flattening concrete. The choice of a truss screed versus a roller screed is determined by a combination of factors including agency specifications, geographical location and even contractor preference.



Introduced by MFC in 1981, the original "SPEED SCREED" is a truss machine that levels concrete with external vibration in combination with a stationary pair of front and rear square strike-off tubes. The vibration is created by a rotating shaft with eccentric weights that runs the entire width of the pour.

Similar to the new roller model, the original truss machine is a variable width unit powered by a Honda engine. Multiple paving widths ranging from 10' to 75' wide are achieved with modular sections of 2.5', 5' and 10'.



The new triple-tube screed operates with the two rear tubes driving the machine forward as the third front tube spins in reverse to begin the concrete leveling process.

An exclusive feature of this machine is a modular frame which permits the width to be set on 1' increments between 10' wide and 30' wide. Other unique features include joystick controls, "quick-change" tube couplers and an intuitive Honda engine.

Bottom line:

When a concrete paving project requires a power screed, MFC now offers the choice between a truss machine and a roller tube model.



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DEALER PROGRAM

As an MFC Dealer, you will receive many benefits designed to help your business. We are committed to our dealers and believe these programs will strengthen this partnership.

The 3-Tier Dealer Program is structured to accommodate all dealer levels: Silver, Gold and Platinum. All program requirements are based on products in our published price lists. Paving, barrier & parapet forms are exempt from these programs.

The 2021 Dealer Program brochure will be e-mailed in late December, early January. If you would like to receive one and have not during that time, please contact the office to request (414-964-4550), or visit our website to view the on-line version which will also be downloadable. <https://www.metalforms.com/concreteFormNews/DealerNews>



MEL'S MUSINGS

