

1946 — 1986

HORST DISTRIBUTING, INC. — OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY



By Arthur Horst

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of Horst Distributing, Inc. The founder, Arthur J. (Art) Horst is a native of the Chilton, Wisconsin area, attended the area's Public Schools, and in 1927 received a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Shortly after graduation he accepted a position with a general contractor in Wheeling, W. Virginia. In 1928, after returning to Wisconsin for Christmas Vacation, he met his future wife Alice, to whom he was married in July of 1929. Art and Alice have one son, Tom, and have been happily married for 56 years.

Art spent the following 17 years in general construction in Milwaukee; near Buffalo, New York; South Point, Ohio; and Baltimore, Maryland. Twelve years were spent as an engineer active in the construction of Wisconsin Memorial Park, West of Milwaukee, and as Superintendent in charge of construction of White Chapel Memorial Park near Buffalo, New York. It was during the time spent on these two projects that Art became interested in landscaping and equipment required for the maintenance of large turf areas. The final two years were spent on emergency wartime construction projects at South Point, Ohio, and Baltimore, Maryland. Because the family could not be with him due to the housing situation, Art and Alice decided to become self-employed, if at all possible, preferably in Wisconsin. Fortunately, an interim position was taken with Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin.

On January 1, 1946, Horst Engineering and Equipment Sales became a reality, located in Chilton, Wisconsin, in the center of a projected operational territory of Calumet, Fond du Lac, Winnebago, Outagamie, Brown and Manitowoc Counties. An old frame building which formerly was a garage and machine shop was rented. A very limited line of credit was established at a local bank, and their assistance throughout the years proved invaluable. Because of limited capital, purchases were minimal. A used wood-bodied Station Wagon and a 2-Wheel Sears Trailer were purchased. Through previous contacts two basic product lines were obtained: Ideal mowers and L.R. Nelson Rainbird Sprinkling Equipment. Golf Course Tee and Green Equipment, a Reel

Grinder, some parts and tools were also added. The original organization consisted of Art as salesman, Alice as Bookkeeper, and in 1947 Dean Connors was added as Mechanic, and he has remained continuously in our employment since then. Office space was rented across the street in a building also occupied by an appliance store.

In these first two years, in addition to trying to establish identity with Commercial Accounts in the area, Landscaping and Survey work were contracted, including preparation of plans for county road improvement. Late in 1948 a fire in the appliance store destroyed the office, records, 2½ months work on road plans and all of the engineering books and equipment. During 1948 a Jacobsen Consumer Dealership was obtained for the Chilton area. At this time, Jacobsen purchased the Worthington Mower Co., and a limited territory was secured for the Fairway Mowers and the Jacobsen Power Greensmower. In 1953 John Mortimer, the present Corporate President, joined the Organization. Additional minor lines were secured, and in 1956 sales exceeded \$100,000 for the first time.

About this time, Jacobsen started a limited pilot distributor consumer products program which prior to this time had been factory direct to dealer. Horst was named as one of a few distributors selected. This program proved successful, and after a few years Jacobsen finalized a 100% Distributor Program. Horst was awarded a distribution territory consisting of 43 counties in Northeast and Central Wisconsin and the U.P. of Michigan.

In 1959 the Company Incorporated, with the Horst family owning all shares of stock issued. A profit sharing-stock purchase agreement was consummated with the employees, and as the number of employees increased, individual insurance policies were obtained to facilitate re-purchasing the stock by the Corporation from the employees at retirement. This plan was later up-dated and remains in effect.

The Company moved to its present location in 1960 after completion of a 60x50 foot office, parts department and service shop. A 40x40 foot warehouse was also constructed. A building rental agreement was consummated between Art Horst and the Corporation. In 1961 a 40x40 addition to the warehouse was added.

As product lines were added to both the Commercial Turf and Dealer Distributor Divisions of the Corporation, it became apparent that additional warehouse space was required. In 1963 a 40x80 foot warehouse was added North of the office. George Ecker, who is presently Vice President and General



Horst Distributing, Inc.

Manager of the Consumer Products Division, joined the Corporation as Bookkeeper. In 1966 a 40x40 foot addition with front show room was added to the North warehouse.

As the volume of sales and services increased, the depth of inventories required increased proportionately as did warehouse space. From 1968 through 1972 changes in occupancy and additional construction of warehouses was extensive. Two additional warehouses 40'x140' with full basement and 60'x120' were constructed. The office portion of the original building was converted to additional parts space. The West 40'x50' of the North Warehouse was converted to the present office. Finally, a 70'x21' addition connecting the original shop to the original warehouse increased both the size of the shop and parts areas. All shop grinding equipment is hooded and equipped with exhaust fans and incoming air is automatically regulated in a very modern service shop employing four full time factory trained mechanics.

Upon his retirement in 1974, Art Horst consummated two agreements with the Corporation: the first a land contract with amortization over twelve years (final payment will be made on January 1, 1986), the second covers the purchase of Horst stock over a period of years.

Currently 20 employees are involved in the operation of the Corporation. The officers are John R. Mortimer, President and Commercial Products Sales Manager; George L. Ecker, Vice President and Consumer Products Sales Manager, and Leon E. Geiser, Secretary/Treasurer.

The Commercial Products Division operates in 43

Counties in Northeastern and Central Wisconsin and the U.P. of Michigan and represents Jacobsen Turf Maintenance Equipment, Cushman, National, Royer, Smithco, Sod-Master, together with complete lines of fertilizer, grass seed, fungicides and herbicides. The Consumer Products Division distributes Snapper lawn and garden equipment, Didier, E-Z Rake and allied lines in Northeastern and Central Wisconsin and the U.P. of Michigan, together with Pioneer/Partner Chainsaws in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Upper Michigan and Northern Illinois.

Throughout the Company's 40 years in business, they have been the recipient of numerous sales and service awards in both of its divisions. Being service oriented, one of the awards they are most proud of is the "Professor Jake" award received in 1980. Subject award is bestowed on the top service distributor of the year by the Jacobsen Division of Textron.



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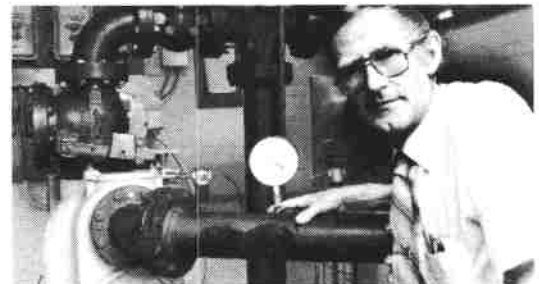


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