

The History Of Portland Welding Supply 1945 - 2008

Clarence Robert MacDonald: 4/23/1902 - 2/12/1975

Co-Founders

LeRoy John Mac Donald, 8/11/1908 - 5/12/1986

LeRoy J (Roy) & Clarence R (Clarey or Mac) MacDonald were brought up in a two story wood frame home at 100 Granite Street in Quincy, Ma. They were two of three sons of Robert & Julie. Harold was the third.

In 1932, Clarey Mac Donald (Mac) & Joe Martin Sr. were welders at the Lawley Shipyards in Neponset Mass. Bill Barron, a salesman for Air Reduction Co. calling on the welding dept. there, asked them if they'd have an interest in working for his company in South Boston. Joe & Mac started as welders the same day, along with Dorothy Cook, who later married Mac. Dot started as a sales mechanic clerk for Frank Mehaffey who was the regional sales manager. Chester Delbridge was vice president and Cliff Miller was the office manager. After only six months with the company, Joe Martin Sr. was offered a sales position covering part of Mass and Rhode Island. Mac was offered a sales position covering all northern New England.

At that time, Airco distributors in Maine were Lee Randall of Lewiston Welding Supply & Ed Boulter of J. J. Boulter & Sons in Bangor. Route 1 to Boston was only a two lane road. Other Airco personnel were: Joe Warner & Fred Downes, Boston sales; Percy Magee was in sales, but committed suicide; E. E. Pettingill was VP working in New York.

In 1940, Mac left Airco to take a management position in South Portland at The New England Shipbuilding Corp. building liberty ships.

In early 1942, Mac, who always watched out for his younger brother, Roy, convinced him & his wife Stella to leave the Shawmut Bank of Boston, where they were bookkeepers & move to 76 Fessenden St in Portland to join him at the shipyards. Before the war ended, Roy became a lead foreman with 8 men working for him. Mac became superintendent of the West Yard with 2,000 men working for him.

In 1943, Joe and Rose Martin moved to Maine taking an apartment on Falmouth St. between Flaherty's Corner and Nathan Clifford School. Mac & Dot had an apartment on Falmouth Street, across from the Noyes estate, now USM. Joe was re-assigned to Mac's territory of northern New England.

In the spring of 1945, after the war, Clarey & Dot moved to 216 Dartmouth St, later to 214, then to 149 Brighton Ave, the old Dr Walter & Alice Hayes home, next door. Joe Martin Sr. moved back to Massachusetts and started Middlesex Welding Supply. Clarey and Roy took on odd jobs with Roy doing gas welding and Clarey trying arc welding and learning quickly.

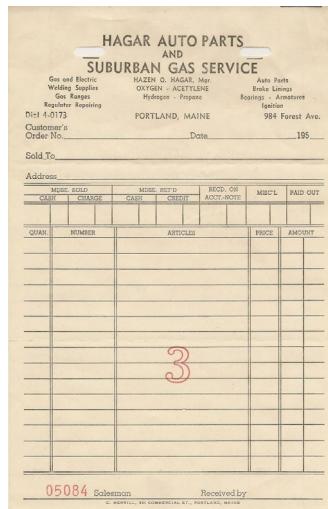
During the summer of 1945, Joe convinced Clarey to start his own welding repair and supply business. Clarey sold Roy on the idea and in August, Air Reduction Co agreed to give them the hardgoods distribution business. Mac gave up arc welding and started making sales calls and deliveries. Roy continued doing gas welding (he was known as an expert, the best in the area), inside sales and bookkeeping. Together, they started Portland Welding Supply in the fall. Each contributed \$25.00 in savings bonds, possibly received as bonuses after the war and received 35 shares of stock. The company started by Clarey, brought Roy in as a 40% owner, but soon realized Roy's value and offered to make it a 50/50 partnership.

The fledgling business started on guts & prayers on the bottom floor of a cold, dark, damp building, known as the Hazen O. Hagar building. Vermin continued to occupy the building without a sublease.

The Start of Portland Welding Supply

Hazen O. Hagar owned two buildings on Forest Avenue in the 1940's. One was just south of the Nabisco building at 289 Forest, just below the Firestone Store. It was torn down to make way for the interstate highway. The other was located at 984 Forest Avenue, just after Walton Street on the left, heading toward Morrill's corner. It was purchased from Alec Nesbitt who ran a car and wagon painting business.. It was burned to the ground by vandals after Mr. Hagar retired. The land was later sold to Arthur Girard of Delta Realty. This is the location where Clarey and Roy started their business. This information comes from David Hagar, Hazen's son. David was born in 1932 and lives in Dexter. David told me that Hazen owned a small gas supply business in Ogunquit, selling propane, oxygen, acetylene and Profax welding equipment. He got his gases from a company in Massachusetts. During the war he supplied gases to the shipyard and got in trouble with the government for mixing up cylinders. At the end of the war, he was missing cylinders belonging to the company in Ma. and had government cylinders in his possession which the government mistakenly decided he stole. It took him a lot of time to straighten things out. It's likely that Clarey knew Hazen as a gas supplier to the shipyard and that's how they came to rent space in his building. After the war, he moved his gas business to Portland.

Copy of Hagar sales ticket below



Below is a picture of the building on outer Forest Avenue. The arrow shows the entrance to the area that Mr. Hager rented out to various companies, which would have included Portland Welding in late 1945, 1946 and some of 1947. Roy owned a car just like the one you see pictured here although this car belonged to Mr. Hagar. . During this period, Roy drove to East Corinth, Me. and spend 3 days gas welding pipe joints, then driving home in a bad snowstorm. In late 1947, Roy left for 2 weeks to fight forest fires in central Maine.



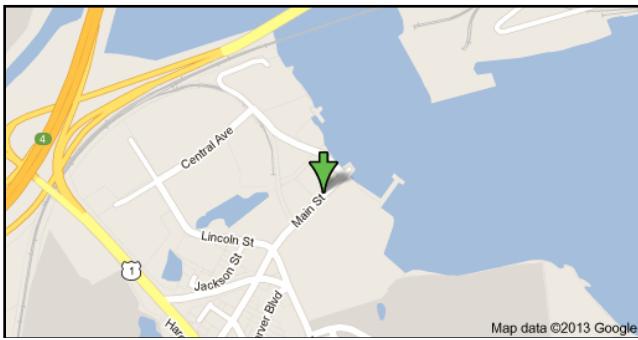
Below, on the right, is the current view of the location of the Hagar building
984 Forest Ave Portland, ME 04103



Frank Tirabassi was their first employee, hired part time in 1947 to do repairs. He worked part time as a Portland Police Patrolman.

In late 1947, after some tough years on Forest Ave, they purchased a government surplus 20' x 36' Quonset hut & erected it on Bancroft & Martin land rented to them by Ken Burr for the cost of taxes. The property was located at 11 Main Street, So Portland, near the old Fore River Draw Bridge & right next to a Sunoco station, which housed the only bathroom facilities in the area and shown below. They moved in in early 1948.





The Quonset hut enlarged photo

Clarey (left) Roy (right) circa late 1947 before moving in



In the early years, Clarey was the motivating force, but the two brothers worked exceptionally well together & got some much needed breaks. Clarey worked outside sales and Roy worked inside sales and book keeping. Below is a picture of Roy's adding machine.



Breaks kept the business alive. An example was a deal on surplus war materials, including boxes of used cutting tips, which turned out to be new, with used ones on the top. However, things turned around with the purchase of 3,000 feet of surplus welding cable. Clarey drove to Rhode Island and brought it back in his trunk.

Also in mid 1948, Airco gave Mac & Roy the retail gas business, previously handled poorly by Bailey Auto Supply, who was, not too keen on the idea. Air Reduction also turned over several industrial gas accounts with the provision that PWS agree to hire the Air Reduction driver as soon as he became available. They purchased their first GMC truck & Clarey was trying to make deliveries when Jim Whidden appeared on the scene, looking for a job. Lyndol Montgomery (Monty) ran the South Portland plant and had given Jim the job lead. He was told that a driver had already been hired, but Jim was unemployed and offered to work for them until the driver became available. Jim became their second employee, was hired on the spot and immediately made a delivery to Bancroft with Clarey. Jim accepted the \$7 a day offered & worked a full week - after which he was called into their office and told that he was more the kind of person they'd like to have working for them, than the Air Reduction driver. He was offered \$50 a week and told that if he worked out the way they thought he might, he'd have a chance to grow with the business. They were true to their word.

It was indeed fortunate for the two brothers to have found a person like Jim Whidden. Starting as a driver, Jim worked hard for Clarey & Roy for over 35 years, doing every task imaginable in a small firm. Jim did everything from cleaning floors to designing building additions, negotiating contracts with suppliers, purchasing, outside sales and management. He made a successful transition to working for the second generation. The combination of Jim's winning smile, great personality & technical skills made him the best industry salesman in northern New England throughout the 60's & 70's. Jim became general manager and vice president, before retiring in May 1982.

The Quonset hut wasn't a wonderful place to work. Howard Rich was hired twice, first to build a cylinder shed and later to add to it. The inside was cold and barren. As you entered the small front room, there were two desks to the left with a door to a small repair area behind them. Inventory shelves were to the right & a larger unheated room used for welding was straight ahead. A woefully inadequate propane heater had to be started each morning, & only warmed the place to about 55 by mid afternoon on a winter's day.

In 1952, the Veteran's Memorial Bridge was announced to be completed in 1954. The Vaughan St. Bridge (shown below) connecting South Portland to Portland was to be torn down.



The problem of being in the wrong place turned into an opportunity when the Esso gas station on the Portland side of the bridge went out of business. Standard oil sold the property to the two brothers on June 20, 1954. Jim Whidden tells of driving by the new building as construction was starting. To his surprise he saw that the dock was to be built at ground level with a ramp below grade so that trucks would back down to dock height. He got the project stopped and after several meetings with George Stanford, the dock was built above ground level and thus a potential disaster was avoided.

. Below is a picture of the Esso station with remodeling underway and the dock above ground level

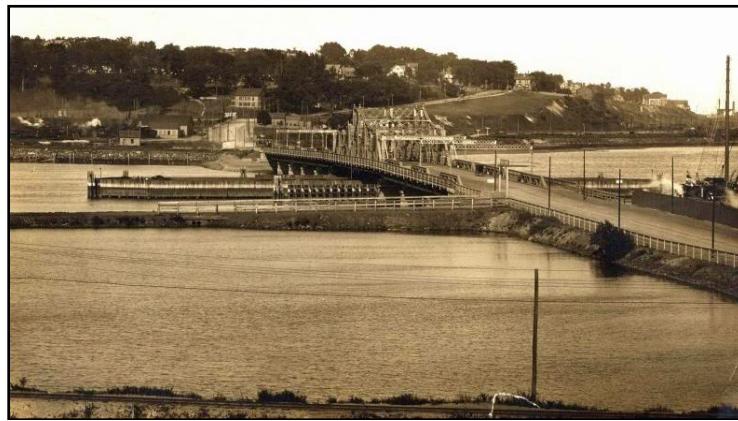


In 1953, business was improving and both brothers gave up what was left of the welding & repair business to concentrate on selling gases and supplies. The early fifties were good for the men as the shipyard continued to operate under Walsh Construction cutting up the liberty ships built for the war effort.

Below is a picture of the traffic circle at Danforth, Vaughn, St. John & Commercial Streets. At the bottom is what was West Commercial Street. Interestingly, it looks like there were two tracks running under the railroad bridge.



Below: The Vaughan Bridge from So. Portland side around 1910, before the land was filled. The toll bridge was built in 1908. It cost 6 cents to cross with a horse. Prior to the bridge there was a ferry service across the river. The foreground was filled and became the location of Bancroft and Martin property and Sunoco Station.



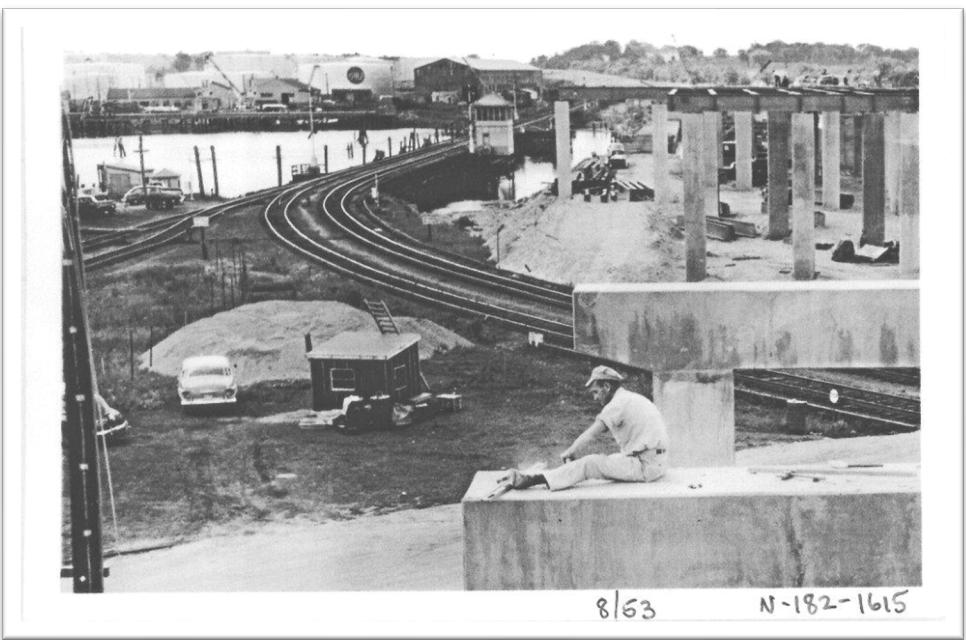
Below is a picture taken from the Portland side from around 1908



Below is another picture from the Portland side. The area near the bank was filled and used for unloading oil for storage tanks. In the 1950's, The Goodall Boat Service Marina was built there.



Below: the Veteran's Bridge under construction in 1953.



In early 1955, the Danforth St building underwent the first of several remodels, adding a showroom, cylinder room, office, shop & warehouse. The picture below shows Roy's 1955 Lincoln.



In 1954 and again in 1956, health problems for Clarey curtailed his time on the road. That driver who had been hired in 1948, Jim Whidden, was asked if he had an interest in making sales calls. Jim readily accepted the challenge, as he did each time a new one came along with the growing business.

In Dec. 1954, Dick Hibbard was hired to replace Frank Teribasse for repairs, filling in on the counter at lunch and making deliveries in the morning. Eddie Haggerty was hired about this time to work on the front counter. Dick, Ed & Jim were involved in the time consuming task of taking serial numbers. There were many problems when the company tried to bill back demurrage to customers when their cylinders were found at another account.

In the late 1960's Dick Hibbard's career took him to the position of Plant Manager - South Portland plant. Dick was eventually responsible for production of two million feet of product a day & distribution of medical, specialty & fuel gases throughout the state.

In October 1956, Dick's brother, Don Hibbard was hired as a route driver to replace Jim. Don stayed until he retired in 1996. Don was meticulous and instinctively knew the value of quality service. Don was a shining example of a route manager who looked after his customers.

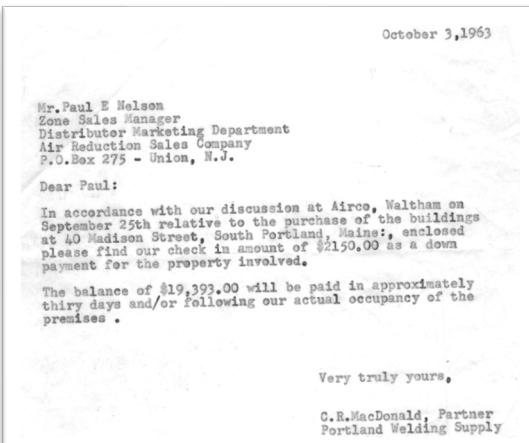
In 1958, the business was growing and Hilton Wheeler was hired to help with counter sales & deliveries. His tragic and sudden death in September of 1966 affected everyone. He was a kind person, willing to help wherever needed and a great loss to his family and the company.

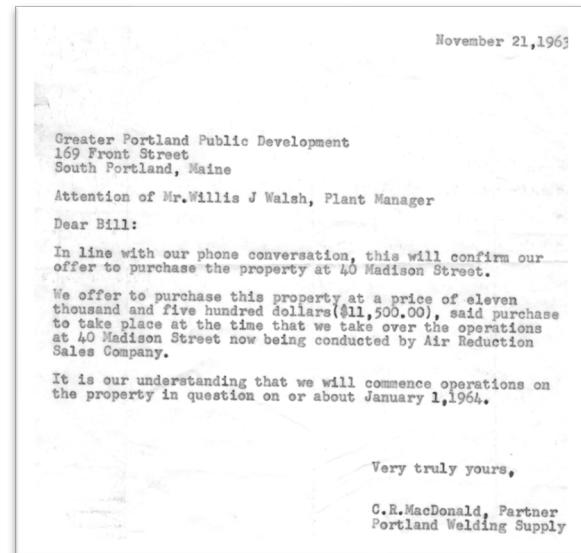
In February 1960, Dick Moore was hired for counter sales, but left in May of 1964. Dick was known for consuming a case of Maalox a week and spending too much time loitering with customers.

In 1962, Airco approached Clarey & Roy about purchasing the Airco gas filling plant in the old South Portland Shipyard. The plant serviced PWS and three other Airco distributors in Maine. There was more than one possible choice for Airco to select a Key Distributor to serve the others & one of their major concerns was continuity. With this in mind, Clarey spoke to one of his daughters about the possibility of her husband joining the business.

In early 1963, with continuity established, Airco agreed to sell the South Portland gas filling & distribution plant, shown below for \$21,540. Greater Portland Public Development Commission agreed to sell the land that Air Reduction had been renting for \$11,500. In 1946, GPPDC had acquired the West Yard from New England Ship Building Corp and in 1950, the East Yard from the GSA.

Clarey & Roy Mac Donald at the South Portland plant





The plant manager, Lindell Montgomery, known as Monty, who worked for Air Reduction, retired when the plant was sold. Joe Marois was hired as plant manager & later, Bob Feeney was hired to assist him. The building was divided in half with the rear rented to South Portland Engineering Co.

For the first several months, Don & Dick Hibbard made daily trips to Acton, Ma. while a new oxygen pump was installed. Even after the oxygen station was put into use, there were three trips to Acton a week to pick up nitrogen, acetylene, hydrogen and helium.. After South Portland Engineering went out of business, in mid 1966, nitrogen filling was added. Both the oxygen & nitrogen stations were rented until purchased November 1, 1971.

As the company grew, new filling capacity was added. At first, it was only filling of medium (125 cf) and large (250 cf) oxygen and nitrogen high pressure cylinders. Cylinders were rolled, 2 at a time, except Joe Marois could roll 3 large oxygen as fast as a person could walk. With time, smaller oxygen (20 cf, 60 cf) and portable medical oxygen (D, E) were added. As volumes increased, new methods for filling and moving cylinders evolved. Cordless drills were adapted to open and close valves. Specialty carts were added to move cylinders, including large liquid cylinders.

racks for fillings D & E medical oxygen cylinders



liquid cylinders for oxygen, argon, nitrogen & CO₂

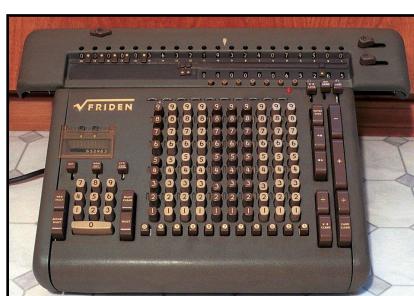


The volume of high pressure gas contained in a cylinder, set by the compressed gas association (CGA), increased as the quality of cylinders improved.

In the 1980's, filling lines and stations for liquid argon, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and Mapp gas were added.

In the 1990's, high pressure helium trailers were added. With the purchase of the plant came 6 high pressure ASME oxygen tubes which were used to supply General Electric until they closed.

In the fall of 1963, Stan Muller moved with Joan and their family from his New York City job selling Friden calculators to join the company helping with plant work and inside sales. Friden calculators were used for many years by PWS employees before electronics arrived.



On December 21, 1964, the partnership was incorporated and the shareholders were granted 500 shares each of capital stock while the real estate was held in the partnership. The Board of Directors was expanded to 4 to include Dorothy and Stella MacDonald. Clarence MacDonald was voted President and LeRoy MacDonald was voted Treasurer.

Below is the State Certification of Portland Welding Supply as a corporation and many of the names used for other locations acquired throughout the state..



Stan was the first new employee of the second generation. Stan had studied at Nasson College, where he met Joan. However, college training wasn't needed for filling cylinders, cleaning floors, doing repairs, making deliveries, doing inside, outside & telephone sales & distributor billing.

Stan got a chance to use his business background as he learned the financial side of the business. He became a Vice President and then Treasurer. He oversaw accounts payables, worked with millions in private and bank loans, presented healthcare insurance options to the Steering Committee & invested the PWS pension plans. The Steering Committee, aka "the muckies" was formed in 1979 and met weekly to collaborate in running the business (more on this later). Stan also worked with Dave in the acquisition of Lewiston & Waterville Welding Supply..

During 1964 there was great anticipation as the company got closer to the first \$30,000 sales month, In mid-summer there was a celebration as that mark was reached. With the installation of the oxygen station, Bob Feeney was hired to help Joe filling cylinders at the plant.

In the spring of 1964, Roy's son, Dave joined the company, replacing Dick Moore and having graduated from the University of Maine, Orono, with degrees in paper technology and chemistry. In early 1965, Dave returned to UMO to complete degrees in business management and chemical engineering. Dave was born in Quincy, Ma on January 1, 1941, but at one year old, decided to accompany his parents to Maine. Roy's family moved in 1949 from 76 Fessenden Street to 183 Dartmouth Street and in 1952 to 161 Falmouth Street, then in 1966 to 23 Whitney Road in Falmouth Foreside.

The inventory ideas that Dave brought to the business were helpful and the friendships he & Jim Whidden developed with GE & later the other Airco distributor owners in Maine, facilitated their purchase by PWS in the 1980's.

On May 5, 1965, Building 25 of the South Portland Engineering Co, across the street from the South Portland gas plant, burned to the ground in a spectacular fire, while the fire department sprayed water on the liquid oxygen station to keep it cool. Below is the 750' long building.



This lead to the collapse of that company and eventual opportunity for General Electric Co to open a nuclear turbine manufacturing facility in 1968. GE grew over the next decade to occupy much of the 1940's shipyard area. Although GE closed in 1983, sales to that company over the fifteen year history of the relationship helped fund PWS growth and position the company for the acquisitions of the 1980's.

In May, 1965, Airco Reduction embarked on a radical plan to sell cylinders to its' distributors. The first of a trilogy, called 'New Horizons', helped to rapidly expand the capital base of those distributors who participated. Later programs were called 'Beyond Horizons' (Sept 9, 1968) and 'Horizons Unlimited' (Jan 1, 1970).

In the summer of 1965, an addition to the Danforth location allowed for more front office space with a small area for inventory display; a precursor to the open shelving concept that became popular in the early 1980's.

In early 1966, Dave and Stan were 'promoted' to outside sales, where they alternated days for over a year. It sounded like a good idea, but customers would often call when they were out. The idea was dropped in 1967.

In the spring of 1966, Bob Feeney replaced Joe Moreau as plant manager and Bill Fisher was hired to work at the plant. Dick Hibbard replaced Bob a few months later and Dwayne O'Roak was hired to become the Acton driver..

Bill Fisher started at the plant but was soon given a truck route. When Dick Hibbard was promoted to plant manager, Bill moved into equipment repairs. Bill was willing to tackle any project and was soon repairing welding machines. Bill eventually learned to repair sophisticated cutting machines and moved from there to maintenance and installation of industrial & medical cryogenic storage vessels. Bill stayed with the company through the transition to Valley National Gases in 2008 and then to Matheson Gases in 2010.

On December 29, 1966, the company adopted a defined benefit pension and insurance plan for employees with five years or more of service.

On December 12, 1967, the Board of Directors was expanded to 4 and Stella MacDonald and Dorothy MacDonald were added to the board. It was also voted to promote Stanley Muller and David Mac Donald to vice president.

In January of 1968, a 18'x24' addition to the rear of the Danforth location allowed for a new office for Clarey and Roy and a new repair area. Herb Tyler moved into The Mac Donald's old office.

In the late 1960's, the home healthcare business started in Maine. Respiratory Therapy was the first of many accounts that opened, but the business exploded from the late 1980's on. Home healthcare and hospital business became a very successful part of the business with the help of Roger Junnarkar and the rest of the outside sales team.

In the early 1970's, shortages of almost all materials caused disruptions throughout the economy. Although the oil embargo lead to long gas lines and was the major story of the day, the acute steel shortage led to disruptions in electrodes, wires and cylinders. Recognizing that lead times were rapidly extending, purchasing placed multiple cylinder blanket orders with lead times up to 2 years. As cylinders came in on schedule, only the Airco distributors in Maine had an adequate supply and took market share from the Maine Linde and Liquid Carbonic dealers. During this period, Airco put all distributors on monthly allocation for electrodes and wires. This was a disaster since GE was a new customer whose usage was rapidly growing. Purchasing was buying scrap and overstock wire and electrodes from all over the country, but resisting efforts by Ed Hadden of Page Wire to become a distributor. One day Mr. Hadden showed up with a purchase order from GE for 30,000 # wire and asked if PWS wanted the order. It didn't think long before becoming a Page distributor, which helped us serve customers for several years as Airco continued the allocations until circa 1978.

Wayne Tanguay, the 3rd of the 2nd generation to join the company, met & married Roy's only daughter, Karen, at University of Maine, Orono. Upon receiving his degree in Biology, he secured a managerial position at Brigham's Ice Cream at the Auburndale Mall. They lived in Marlborough, Ma. with their son Christopher. Wayne joined the company & moved to Maine on February 27, 1973. Their daughter Amy was born in November, 1974. Wayne was born in Michigan but lived in Fort Worth, Tx. before moving to the Washington DC area, which he still loves. Wayne proved to be a very dedicated and hard worker and performed every task needed in a small business. He was promoted to Vice President, Operations in September of 1982.

In 1968, Jim Walsh was hired as a driver, then later having moved to inside sales. In 1973, he was promoted to outside sales. Alan's guidance in the early 1980's helped Jim become a skilled sales person. Jim retired in early 1998, suffering from stomach cancer, which caused his untimely death on Feb. 26, 1999.

On May 23, 1975, the Board of Directors elected David Mac Donald to the board to fill the vacancy left by Clarence MacDonald's passing.

On May 7, 1976, at a board of directors meeting, LeRoy MacDonald resigned as President and Treasurer and was elected Chairman of the Board. David Mac Donald resigned as Vice President and was elected President. Stanley Muller resigned as Vice President and was elected Treasurer. James Whidden was elected Vice President. LeRoy MacDonald announced that, acting for and on behalf of the corporation he has agreed with Alan Saabye that Alan Saabye would join the company.

Alan Saabye, the last of the 2nd generation to be hired, met Barbara MacDonald, Clareys' 2nd daughter, at the University of Rhode Island in the fall of 1961. Alan graduated in 1964 with a degree in Civil Engineering and worked in 1964 / 65 for Charles A Maguire, a consulting and engineering firm. In 1965, Alan entered a 2 year business program in Industrial Management at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1966, Alan worked at Bancroft & Martin as an engineer and business consultant. Graduating from UPA in May of 1967, Alan worked in several management positions at W. R. Grace until he joined the company on August 16, 1976. Alan's business and management experience and organization skills helped the company to grow a competent sales staff. Alan was instrumental in the company's first of several acquisitions.

On June 8, 1977, Stella MacDonald passed away. On August 11, 1977, Karen Tanguay was elected to the Board of Directors to fill the vacancy created by Stella's passing.

During the 1977, based on inflation, the accountants agreed to increases in rental rates on properties owned by Dorothy and LeRoy MacDonald. Dividends were decreased over a several year period.

In the summer of 1978, Dave Salzman of N.H. Welding Supply, Bill Leonbruno of Yankee Oxygen and Dave Mac Donald of PWS met in Portsmouth, NH to discuss the growing purchasing power of Airgas Inc and Airco's chain of company owned stores, moving into New England. Mac Donald brought in three suppliers; Atlas Welding Accessories, Nasco Welding Products and OKI Supply to put on presentations. OKI's volume program convinced them to start a group that became the Airco Distributors of New England . In 1979, the group expanded to include all northeast Airco Distributors and became known as AIRDANE (Airco distributors of all New England). John Kopins was elected president & David Mac Donald elected treasurer. The group was very

successful through 1992, after which, they combined with BOC retail and other regional purchasing groups that had formed during the 1980's and in July, 1993 became a national buying group, renamed The Airco Distributor Association or ADA. In 2011, this group changed to The Linde Distributor's Association.

Below: So. Portland Plant mid 1970's. Leaky flat roof needed repairs yearly.



Below: Another shot from different angle



In the fall of 1978, Karen Tanguay was elected to the board of directors to replace Stella Mac Donald.

In the late 1970's the company held a 'lawn sale' in the parking lot on Danforth St. Tables were set up in a semi circle. It was a surprise success, although it took several more years before, in the 1990's, tent sales were started at Freeman's Supply.

By September of 1979, Dorothy & LeRoy Mac Donald completed an ambitious \$235,784 expansion - adding a 2nd floor over the Danforth Street building (shown below). On the first floor; the rear of the building was expanded to provide a new welding machine repair area. The front was expanded to provide a new customer showroom with open shelving. The counter was moved to the rear of the display area. The rest of the first floor became warehouse, shipping & receiving. The second floor became the location for outside sales, finance, and back office functions. Data processing was automated on the first of many computers with an IBM System 34 & the company hired the first woman, Rhonda Desrochers, to work in that department. The rest of the second floor was used for GE inventory, parts storage and a conference room. The digital age had dubious beginnings. Several employees left over a few years, not wanting to deal with computers. Management struggled with decisions both for hardware and software. The new computer could only handle 2 terminals, after which, it quickly slowed down. There were often lines of employees waiting to use a spare terminal. By 1982, even with money spent on upgrades, there were 7 terminals running so slowly that it was often a 10 second delay when changing screens. Those involved with heavy use of the computer came in early or stayed late since more work could get done in an hour before 8:00a than in 4 hrs after 8:00a. By 1983, with the addition of new Rockland and Bangor stores, a more powerful computer was desperately needed. The new system 36 could handle 15 terminals and wait time during heavy use was reduced to under 4 seconds. However, with the addition of 4 more locations by the end of 1986, we were back to 6 seconds between screens and at remote locations, hitting the enter key caused terminals to drop off the network, leaving employees and customers frustrated. For many years, separate, typed lists of customer and inventory pricing had to be kept at every location. From the late '80's through the early 2000's, faster, more powerful computers were purchased, but the company was growing so fast that it wasn't until 2005 that the computer purchased was able to run over 100 terminals at 11 locations with response time finally sub-second.

By 1979, with 2 trucks on the road full time, and 1 part time, customer calls for deliveries were coming in all day. Locating a driver while on a route was becoming frustrating and time consuming. Drivers didn't always follow the same pattern so several calls to customers asking them to have the driver call in

might not produce results until the driver had past the customer who needed a delivery. Drivers had no extra time to retrace their routes. Two way radios were installed in the trucks with a base at the front counter. This was a huge time saver for several years until the bands became crowded and no longer useful.

On Dec. 12, 1979, Alan Saabye was promoted to Sales Manager & Wayne Tanguay was promoted to Office Manager.

Below: 527 Danforth St before construction circa 1978. There are 3 outlined parking spots for Roy, Stan & Dave



Different view. Anchor still in traffic circle



Employees in the spring of 1980 at the new Danforth St. Store



Jeff's Maine Lobster upper right. Dave's 1979 Silver Volvo beside building. Oil tanks on right.



In the same year, a new roof & 2nd floor lunchroom were added to the South Portland plant to solve the leaky roof problem



In 1979, the Steering Committee was formed with members Dave Mac Donald (purchasing), Wayne Tanguay (operations), Jim Whidden (sales), Alan Saabye (sales) and Stan Muller (finance). The group started setting five year goals and looking outside southern Maine for new opportunities. This was important since a major shift was occurring in Maine. From the late 1940's through the 1970's the pulp and paper industry experienced tremendous growth, helping to spawn many companies that supported it. However, while the paper industry was growing, the textile industry was moving abroad. The Three Mile Island catastrophe ended nuclear development, leading to the demise of the company's biggest customer, G.E. South Portland, by 1983. In the early 1980's, paper production started moving south and the industry in Maine started shrinking. Some of the companies that shrank or disappeared during this period were: C. J. Merrill, Fels Co, Portland Engineering, Peerless Welding & Commercial Welding. Sales during this period stagnated at \$2.8 million a year.

This was the impetus to push into new areas. As these new forays proved successful, management started meeting as often as twice a week. By the mid 1980's, meetings moved to 5:00p and sometimes lasted into the early morning hours. During this period the business grew rapidly both organically and by expansion. Merging computer systems, customers, inventory & business philosophies presented tough challenges.

In July 1980, with the expanded display area, an effort was made to promote impulse sales. A large rack was built by the repair dept. to hold all the sizes of welders caps. Although sales increased rapidly, customers trying them on, failed to put them back in the correct bins and the idea was dropped after several months of wasting time each day straightening up the display.

In 1980, John Maurice was hired, as a temp and later added full time in counter sales. John was instrumental in moving the company into the retail tool business, which changed the face of the stores and became over 20% of sales..

In November 1980 Pam McLuskey was hired as a temp to help Herb Tyler with book keeping. In Jan, 1981 she became full time and replaced him at his retirement. Pam was named Office Manager in 1985 and gave up that position in 1997. In May 1993, Pam became Pam Mac Donald. In 1999, she returned part time to help with Y2K issues.

On February 20, 1981, Dorothy Mac Donald and LeRoy Mac Donald purchased the old Stauffer Chemical Co storage building adjacent to the South Portland plant, formerly known as a portion of the East Yard of The New England Shipbuilding Corporation as conveyed in 1950.

Stauffer Building pictured below



On January 1, 1982, the company purchased Gordon Metals, dba Morris Gordon & Son of Leland Street in Rockland from E. Allen Gordon for \$200,000 plus expenses and renamed it Rockland Welding Supply. The owner, Allen Gordon, was retained as a consultant with Ray Robinson in counter sales, along with the rest of employees.

Below: Pictures of Morris Gordon & Sons @ Leland Street.



In September of 1983, Rockland Welding Supply moved into a newly constructed building on the corner of Route 1 and Pleasant Street.



Below: Rockland Welding Supply view from 1986, before expansion



In July, 1988, Rockland Welding Supply was expanded, doubling the warehouse and showroom.



On September 30, 1983, the company purchased J. J. Boulter & Sons & renamed it Bangor Welding Supply, but continued to operate at 349 Harlow St. The company hired Bill Mac Donald (no relation to Dave) as Sales Manager & Art Boulter as Operations Manager. All other Boulter employees were hired as well, except Ed & Evelyn, who retired.

J. J. Boulter & Sons was founded in 1917 by John J. Boulter and was the first authorized Airco distributor in the United States. Oxygen and acetylene cylinders were brought up the Penobscot River by boat to the Eastern Steamship Wharfs and then handled by horse and wagon from the docks to 28 Hodsdon

Street, where Boulter had a welding repair and supply business in its' infancy. In 1924, Edward E Boulter purchased the business from his father. By 1925, when John died, the business was ready to expand and moved to a large wooden 75 year old building at 283 Harlow Street, previously owned by L. P. Swett, a REO car dealer. The 2 story building was Moss Wiley's livery stable in the 1850's and the stalls needed to be torn down in 1907 when Swett bought it. Later, Boulter added buildings at 293-301 Harlow & 18-20 Curve Streets to his business. An automotive radiator repair shop was started on the 2nd floor of the old Swett building.

283 Harlow Street circa 1940's



293-301 Harlow Street early 1960's - Art , Ed & Jon Boulter



In 1958, Boulter moved to a new building at 349 Harlow Street, where he stayed until the business was sold in 1983. John Elvin (Ed) Boulter was born Jan 5, 1902 and passed away on June 28, 1992.

PORTLAND
527 DANFORTH STREET
(207) 772-3746

ROCKLAND
ROUTE 1 & PLEASANT STREET
(207) 594-4500

BANGOR
349 HARLOW STREET
(207) 942-6393

MAILING ADDRESS PO. BOX 8361, PORTLAND, MAINE 04104
MAINE WATS 1-800-482-0130

September 26, 1983

Dear Customer:

We are pleased to announce the combination of J. J. Boulter & Son Inc. and Portland Welding Supply, effective September 26, 1983. The new company will do business as Bangor Welding Supply at the same location of 349 Harlow Street, Bangor.

J. J. Boulter & Son Inc. has served the Central and Eastern Maine welding and fire extinguisher market for sixty-seven years with high quality products and personalized customer service. Bangor Welding Supply will operate on the same principles and with the same people with the exception of Edward and Evelyn Boulter who will retire after more than sixty years with the company.

We sincerely appreciate your choosing J. J. Boulter & Son Inc. as your supplier. Through expansion of product lines and technological capabilities, we hope to earn your continued patronage in the future.

Sincerely,

Edw. E. Boulter

Edward E. Boulter
President
J. J. Boulter & Son Inc.

Sincerely,

David R. MacDonald

David R. MacDonald
President
Portland Welding Supply

New Building in 1986



Expanded parking & Awning 2012



From the late 1950's through the 1970's, the company partnered with businesses (Springvale Auto Parts, followed by W. E. Roberts and Mason's Variety followed by Standish Hardware) to act as dealers to sell gas and supplies in their local areas. With the purchase of J. J. Boulter & Lewiston Welding, the number grew to over 25 and became a management nightmare. There were ongoing complaints of poor attention to detail, miscounted cylinders and unhappy customers. While the worst of these dealers were dropped, others were added and the headaches continued.

In 1983, heady with the successful purchases of Gordon Metals and J. J. Boulter & Sons, management decided to approach N. H. Bragg, a large industrial supplier in Bangor to see if they had interest in selling their welding supply business. Letters and meetings were held with Cliff Eames, but negotiations never got serious.

In April 1984, Bill Muller, Stan's 2nd son, was hired to work in the South Portland plant. He later joined the inside sales team on Danforth St. He was promoted to outside sales in Portland, until the Manchester store was built at which time he moved into outside sales in Manchester.

In the 1980's & 1990's, the Stauffer Chemical building, adjacent to the South Portland plant, was used to store excess acetylene and propane cylinders which helped dramatically feed the fire of 1996.

In Feb. 1985, Ann Beckwith joined the company in customer service & billing. She developed computer skills and early in the 2000's became the network manager and system administrator in charge of over 100 work stations, PC's and communications.

On August 23, 1985, Airco invited Roy MacDonald (wife Stella deceased) & Dorothy MacDonald (husband Clarence deceased), Stan & Joan Muller, Wayne & Karen Tanguay & Dave & Sandy MacDonald to help celebrate 50 years as an Airco distributor.

In 1985, management considered opening a location in the Medway or Millinocket area. Richard Day, operating a sub-dealer in the area was considered to run the operation, but after due consideration, the idea was rejected. On April 12, 1985, land was purchased for \$40,000 from Bangor Target Area Development and in June, 1985, construction started at 1122 Outer Hammond St. for the new Bangor Welding Supply Facility.

On February 1, 1986, the company purchased Lewiston & Waterville Welding Supply from Oliver Randall, Lee Randall's son. Oliver M. Randall was born 2.26.1924 and died 1.28.2005. The company hired Bill Randall, Oliver's son, as Operations Manager in Lewiston & Bob Ferland, his counterpart in Waterville. Bob stayed with the company until he retired in 1995. Kevin Winsor was hired as Sales Manager for both locations. Lewiston's remaining employees were also hired. In Feb. 1987, Bill Randall decided to pursue a career in theater and left the company. Roger Herbert was promoted to interim manager at Lewiston, but left in late 1988. Mike Muller replaced him in Dec. 31, 1988, Stan's 1st son. Mike later was involved with the design and construction of the new plants in So Portland and Westbrook as well as the Manchester store and Bangor store additions. In the summer of 1989, the entire employee group teamed up to remodel the Lewiston showroom and enclose the downstairs, installing pallet racks for electrodes & open shelving upstairs.

Lewiston Welding Supply: 1930 - 1986



**PORLAND - ROCKLAND - BANGOR
WELDING SUPPLY**
A DISTRIBUTOR OF  QUALITY PRODUCTS

January 28, 1986

Dear Customer:

We are pleased to announce the combination of Lewiston Welding Company and Portland Welding Supply, effective February 1, 1986. We shall continue to do business as Lewiston Welding Supply at 44 Hammond Street in Lewiston and Waterville Welding Supply at 215 College Avenue in Waterville.

Lewiston Welding Supply has served the Southern and Central Maine and Northern New Hampshire Welding and Safety equipment market for over sixty years with quality products and personalized customer service. We shall continue to operate on the same principles and with the same people with the exception of Oliver M. Randall who will retire after thirty-six years with the company.

We sincerely appreciate your choosing Lewiston and Waterville Welding Supply as your sources for welding, medical and industrial gases and equipment. Through the expansion of product lines and competitive pricing, we hope to earn your highly valued patronage in the future.

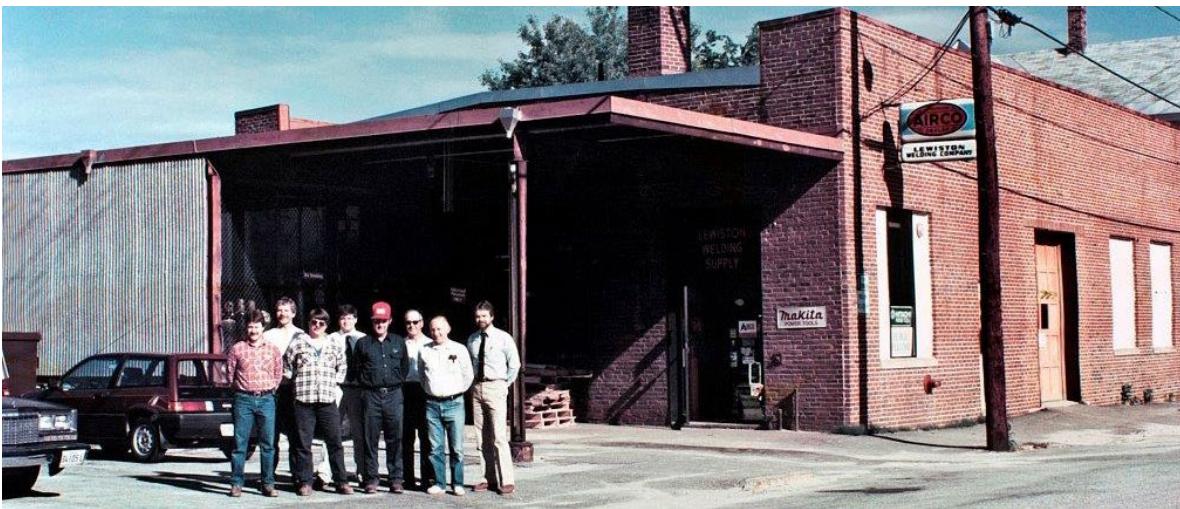
Sincerely,

Oliver M. Randall
President
Lewiston Welding Company

Sincerely,

David R. MacDonald
President
Portland Welding Supply

Below: Lewiston Welding Supply view in 1986



Below: Waterville Welding Supply view in 1986



On May 12, 1986, LeRoy MacDonald passed away, leaving his stock to David Mac Donald. In September, 1986, the board of directors was expanded. Sandra Mac Donald was elected to replace LeRoy MacDonald. Joan Muller was elected to the expanded board..

On December 1, 1986, the company purchased Freeman's Welding Supply on Main Street in Sanford & Freeman's Supply with the adjoining lot on Warren Ave in Portland (for \$60,000), from Browning & Plank LP, owners of Wesco in Billerica, Ma. They had purchased the company from Frank Johnson, who owned it for about 10 years, having purchased it from George Freeman, who started the business in the early 1950's on 27 Vannah Ave. at Woodfords Corner. The company hired Dick Norris; Operations Manager for the Warren Ave store who shortly transferred to Sanford. Russ Norris (no relation), Rick Bessler, Carl Stanley and Bob Laskey were also hired.

Below: Freeman's Supply, Warren Ave. in 1986



Old Sanford Store in 1986



New Sanford Store in 2000



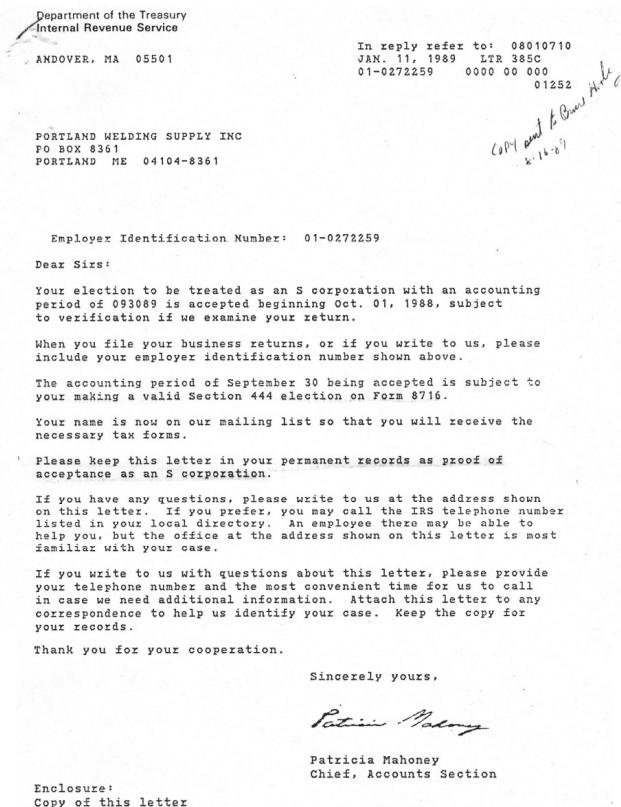
Sanford Time & Temperature sign



In September 1988, the company purchased one of the first IBM AS400's sold in the country and spent 6 agonizing months solving the software problems associated with the change. During that time, PWS dropped its' long relationship with Equinox Software Systems, which wrote code in an old style known as RPG-2 and would not agree to re-writing the code in RPG-3. In Nov. Georgia Day replaced Wick Mc Connon as programmer. Pam McLuskey MacDonald had worked unsuccessfully with Mid Range Systems to develop a message system. In early 1989, Pam & Georgia completed our first intranet. The message system helped all employees communicate without having to make long distance calls, waiting to talk with or interrupt someone.

On October 1, 1988, the stockholders elected to change the status of the company to an "S" corporation.

The IRS acceptance letter is shown below.



On November 1, 1988, the company purchased North Star Welding Products from Bob Smith & Jim Patterson of Gould & Smith in Presque Isle for \$610,000. Gould and Smith was a food processing equipment manufacturing company started in 1919 by Frank Smith, Bob's father. Tom Peters was hired as Operations & Sales Manager. All the employees were hired except Jeff Cochran, who opted to stay with Gould and Smith and Parker Smith, Bob's son, who moved on. Gould & Smith had acquired the company from Arctic Welding Supply in 1986, owned by the Solman Brothers, who had purchased the business in 1979 from Al Thomas of Northeastern Welders Supply Co, Caribou.

Northstar Welding Products circa 1993



During the 1980's, PWS became a beta site for the welding distributor software package sold by McCracken Computer Systems. Several employees became involved suggesting improvements. Wick McConnon, McCracken's programmer and later owner of Equinox Software Systems, became a pseudo employee, spending many days each week writing improvements. However, in the spring of 1989, the company decided to re-write the software and the relationship ended.

In May of 1989, the company purchased a large lot next to Freeman's Welding Supply in Sanford. from Martha Butler. Shortly thereafter, the savings and loan disaster caused prices to fall nationwide and it looked like we had paid too much. However, that would change in 1996.

In July of 1989, the following message is a foreboding of events only 7 years in the future

REPORT PERTAINING TO A FIRE AT THE SO PORTLAND FILL PLANT:
AT 1:30 ON THURSDAY, JULY 27, 1989 THE PORTLAND WELDING SUPPLY CREW
WAS UNLOADING ONE OF THEIR TRAILERS. TWO OF THE EMPLOYEES, KERRY
BURNELL AND JIM GREGOR LOOKED OVER BY THE HYDROGEN DOCK AND SAW
SMOKE RISING. FURTHER INSPECTION SHOWED THAT A FIRE WAS GOING IN THE
WOOD CHIPS ON THE MCCOURT LAND RIGHT BY THEIR NEW FENCE. KERRY AND
JIM YELLED FOR THE OTHER PLANT EMPLOYEES TO BRING OUT THE FIRE EX-
TINGUISHERS AND THEY ALL TRIED TO PUT OUT THE FIRE. WHILE THIS WAS
GOING DICK KELLEY HAD ALREADY CALLED THE SO PORTLAND FIRE DEPT.
THERE ALSO WAS A HOSE ON THE MCCOURT LAND THAT WAS BEING USED FOR
WATERING THE SHRUBS, SO ANOTHER OF OUR PLANT EMPLOYEES(PAT DESOMA)
USED IT TO HELP PUT OUT THE FIRE. IN A SHORT TIME THE FIRE DEPT ARRIVED
AND FINISHED PUTTING OUT THE FIRE.
ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT KNOW THE CAUSE OF THE FIRE, THE LAST PERSON
SEEN IN THAT AREA WAS THE PERSON SETTING UP THE HOSE FOR THE WATERING
OF THE SHRUBS.
THIS REPORT HAS BEEN MADE OUT BY DICK KELLEY.

The break from Airco as a one source supplier

From the start, Clarey and Roy remained fiercely loyal to Airco. Although other products were stocked and sold, such as Red Ram gloves, Kessler stainless steel, Thermacote Weldco specialty welding alloys; most of these items were not considered important by Airco to the relationship. Other products really made them angry. The first such example was Westinghouse 6013 electrodes. Many customers preferred them and since the company focused on customer needs, they were purchased in the 1960's through Lewiston Welding *, until Airco threatened to cancel the franchise if the company didn't stop carrying them. Roy took the threat to heart and got ready to throw them out the door, but Clarey acquiesced and agreed to drop the line. After the Airco people left, Clarey and Roy agreed to hide the product out back and only bring it out when customers asked for it.

From the 1920's through the 1950's, most gas distributors were small and had to behave as their main suppliers demanded. During the period from the 1960's through the 1980's distributors grew rapidly, either organically or through acquisition and were not so easily pushed around. Suppliers demanding distributors only carry their products were challenged in court and lost. Compounding the problem were acquisitions that broke territorial boundaries and combined companies carrying different product lines. The purchase of J. J. Boulter brought the Miller Electric line to PWS. This created tension with Airco as they handled a portion of the Miller line branded with the Airco name for many years. It created a tension with Miller since they sold through our competitor in Southern and Central Maine. The problems intensified when we purchased Lewiston and Waterville. Neither Airco nor Miller wanted territorial lines blurred. However, a failed attempt by Airco, due to big egos, to purchase Miller, made them enemies and Airco dropped Miller in April, 1983 and recommended Generac gas welders.

Even more serious were customer requests for Lincoln 5P 6010 electrodes. Airco and Lincoln were fierce competitors and their products were almost never found in the same distributor. Not wanting to turn customers away, Jim contacted Lincoln and was surprised to find they would sell to us. Only small quantities were purchased at list for many years. But as customers in the late 1970's regularly asked for Lincoln 5P, Dave negotiated purchases large enough to get free freight and a 10% Class 'C' distributor discount. Suddenly PWS was competitive with the major Lincoln supplier in Maine and sales continued to grow, until the Lincoln supplier, Maine Oxy, found out.

Maine Oxy threatened the Lincoln district manager, Jim Clauson, and he withdrew the discount, but agreed to continue selling us product. Then began a negotiation that lasted years, trying to meet Lincoln requirements to get the discount back. Although we were not close to an agreement, the hiring of a key Maine Oxy employee, Steve Brown in 1981, who had Lincoln product knowledge and training, convinced Jim Clauson to pursue serious negotiations. On April 20, 1982, Don Hastings of Lincoln reinstated the class 'C' contract, upsetting Airco management who rushed to Maine to try and prevent the agreement. Dave listened politely, remembering the story of Clarey's handling of Westinghouse, but told the Airco reps that the company needed the ability to compete. If we could draw more customers, we'd sell more Airco products also. Nevertheless, it was October 27, 1986 before Lincoln approved a full distributorship. While the PWS management team debated whether to place the first major order for product with Airco's most hated competitor, they learned that Maine Oxy's owners had traveled to Cleveland and threatened Don Hastings, the President of Lincoln, if he allowed the offer to stand. Little did Maine Oxy or anyone know that Lincoln was in the process of negotiating the purchase of most of the Airco electrode and wire business. We placed the order and shortly thereafter the Airco purchase was announced.

We the disposition of the hardgoods business, in Aug. 1986, BOC announced the dissolution of Airco Welding Products to be replaced by Airco Distributor Gases. In Dec. BOC stopped the direct competition of AIG & ADG and set guidelines for working bulk accounts together.

Power tools, parts and accessories become an \$8 million business

In the early 1960's, Jim Whidden brought in 7" and 9" Metabo industrial grinders and Bullard grinding discs. This was an ancillary part of the business until early 1982, when a friend of John Maurice, a Makita salesman, started calling on us. John convinced us to bring in a small quantity of a new 5" grinder, more suitable for the retail market. They were an immediate success and sales exploded as we added more Makita tools to the showroom. In the mid 1980's, the company joined with Makita and Groff Productions to make a series of light hearted TV power tool commercials which were moderately successful. The late 70's and early 80's were a rough time in the economy but the acquisition of new businesses in the mid 1980's, which also brought new product lines, came at just the right time as the economy grew rapidly along with the use of portable power tools. On March 16, 1983, Oliver Randal granted Portland Welding Supply territory along route 1 to Freeport Village that had belonged to Lewiston Welding Supply

From 1982 through 2000, management tried many new product lines. Most were successful, but some failed, despite our best efforts. Safety shoes and prescription safety glasses created a high rate of return and custom orders took too long to complete, leaving customers unhappy. Valved balloons had too many leaks. Electronic, doping & sterilizing gases were dropped as unsafe to handle or use. Ammonia was dropped and propane for home use was discouraged. Freon was considered and passed. Medical oxygen for patients were referred to healthcare companies. Fire extinguisher repairs were too costly to keep parts and took so long that some customers didn't bother to come back. The company gave up filling customer owned 20# propane cylinders when the adoption of complex and costly new and changing regulations caused migraines. The management also looked at opening more locations. Property was looked at on Lincoln St in Saco. Nice view of the river, but not for a retail business. Negotiations with Wakeman Realty Trust to sell their location at 52 Railroad Ave, Springvale - fell through when, after a deal was reached in May 1993, they wanted more money.

In early 1987, with the business becoming more complex, a major task was started to put thoughts on paper that exemplified Clarey and Roy's philosophy of focus on the customer and the 'blue book' was started. An outline was made for personnel guidelines, business procedures, general policies and procedures, which grew to over 60 pages. The pictures below are just a preview of the effort.

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C. <u>EQUIPMENT</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demo Machines (114) 2. Installment Sale (122) 3. Sale of Rental Equipment (123) 4. Rental Equipment (120) 5. Repair & Trade In (24) 6. Welding & Primary Cable (26) 7. Equipment Repairs (126) 8. Warranty (25)
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B. <u>BENEFITS</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Medical (1) 2. PWS Medical (3) 3. Accident & Sickness (2) 4. Pension & Life (4) 5. Vacation (5) 6. Holidays (7) 7. Pregnancy Disability (6) 8. Jury Duty (32) 9. Perfect Attendance (8) 10. Inventory Purchase (20) 11. Supplier Spiffs & Perks (16)
C. <u>EXPENSES</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uniform (15) 2. Shoes (14) 3. Mileage Reimbursement (22) 4. Sales Vehicle (31) 5. Service Vehicle (33) 6. Moving Expenses (19)

In May, 1988, Brian Saabye graduated from Clemson and joined the company full time in Nov. 1988 in customer service at Warren Ave. Brian was first hired in June 1985 and worked summers through college at the South Portland plant.

In 1989, management started thinking about a new name. A contest was devised with a trip to be awarded, but the employees at the plant were left out. After fixing the error, a new plant employee, Diane Branscomb won the drawing, took the trip, then quit. Diane was hired to help produce and analyze rare and

specialty gases, which the company had been buying at high cost. Her leaving was a temporary setback, but by the mid 1990's, Ray Misiuk was transferred from repairs to the So. Portland plant and new equipment was purchased in order to produce high quality special gases.

Pictured below is testing equipment for specialty gases



In the spring of 1989, a panic call from Dick Hibbard at the So. Portland plant stated that construction had started at the rear of the building of a new sidewalk, essentially ending the 4 egresses on 10th St. and thus blocking the rear use of the plant. Research showed that a new condominium and marina complex had been approved by the City of So. Portland for which they said adequate notice had been given. We were left with no choice but to sue. A judge granted a TRO and the fight was on. 4 months and tens of thousands later, we were prepared for court, but the judge demanded we settle. This led to the loss of 2 of the 4 driveways on 10th St., which held until the late 1990's when we negotiated with the condo association and got the 4 access points back.

On Sept. 30, 1989, the shareholders elected to change the treatment of the company to an "S" corporation.

On October 1, 1990, Dorothy MacDonald transferred her stock to Joan Muller and Barbara Saabye and resigned from the Board of Directors to be replaced by Barbara Saabye.

Starting in the early 1980's and continuing through the early 2000's, the company held yearly parties. With the purchase of additional locations, employees from all locations were encouraged to attend in order to create solidarity. There were many pictures taken over the years.

Here are pictures of management and their families taken at some of these events.

Karen & Wayne Tanguay



Alan & Barbara Saabye



Bill, Stan & Mike Muller



Pam, Dave & Darren Mac Donald



Joan Muller & Dave Mac Donald



In the spring of 1990, the company, with help from BOC, made a major effort to incorporate the philosophy of Total Quality Management. Teams were formed to help manage various aspects of the business, and improve communications, reduce errors and improve the customer experience. Co-managers were named for each of the locations, in an attempt to foster team spirit and employee collaboration with the goal of making the best and fastest decisions to solve problems.

By 1991, policies and procedures - written in 1987, were being refined and new ones added, many due to the new Family Leave Act of 1991. Each week, an issue at the management meetings was to rewrite one of the old policies or procedures. Maintaining the blue book was becoming a major chore. New pages were sent to the locations, but employees didn't always maintain their blue books. The electronic bulletin board was created so employees could quickly have access to the latest updates and management could be sure that all employees had the same information. The blue book was maintained through 1994 when the bulletin board and message system were improved. A company newsletter was started on Jan. 15, called Gas Arc Sparks Beads, an Chips or GAS BAC. The letter was published every two months for two years. Started by Dave Mac Donald, employees were encouraged to contribute, which worked well for awhile, but as with many ideas, interest waned over time. Sheila Huff, Dave's secretary, took it over for several issues. The receptionist, Maggie Brady, created several issues. Finally, Keith Gorman took it over running many amusing articles before finally closing it down.

In 1992, Airco entered into an agreement to sell itself to Air Products. The deal fell through, but a message was sent to the investment community - Airco is for sale. The Airco distributors of the northeast and midwest held a joint meeting in Jan. 1993 headlined "The Fall of the Airco Franchise". Topics were: (1) sale of Jackson Products to Werco; (2) closing of regional warehouses in 1988; (3) sale of flux cored wires to Tri-Mark in 1984; (4) sale of machine business to ESAB in 1984; sale of Airco cutting line to Koike; (5) sale of gas equipment line to Concoa in 1987; (6) the electrode line to Lincoln in 1986; (7) gas driven welders to Generac in 1982. Airco had given up the hardgoods business and proposed to partner with the distributor buying groups to form the Airco Distributor Association or ADA. Although it might appear that the tiny group meeting in New Hampshire to form Airdane, was the start of the decline of Airco as a full line supplier, the truth was that distributors were growing so large through M&A and organic, they could buy direct from manufacturers or through buying groups for about the same price that Airco paid. Change was inevitable.

In the 1990's, tent sales became a huge hit with customers and a morale booster for employees. The shows started as one day affairs but ended with flaps open at 6:00a on Thursday and staying open straight through to 12:00p Saturday. Each year, the tent got bigger and more vendors asked to attend. By 2007, there were 30 tables in a tent 40' x 140' and sales of \$119,000 in the tent and a bump of \$46,000 in store. Employees came from every location and the events drew thousands of customers. The entire purchasing dept were posted at terminals watching the sales in real time and rushing items from other locations as rapidly as they were sold.

Below are some pictures from a tent sale.





1995 was a busy year. In June, 1995 after a one year search, Ron Horvath was hired as plant manager for the South Portland gas filling and distribution plant. In late July, Jeannie Jeffords was hired as Marketing Manager. She helped with tent sales and set up displays for the opening of the Manchester location. She left to join the Red Cross in late 2000. Late in the year, the company entered the power tool repair business, opening New England Tool Repair on the second floor of the Warren Ave. store in Portland. In December of 1995 the company received permission for a new building in Sanford on the land adjacent to the original location.

Possibly the most important issue of 1995 was the consideration to join with Middlesex Welding Supply, which had locations throughout Ma and a few in NH. This would have created a very powerful company and added important young talent that could help the transition to the next generation. However, a meeting of top management in August at the Holiday Inn in Portsmouth, NH showed a glaring difference in culture, which discouraged further consideration.

In April of 1996, with the help of Jeannie Jeffords, the company opened an 'on-line' store selling power tools and parts, called Tools For Less (tfl). After a short stint of hosting with a local company, tfl joined AT&T and sales grew slowly but steadily through 1998, when AT&T dropped hosting. Nightmares followed as a rush to find a new host failed and it was decided to purchase a sales package from Soft Cart in 1999. Although the site was an improvement, the content was not searchable by Google, which had rapidly become the premier search site. More on this later.

In 1996, the company had its' 1st and only million dollar sale, made to Bath Iron Works.

On May 15, 1996, several promotions were announced by the board of directors and new positions were created. Mike Muller to Vice President: Operations; Kevin Winsor to Vice President: Sales, for central and northern New Hampshire and mid central Maine; Roger Junnarkar to Vice President: Sales, for southern and south central New Hampshire and southwestern Maine; Roger Brown to Vice President: Sales, for Canada, northern, north central and eastern Maine; Wayne Tanguay to Executive Vice President: Operations and Alan Saabye to Executive Vice President: Sales. Brian Saabye to Operations Manager of Freeman's Supply on Warren Ave.

* Airco distributors often sold products to each other at cost as there was a friendly relationship due to each distributor having an assigned territory and didn't compete with each other. This was a unique feature of an Airco distributorship. However, during the 1980's and 1990's, the Airco brand had been frittered away. By the end of 1996, BOC stopped using the Airco name. There were no more Airco hardgoods, retail operations or gases. Suppliers who had purchased gas equipment, flux cored wires, electrodes and bare wires and electric welders all dropped the Airco name.

Front and back of So. Portland plant before the fire



The Nightmare: Fire

On August 27, 1996, the filling and distribution plant in So. Portland burned to the ground in a spectacular fire and explosion. Although no employees were injured, a fireman died of heart failure.

The facility was destroyed and 10,000 cylinders were lost. Asbestos from acetylene cylinders, piping insulation, roof shingles and fire walls was spewed over a 3 square mile area of residential neighborhood, playgrounds and schoolyards.

The EPA, OSHA and DEP descended on the site and a massive cleanup began, taking 4 months to complete. The cleanup included scrubbing streets, scraping lawns, washing roof gutters, windows, porches, cleaning carpets and floors, pumping out catch basins. Material at the site had to be scrubbed and tested before it could be hauled off and buried. Airco / BOC gases played a key role in supervising the cleaning and removal of the destroyed cylinders and working with the DEP.

TV and newspaper reporters swarmed the area reporting exaggerated dangers and causing turmoil with interviews of frightened residents. People were warned to stay indoors. A special press conference was held by the Maine Dept of Public Safety to assure the public that the danger was minimal and the cleanup proceeding quickly.

The exact cause of the fire was never determined. The State Fire Marshalls office report said the likely cause was an electrical short in the CO-2 station control box that ignited MAPP gas fumes in the court yard next to the MAPP filling room, but it was thought that an employee tossing a cigarette into a non-smoking area where Mapp gas fumes may have accumulated could have been a contributing factor.

The aftermath is hard to exaggerate. All company efforts went into arrangements for alternate sources for gases. Bangor was rushed to become the major filling facility for Oxygen, nitrogen, CO₂ & Argon and plant employees had to live in Bangor motel rooms during the week for a year. Sanford was set up to become the major distribution center for the state. Arrangements had to be made with Middlesex to help with filling Mapp Gas. Cylinders had to be rented from BOC while new cylinders were ordered. Personal visits were made evenings to neighborhood gatherings and meetings of the South Portland City Council and the newspapers. Work had to be done to design a new plant and rush work on the Westbrook plant had to go forward, with complaints from a nearby daycare center. Local So. Portland residents sued to block the building permit to replace the plant. Weekly meetings were held with the insurance company and all expenses had to be cataloged and verified. The file containing the cleanup work done is 4" thick. There is a separate thick file designing the plant and negotiating with contractors. There was a fulltime commitment from management and employees to maintain quality and customer satisfaction. A major PR campaign with the community and massive help from our suppliers and employees, our business actually grew during the toughest period the company had faced.

below: Picture from balcony of Breakwater condominium, showing plant @ 119 Madison Ave & Stauffer building with full acetylene cylinders stored within, just minutes before the fire started.



The person taking these pictures started outside the deck of his apartment but ended inside his condo with the sliding doors closed. However, he kept snapping throughout the fire. There are about 40 pictures in all. Below is a picture of the fire just getting started. You can still see the all the liquid stations, a trailer in front of the building and a tractor trailer at the acetylene dock. The Stauffer building had not yet exploded.



Below: The fire in full bloom. The Stauffer building is shooting acetylene cylinders into the air.



Below: The fire department finally gave up trying to control the fire and started pouring water on the fire trucks.



Fortunately, the company had decided to build a new \$475,000, 11,280 sq. ft. retail store in Sanford, 40 miles to the south, which opened the day after the fire. Sanford quickly became the distribution center while the Bangor location, 150 miles north, became the filling facility for the state. Plant employees were split between Sanford and Bangor. Those going to Bangor stayed in motels during the week for a year while a new plant was built.

During the 11 months after the fire before moving into the new plant, Airco / BOC came to the company's rescue. They produced loaned cylinders, filled requirements for helium, nitrous oxide and Mapp Gas. They supplied trucks, people, stations, and technical expertise.

Although most of disaster cost was covered by insurance, the \$474,742 cost of MDEP cleanup, PWS labor and miscellaneous was not covered. Here's an abbreviated list of the covered losses: Letter from Maine DEP at end.

cylinders	\$862,929
stations	525,485
manifolds	210,940
security	56,720
cylinder contents	96,497
computers & office equip	41,116

In 1996 management applied to build a 25,000 sq. ft. cylinder maintenance plant in the Glassworld Industrial Park, Westbrook. Abutters objected but on June 25th, the Westbrook planning board granted the permit. Permits were also required from the EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and mitigation with deed restrictions from the Maine DEP. The plant cost almost \$800,000 and opened March, 2000. The plant handled flammable gases, including a large liquid propane filling facility. The plant was also used to re-qualify Airco acetylene & hydrogen cylinders converting them to private brand.

In April, 1997, Pam Mac Donald resigned to prepare for the coming of her twins in July. She returned for a short time in 1999 to help with Y2K software conversions.

August, 1997 saw the opening of new plant in South Portland. In 1997, Bud Neale, from inside sales in Bangor, was promoted to safety director.

From 1992 through 2006, other family members - Amy Tanguay and Isaac Misiuk worked at the company for short periods.

In December of 1997, The Gases and Welding Distributor magazine published an article about the company. Several people were quoted, but only Mac Donald is named. Some of the information is inaccurate. A copy of the article will be sent separately.

In 1997, management started looking at Manchester, NH for a possible new location. Roger Junnarkar spent several weeks, finally locating a property at 4090 So. Willow St, which was purchased for \$144,600 on Oct. 29, 1998. Permission to build was required from the City of Manchester, the Federal Aviation Administration, FEMA, and the DEP. Mike Muller was put in charge of the project. The Airport donated free fill which turned out to be unsuitable for building and cost over \$100,000 to remove. Mike had to hold weekly meeting through most of 1999 with North Branch Construction in order to complete the 12,900 sq ft facility. On October 1, 1999 the location finally opened with a new name: Advantage Gases and Tools. In August, the name: Precision Gases and Tools had been considered and might have become the new name of the company, but the State of NH rejected it.

The successful open of the Manchester location spurred management to look for other opportunities, which included nearby Nashua. A gas supply company was approached and a major effort was made to purchase Danfor Sales & Service from Chuck Daniels in Feb. 2002. After cursory due diligence, an offer was made, but the deal soured when no compromise could be reached.

In January, 1998, Maine experienced one of the worst ice storms in recent history. The company had windfall generator sales of \$850,000, which helped in the recovery from the losses due the fire, not covered by insurance.

In May, 1998, Cindy Wass was promoted to office and credit manager.

In March, 1999, the company purchased the lot and building next to Waterville Welding Supply for \$88,530. In Jan. 2005, the building was removed.

In May 1999, Chris Tanguay came to work full time and in October accepted a position in web design @ Tools For Less. Chris was hired in June of 1985 working summers and part time through high school and college.

Also in 1999, Bill Tracy was hired as South Portland plant manager & a process began with the Breakwater Condominium association discussing their demands. A year of work, with help from Bill Tracy and Bill Fischer, to reduce noise and truck traffic produced a new agreement, allowing us additional access to formerly 10th street, which negated the court settlement reached in the early 1990's with McCourt Corp.

In March, 2000, our programmer, Georgia Day left and Pat Berg was hired to replace her.

In April, 2000, Darren MacDonald and Sherri Kinney graduated from the University of Southern Maine, Darren MacDonald took an offer @ Tools For Less which became Toolsforless later that year. In August, Sherri took a job in the office. Darren had started part time in 1989 and worked some summers starting in May 1990.. Sherri left in 2005.

During the early 2000's, Darren, Chris and Dave spent an inordinate amount of time, working with IBM and others to solve the Google search problem. In 2005, as the site was crashing every few weeks, they decided to look for a new package, settling on software from Net Concepts.

In May, 2000, all locations started doing business as Advantage Gases and Tools except the tool repair department which d/b/a New England Tool Repair. Mike Muller, Brian Saabye, Darren MacDonald and Chris Tanguay were invited to join the steering committee. In August, 2000, Jeff Barrell accepted a job in purchasing, later becoming purchasing manager.

Later in 2000, the company started a major addition to the Waterville location which was completed in 2001.

In April 2002, management was struggling with high turnover and started a human services dept, hiring Dorothy Moreau, who stayed for two years.

In 2003, the owners of the company investigated the possible sale of the company. This lead to lengthy discussions with Leaders, a mergers and acquisition firm who brought Airgas to the table. After months of work, negotiations broke down and the issue went on the back burner for 4 years.

In March, 2004, Cindy Wass left and the search for a new office manager turned up John Hildreth. Late in 2004, Terri Lorenz was hired to replace Dorothy Moreau as head of the Human Services dept.

In November, 2004, Joan, Barbara and Dave purchased land surrounding the Danforth St. location from Maine Central Railroad..

On July, 1, 2004, the Board of Directors instituted a freeze on the defined benefit pension plan and on December 17, 2004, created a 401K pension plan to replace the previous plan.

In April, 2005, lower Danforth St and West Commercial St. were renamed Cassidy Point Drive. A traffic light was added to the new I-295 connector at West Commercial and the exit from Danforth was changed to one way east. Trucks entering Danforth from the west, headed for Merrill Transport, blocked the entrance to Portland Welding Supply as they cued all the way to the old traffic circle. Sales at this location started a slow but steady decline.

In Sept. 2006, after 100 years of doing business as: 'Air Reduction Co', 'Aircos Inc', 'Aircos div BOC', 'BOC gases', 'The BOC Group' was sold to The Linde Group of Germany. (See Aircos history at bottom).

In 2006, 41 employees donated nearly \$11,000 of their vacation time to Grady Pierce to help him with his cancer treatments.

In 2007, Darren MacDonald was promoted to Vice President - Technology and Brian Saabye was promoted to Vice President - Marketing.

In 2007 the company, dba Advantage Gases & Tools, except loc 11 & 13, had grown from the humble beginnings on outer Forest Ave to:

loc 2	Rockland Welding Supply	@ Pleasant St & Route 1	Rockland
loc 3	Bangor Welding Supply	@ 1122 Outer Hammond St	Bangor
loc 4	Lewiston Welding Supply	@ 44 Hammond St	Lewiston
loc 5	Waterville Welding Supply	@ 215-217 College Ave	Waterville
loc 6	Lewiston van (discontinued)	@ 44 Hammond St	Lewiston
loc 7	Freeman's Supply	@ 110 Warren Ave (down)	Portland
loc 8	Freeman's Welding Supply	@ 1787 Main St	Sanford
loc 9	Northstar Welding Products	@ 65 Spruce St	Presque Isle
loc 10	So. Portland Filling Plant	@ 119 Madison St	South Portland
loc 11	New England Tool Repair	@ 110 Warren Ave (up)	Portland
loc 12	Advantage Gases and Tools	@ 4080 So. Willow St	Manchester, NH
loc 13	toolsforless.com	@ 110 Warren Ave (up)	Portland
loc 14	Westbrook Fuel Gas Plant	@ 75 Scott Drive	Westbrook

On January 2, 2008, the company was sold to Valley National Gases. Alan Saabye and Stan Muller retired. Dave Mac Donald stayed to facilitate turning over the purchasing functions, retiring in June. Wayne & Chris Tanguay, Bill and Mike Muller, Brian Saabye and Darren Mac Donald were hired by Valley, along with most of the company's employees.

Notes

Interviews were conducted with: Dorothy MacDonald (1984), Oliver Randall (1986), Edward Boulter (1984)

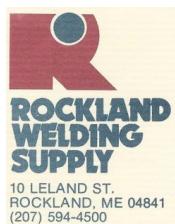
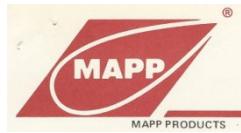
Contributing information & pictures were: David Mac Donald, Joan & Stan Muller, Barbara & Alan Saabye, Karen & Wayne Tanguay, Reggie Groff

Contributing information were: Brian Saabye, Darren MacDonald

Pictures from other sources: The Maine Historical Society, the South Portland Historical Society,

Google Maps, Breakwater Condominium, Portland Welding Supply, PWS parties & letters of correspondence.

Some decals of our company and suppliers





The History of Airco

1905: Oxygen Acetylene gas cutting and welding appeared
1915: Air Reduction Co - primarily oxygen and nitrogen
1916: Air Reduction Co becomes Air Reduction Sales - 40 people
1917: J J Boulter - 1st Air Reduction distributor
1930: 2,200 employees
1940: 3,960 employees, 65 oxy plants, 35 acetylene plants, 20 CO₂ plants, 3 neon plants, 2 carbide plants, 597 warehouses
1940's: Purchased Ohio Medical
1950: 7,022 employees
1958: Purchased Jackson Safety Products
1960: 8,383 employees, 2000 distributors and dealers
1964: Adopted name Airco Inc.
1967: Mapp Gas
1968: Purchased Aronson Positioners
1970: 14,201 Employees
1973: BOC buys 4,000,000 shares of Airco stock
1976: Sale to BOC
1980's: Sales of gas driven machine, electrode and gas apparatus divisions
1990's: Sale of all hardgoods divisions and closing all warehouses, Announced sale of Airco/BOC to Air Products (failed)
2000's: Sale of Airco/BOC to Linde

Power Tool ads from the 1980's

TV Power tool ads were written by Reggie Groff and Dave Mac Donald. There were several ads over a few years in the mid 1980's. Dave and Reggie came up with the basic ideas. Dave wrote out the dialog. Reggie visualized and then wrote the story board for each spot. They can be seen on you tube. Here is an example you can copy and paste into you tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5LvutHyDFY>

Below is an example of a write up

MAFIA SPOT

MAFIA : WE'RE AH LOOKIN FOR PORTLAND WELDING SUPPLY

DAVE : YOU CAN'T GET MUCH CLOSER!

MAFIA : EHNN, WHO RUNS THIS JOINT?

DAVE : I'M THE PRESIDENT, CAN I HELP YOU?

MAFIA : YA, WELL AH OUR... "PRESIDENT" HA HA SANDY SENT US OVA TO GET SOME TOOLS

DAVE : BOY! ARE YOU GUYS IN THE RIGHT PLACE! WE SELL OVER 100 DIFFERENT MODELS OF HAKITA POWER TOOLS, AT GREAT PRICES ALL THE TIME

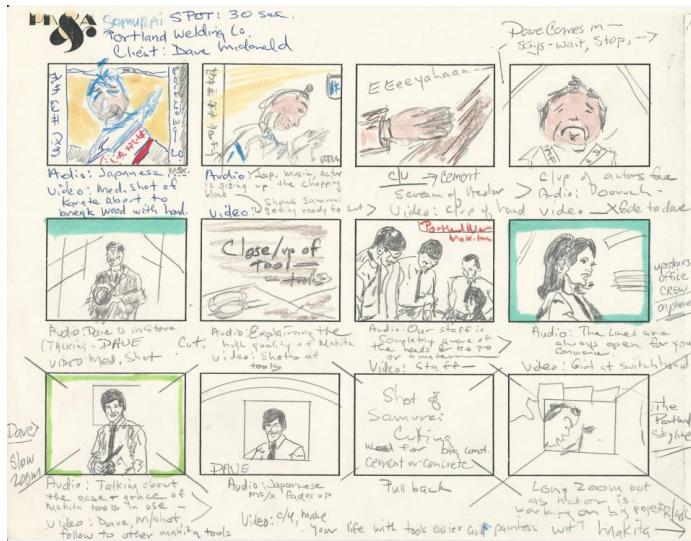
MAFIA : ER-AH OUR BOSS WILL LIKE THAT! EH? (LOOKS AT GIRL AND PARTNER, GETS GIGGIES & LAUGHS)

DAVE : SO... WHAT KIND OF JOB DOES YOUR BOSS WANT DOWNS?

MAFIA : IT'S A JOB HE COULDN'T REFUSE! (MORE GIGGLES, KISSES)

DAVE-TAG : WHAT A COUPLE OF JOCKERS, WE'RE PORTLAND WELDING SUPPLY - JUST AFTER THE ROTARY ON ST JOHN ST - MAINE'S LARGEST HAKITA DEALER -- OR WE WERE!!! (SCENE OF PLUM TRUCK W/SAFE + MAFIA)

Below is a typical Story Board written to describe the ad



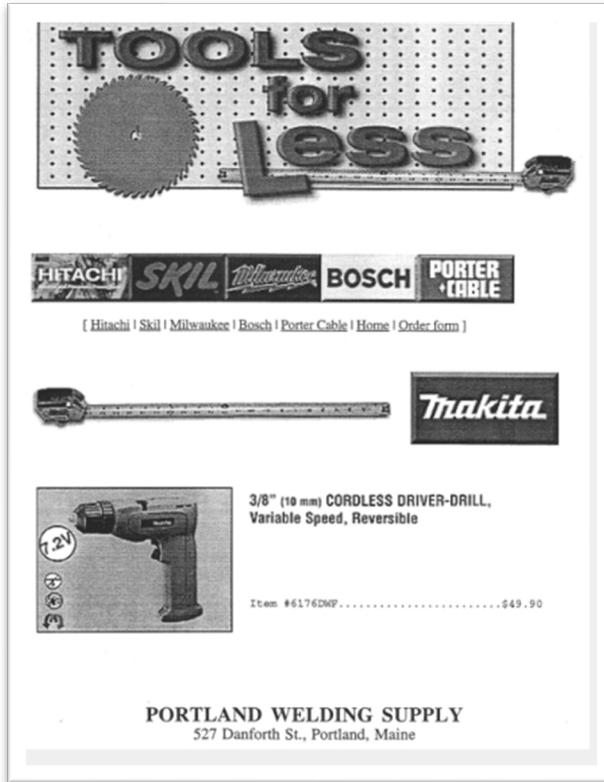
From Portland Press Herald (Portland, Maine), Tuesday, July 19, 1949, Page 15.

Armand Houle was found on Middle Street, where he had wandered after attending an uptown movie with local relatives. He became separated from them when the show let out and walked in the wrong direction. Patrolman Elmer R. Shaw and Frank Tirabassi came to his rescue.

Toolsforless.com

A heartbreaking amount of work went into creating the B2C website toolsforless for marketing & selling power tools, parts and accessories and later efforts to establish a B2B network for Industrial customers to place orders and pay bills . Started in 1996 by Jeannie Jeffords & Dave Mac Donald, the site moved several times onto different servers with different website administrators and eventually several software packages. By 2000, Jeannie had moved on to merchandising our new Manchester store. Chris Tanguay and Darren MacDonald joined with Dave with the goal of becoming our own administrators. Several setbacks made for frustrating times, until 2006, when the site finally started functioning effectively. Pat Berg worked on the B2B portal but it never got fully functional. Issues such as storage of critical customer information, social security numbers, password and ID recognition and encryption were difficult to overcome.

Below is the original logo circa late 1996



Next is The Maine DEP letter stating that the asbestos cleanup was complete



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
GOVERNOR

EDWARD O. SULLIVAN
COMMISSIONER

March 9, 1999

Ed Budway
Breakwater at Spring Point Condominium Association
148 Breakwater Drive
South Portland, ME 04106

Dear Mr. Budway:

In reference to the final clean up of Breakwater property relative to the Portland Welding asbestos incident that spewed asbestos on numerous properties, including Breakwater, in South Portland in the fall of 1996, I would offer the following thoughts. First and most important, the clean up of all properties, including Breakwater, has concluded and the state will not require further action relative to the clean up unless additional visible asbestos debris is discovered. The best practicable clean-up standard, namely DEP-certified monitors conducting visual evaluations of the effected areas, was used during the clean-up, but even that method is not an iron-clad guarantee that all asbestos debris was removed. Second, Breakwater property has been visually inspected by certified individuals from Northeast Test Consultants and was determined to meet acceptable criteria for considering the property visually clean of asbestos debris.

Therefore in regard to the asbestos incident that occurred and was satisfactorily mitigated, the Breakwater property is not under any restrictions relative to performing landscaping or other similar types of activities that may impact effected areas of the property. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact me at 287-7829.

Sincerely,

Ed Antz, Asbestos/Lead Program Manager
Maine DEP
State House Station #17
Augusta ME, 04333

pc-Northeast Test Consultants
-Portland Welding

AUGUSTA
17 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0017
(207) 623-5700
FAX: (207) 623-5700

BANGOR
312 HOGAN ROAD
BANGOR, MAINE 04401
(207) 941-4370 FAX: (207) 941-4354

PORTRLAND
312 CANCO ROAD
PORTLAND, MAINE 04103
(207) 822-6100 FAX: (207) 822-6303

PRESQUE ISLE
1214 CENTRAL DRIVE, SKYWAY PARK
PRESQUE ISLE, MAINE 04766-2913
(207) 784-0477 FAX: (207) 784-1457

printed on recycled paper

TOTAL P.02

The end of an era

Airco / BOC drops Miller



TO: AIRCO DISTRIBUTORS
AIRCO WELDING PRODUCTS PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: ENGINE-DRIVEN WELDING MACHINES

Effective immediately, Airco Welding Products is dropping all engine-driven welding machines and related accessories from its product line. Those stock numbers affected by this decision include all 1350-xxxx items and all accessory stock numbers as indicated on the catalog sheets 1340, E, Page 1.4.7 through 1340 E, Page 3.16.6.

Please note in your catalog that these items have been discontinued. In addition, please discard all 1350 distributor net price sheets as these prices are no longer valid.

A small number of engine-driven machines and accessories are still in Airco's stock. These items will be available until stock is depleted at special discounted prices. Please contact your respective zone office requesting prices and availability.

Parts and service information regarding all discontinued items can be obtained by calling the equipment manufacturer, Generac Corporation, at [414] 544-4811.

Eric B. Manos
Arc Equipment Marketing
AIRCO WELDING PRODUCTS

Airco / BOC drop arc welding equipment by sale to ESAB

AIRCO Welding Products A Division of The BOC Group, Inc.

575 Mountain Avenue
Murray Hill
New Jersey 07974
Telephone: 201-464-8100
TWX: 710-984-7970

David J. Daffey
President

November 1, 1984

Mr. D. R. MacDonald
Portland Welding Supply
P.O. Box 8361
Portland, ME 04104

Dear Dave:

As you are well aware, the Arc Welding business of Airco has had a great deal of difficulty in achieving satisfactory performance over the last few years. We have been modifying and streamlining our operations in order to reduce our costs, but these actions have been taken during a period of considerable decline in demand from the peaks achieved in 1979 to 1981. Whilst we have achieved success with many of our actions, additional measures need to be taken in two areas.

Firstly, after several months of negotiations with ESAB, the Swedish manufacturer of welding equipment and related products, we have entered into an agreement whereby ESAB will purchase Airco's arc equipment business. ESAB will continue to supply products branded with the Airco label directly to you, the Airco distributor. You will be associated with the largest European producer of welding equipment and a world leader in welding technology, a situation from which you can only benefit.

Secondly, we have decided to cease production and marketing of cored wires, and have established an arrangement with Tri-Mark to produce and supply Airco formulations under an exclusive label, "Corex," directly to you. As you know, Tri-Mark is a well established, reliable supplier of cored wire and is no stranger to the business.

We will continue to manufacture electrodes and market these with solid wire out of our re-equipped Cleveland factory. Gases and gas apparatus are unaffected by the above.

We believe these are the right decisions, for us and for you. We plan to work very closely with you, ESAB, and Tri-Mark so that the transition takes place as smoothly as possible.

We have made arrangements to meet with as many of you as possible over the next two weeks. These meetings are being held to enable us to explain in more detail the rationale behind our decisions and to give you the opportunity to ask any questions you feel are appropriate.

Very truly yours,

David

Airco / BOC sells electrode & wire business to Lincoln

AIRCO Welding Products Division of The BOC Group, Inc.

575 Mountain Avenue
Murray Hill
New Jersey 07974
Telephone: 201-464-8100
TWX: 710-984-7970

FYI

AS RB BM BF
WT CS WR
SM AB KW

August 15, 1986

To: Airco Distributors
Subject: Airco Sells Welding Electrode Facility to
The Lincoln Electric Company

Airco has agreed to sell all the production equipment and inventory of its Cleveland-based welding electrode facility to The Lincoln Electric Company. The sale is effective immediately.

Under the terms of the agreement, Lincoln will continue to manufacture and market the electrode line under the Airco name, through Airco distributors. Prices will remain unchanged through the end of this year.

Your brand name exclusivity is protected under the terms of the agreement. Only Airco distributors will market the Airco line.

The Airco-Lincoln sale, in our judgment, offers Airco distributors new opportunities in the filler metals market which we believe will prove increasingly valuable. The product line will continue as is, avoiding the need for customer conversion. With Lincoln, you will be supported by a supplier of recognized excellence, and we believe you can look forward to a broad, competitively priced product line, which encompasses one of the best established names in the welding business.

We have transferred all unfilled orders to Lincoln for shipment. Within the next few days, you will receive a letter from Lincoln describing the procedures for future orders of the Airco product lines.

We strongly endorse Lincoln as your future supplier of Airco welding electrodes. If you have any additional questions, please contact your Airco Zone Vice President.

Very truly yours,

S. G. Dukas

Vice President & General Manager
Industrial Products

Airco / BOC sells bulk Nitrous business



Medical Gases
A Department of The BOC Group, Inc.

575 Mountain Avenue
Murray Hill
New Jersey 07974
Telephone: 201-464-8100

July 31, 1986

TO: Airco Welding Products Distributors
(Excluding California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah
Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii)

Airco Welding Products Personnel

SUBJECT: NITROUS OXIDE SUPPLY

Airco has reached an agreement to sell its bulk nitrous oxide business in your part of the U. S. to the Nitrous Oxide Corp. (NOC), a new subsidiary of Merco, Inc. All of the assets, facilities, customer stations and bulk customer contracts will be passed over to NOC effective July 31, 1986.

For distributors currently purchasing bulk nitrous oxide from Airco we believe this will provide you with a secure and competitive supplier in the long run. Your contracts with Airco will be honored by NOC.

For distributors currently purchasing cylinders from Airco, we will retain the nitrous oxide cylinder business within the existing Airco cylinder filling/redistribution operations. NOC will meet AWP's bulk nitrous oxide requirements through a long-term supply contract.

NOC has completed a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Donora, PA. (near Pittsburgh). Airco will operate the nitrous oxide plant in Cleveland for NOC during an initial transition period, but after that time, the Cleveland nitrous operations will close permanently. The Yazoo City plant will be taken over immediately by NOC and is expected to continue operating under NOC management.

Airco has an historical working relationship with NOC's parent, Merco, Inc. having sold the Jackson Products operation to Merco, Inc. in 1984. We would like the nitrous oxide relationship to be one of close cooperation and believe a smooth transition for our distributors is important.

Distributors currently supplied with bulk nitrous oxide will be contacted individually within the next couple of days, but if you have any queries, please contact your Zone Vice President.

Distributors currently supplied with nitrous oxide in cylinders from Airco will be unaffected by this announcement.

R. S. Grant
Vice President, Marketing

Airco / BOC sells gas apparatus business



AIRCO SELLS GAS APPARATUS BUSINESS TO CONCOA

MURRAY HILL, NJ, MARCH 7, 1987 -- Airco Distributor Gases, a division of The BOC Group, Inc., finalized the sale of its Virginia-based gas apparatus business to Controls Corporation of America (CONCOA), today, completing the industrial gas company's divestiture of its welding products business.

Under the terms of the sale, CONCOA will continue to manufacture the gas apparatus product line under the Airco brand name, marketing the products exclusively through the Airco Distributor network.

CONCOA, a newly formed investment group organized by former Airco employees, is headquartered at Virginia Beach, Virginia. CONCOA president, Sande G. Dukas was formerly Airco Vice President and General Manager Industrial Products.



Welding Products

Division of Airco, Inc.
575 Mountain Avenue
Murray Hill
New Jersey 07974
Telephone: 201-464-8100

David J. Daffey
President

October 3, 1983

*Mr. & Mrs. E. Boulter
267 Silver Road
Bangor, ME 04401*

Dear Ed & Evelyn:

On behalf of the Company, I wish to extend my thanks to you for the dedication, loyalty and cooperation J. J. Boulter & Sons, Inc. has given Airco over the past years. We feel honored to have had you as a Distributor since 1916. I hope that all your years as a member of the Airco family will provide you with many good memories.

The passing of time brings about changes, and although we will miss you, I wish you happiness and good luck on your retirement.

Sincerely,

jw

✓bcc: D. MacDonald

Notes

Although I've recognized many of the people that helped to tell this story, there are many more who contributed tidbits, but are not mentioned and for that I apologize. Although it's labeled a history, it's truly a story as there are instances from my and others' recollections along with papers, pictures & other documents which I have not footnoted. Recognition for the marvelous success of the company belongs to the many employees who worked tirelessly for many years. From its' inception on a wing and a prayer to the \$35,000,000 company it had become when I left in mid 2008, we can be proud of the accomplishments of all those who contributed.

Submitted: David Mac Donald

Picture below: May, 1991 for BOC Distributor Management Meeting, London, UK as Portland Welding honored as new member of \$100,000 club.



A few employee obituaries follow

Herbert M. Tyler
retired office manager for Portland concern

TOPSHAM — Herbert M. Tyler, 77, of 12 Haskell Circle, a former office manager at Portland Welding Supply Co., died Friday at a Brunswick hospital.

He was born in Dover-Foxcroft, a son of Orin H. and Miriam Glidden Tyler, moved to Portland as a child and graduated from Portland High School in 1935. He later graduated from Shaw's Business College there.

On June 6, 1946, he married Margaret Parker in Lewiston.

During World War II, he worked as an office manager at Industrial Development Corp., and later operated his own insurance company.

In 1963, he became office manager at Portland Welding Supply Co., retiring in 1981.

He and his wife moved here from Portland in 1988.

Besides his wife of Topsham, he is survived by three daughters, Kelly J. Tyler of Portland, Patricia Tyler Fullam of West Virginia and Carol Sheloske of Topsham; a son, John H. of Topsham; two brothers, Edward Tyler of Portland and Ammon Tyler of North Windham; two sisters, Ruth Manchester of North Windham and Nancy Murphy of Albuquerque, N.M.; and eight grandchildren.

A funeral will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday at Brackett Funeral Home, Brunswick, with the Rev. Jonathan B. Appleyard, rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, officiating. Burial will be in Evergreen Cemetery, Portland.

Hilton Wheeler

born: 1932-11-10

death: 1966-09-09

Name:



Leroy J. MACDONALD

Date of Death: Monday, 12 May 1986

Place of Death: Portland, Me.

Age: 78 years

Name: **Lawrence H. JONES**

Date of Death: Friday, 25 April 1980

Place of Death: Naples, Me.

Age: 30 years

JON A. BOULTER



Posted Sept. 25, 2008, at 11:19 p.m.

LEVANT — Jon Arthur Boulter, 51, passed away unexpectedly Jan. 24, 2008, at his home. Jon was born Oct. 1, 1956, the beloved son of Arthur Edward and Helen Alice (Sutton) Boulter. A lifelong resident of Bangor, Jon was educated in Bangor schools, graduating from Bangor High School in 1974. He attended the University of Maine, Orono and graduated in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science in business administration. After college and for a number of years, Jon worked along side of his father, grandparents and uncle in the family business, J.J. Boulter & Son, Inc. He worked for his father until his father's retirement and then assumed his position as operational manager. He subsequently worked in sales for the successor business, Bangor Welding Supply/Advantage Gases and Tools, until the time of his death. Jon excelled at sales and customer service, and was respected for his expertise. Jon was passionate about his hobbies and had many of them, from dirt bike riding in his younger years and cars to radio controlled boats and airplanes. He was also a storyteller of Maine proportions; few people could top his stories when he was on a roll. The love of his life was his family, especially his son, Jon James and his daughter, Jennifer Ann, whom he was very proud and he cherished them. All his family and his life partner meant a great deal to him. Jon is survived by his parents, Arthur and Helen of Bangor; daughter, Jennifer of Winterport; son, J.J. of Bangor; his life partner and friend, Susan Terrillion of Levant; sister, Karen Young and her spouse, Duane, of Bangor; brother, Dr. Joseph Boulter and his spouse, Dr. Avis Chen of Jacksonville, Fla.; brother, David of Augusta; uncle and aunt, William and Helen MacDonald; uncle and aunt, Robert and Judy Sutton of Quincy, Fla.; many cousins, nieces, nephews and friends. He is also survived by his former spouse, Jane Opel, the mother of his children. He was predeceased by his grandparents, Ed and Evelyn Boulter, and Robert and Gladys Sutton. Jon was loved by many, many people and will be sorely missed. Relatives and friends may call 2-4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 27, at Brookings-Smith, 133 Center St., Bangor. A private funeral service will be held Monday, Jan. 28. Burial will be at Mount Hope Cemetery, Bangor. Those wishing to remember Jon in a special way may contribute in his memory to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Komen Maine Affiliate, P.O. Box 1626, Bangor, ME 04402-1626. Condolences to the family may be expressed at www.BrookingsSmith.com.

