



Chief Manufacturing Woodbury Box Co. New Name Reflects Growth And Honors Founder

Chief Manufacturing of Thomaston, GA, has been making industrial mop hardware for the industry since the 1950s, and, until recently, under the name of **Woodbury Box Company**.

The company was founded in 1946 by the late **Bill and Evelyn Rudder**, who set up shop in **Woodbury, GA**, about 20 miles from Thomaston, to make wooden peach crates for peach farmers in the area.

As the market for wooden fruit boxes waned in the 1950s, Woodbury Box would manufacture other products such as corrugated boxes, rollers and beams for the textile industry and caskets. Meanwhile, the company also expanded its capacity by contracting assembly work of industrial mop hardware for the surrounding textile mills. Bill Rudder was successful in convincing the mills that Woodbury Box could produce the parts itself providing better quality and at less expense.

By 1965, Woodbury Box Company was producing a full line of industrial mop hardware components complete with a plated finish. In 1978, the company added its first injection molding machine to produce the plastic lock still found on the company's dust mop hardware today. During the next 30 years, more plastic injection molding machines were added to further increase the capacity and capabilities of the company.

In 1988, Bill and Evelyn Rudder's daughter, **Dr. Susan Hall**, took over the helm as CEO of Woodbury Box Company. She had spent her previous 14 years in education. Challenged with aging facilities and an electroplating system that was facing increasing government regulation, the decision was made to move the company to Thomaston. In 1994, the company opened for business in its new 65,000-square-foot facility. With the move, CNC wire bending machinery, robotic welders, computerized office software and, soon after, a five-stage powder coat system all replaced the processes of the past. With these new capabilities, the company increased its capacity to mass-produce wire and steel products to numerous markets outside its existing business.

In 1999, a third generation of family members became active in the business. Along with Hall, her children, **Kim Sidey**, who is head of the marketing department; **Matt Fuller**, who works in purchasing; and **Dan Fuller**, president of the company, are moving the company forward into a new era. As the company continued to redefine itself through increased capabilities and new markets, the time had finally come to put the name Woodbury Box Company to rest.

"We are not in Woodbury and we don't make boxes any longer," Dan Fuller said. "We have been told by some marketing firms to change our name. However, because our name was so established in this industry, we were reluctant to change. But, because of the Internet and search engine optimization, and because we are no longer in Woodbury and don't make boxes, it was time for a change."

In renaming the company, the family sought a name that would have meaning, but, at the same time, would remain appropriate as the company grows and evolves. For example, a name including a word such as 'mop' or 'wire' might indicate to people the company only makes mop or wire products.

"Because we have so many capabilities, not only in the broom and mop field, but also in other industries, we did not want to limit ourselves by our name," Dan Fuller said. "We wanted to come up with something fairly generic."

Why the name Chief Manufacturing? Dan Fuller explained: "My grandfather (Bill Rudder) was affectionately known as 'Chief' by all of his grandchildren. Our new name fit the purpose of giving the company a fairly generic name, and it is also a tribute to my grandfather."

Chief Manufacturing's Web site, www.chiefmanufacturing.net, is designed to promote the company's capabilities in any market. An additional Web site, www.chiefclean.net, is dedicated to Chief's industrial mop hardware line.

One of the company's new product lines is the Z-Force hands-free dust mop system.

"Our Z-Force dust mop line has been on the market for about three years and is doing extremely well," Dan Fuller said. "All the items in this line are patented or patent-pending. We redesigned the dust mop frame to become more durable and lighter weight to lower cost and save shipping expense. The Z clip connector is made of an indestructible resin that is more durable and less expensive than the metal head found throughout the market. Even more impressive, it is truly a hands-free application that requires no bending or kneeling when using the dust mop handle."

As many companies in the U.S. manufacturing sector have moved offshore in recent years, Chief Manufacturing has remained and prospers in the United States.

"Right now, perhaps more than any time in the past, we think it is important to stress that our products are still American made," Dan Fuller said. "We have become extremely competitive over the past four to five years against the import pricing as a result of some of our new designs and internal efforts to eliminate costs."

Located in the United States, Chief Manufacturing boasts it can ship an order the very next day if a customer has an emergency order. Another advantage to being a domestic manufacturer, Dan Fuller pointed out, has to do with cash flow issues, especially during these tough economic times.

"There are cash flow issues involved with importing. If you order containers from overseas, you are likely going to order a huge volume of merchandise that can strangle your cash flow and sit on your shelves for months. We warehouse many of the same goods here in the states that are American made and can be ordered in smaller quantities, freeing up one's cash flow," Dan Fuller said. "Also, we are proud we are still creating American jobs when so many other companies have chosen not to. Ingenuity, service and quality will continue to prove Americans can still manufacture goods and jobs."

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