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Masterbuilt: From Ornamental Ironworks To Leader in Outdoor Cooking

In 1973, Dawson McLemore founded an ornamental ironwork business in his backyard. Today, his sons John and Don own and run the company that continues to design, produce and market dozens of products to various industries after more than 30 years.

One thing that has remained constant through the years is the work ethic that Dawson instilled in his sons. Both John and Don began working in the business at an early age. Today, the Masterbuilt line comprises more than 75 products, including a complete range of outdoor cooking grills for backyard or camping, smokers, deep fryers and accessories, sauces, spices, marinades, auto cargo carriers and bike racks. The emphasis on the outdoors is not coincidental – Dawson and his sons are avid outdoorsmen.

Another aspect of the company that has remained the same, is the commitment to innovation, creativity, vision and good old-fashioned hard work. Recognizing that the marketplace is always changing, the company has excelled at adapting to ensure it produces products that appeal to today's consumers.

As a result, Masterbuilt has experienced tremendous growth, especially during the last few years. The McLemore brothers are business partners, best friends, and their particular skills complement one another perfectly.

John is president and chief executive officer while Don is vice president and chief operating officer. But the growth of the company has also required building an experienced management team to help oversee an expanded manufacturing facility, product research and development, augmented distribution and sales and significantly stepped-up marketing efforts.

The Masterbuilt emphasis on product innovation has led to many recent patents as the line was extended to meet consumer needs. Once known primarily for its propane gas products, the company has invested heavily in electric cooking appliances for consumers who love the convenience they offer both indoors and outdoors. These new products have met with great success in the marketplace.

First they introduced the Electric Veranda Grill, which has a very small footprint, and is a good choice for those with a small patio or deck. It also allows many of those living in multiple-unit town houses, condos and apartment dwellings that often restrict the type of barbecue equipment that is acceptable to still have a grill and enjoy outdoor cooking.

The Electric Turkey Fryer was the next electric product they tackled. It was an industry first, inspired by consumer concerns about the safety of traditional outdoor propane fryers. The electric version makes it safe, easy and convenient to fry a turkey right in the kitchen or in a protected outdoor area such as a screened-in porch or the garage. The fryer can also be used to steam food like lobster or crab and to do a seafood boil or cook up a big batch of corn on the cob. The newest models feature a digital control panel and an easy-to-use "Turkey Tap™" drain valve that makes it simple for users to drain oil or water out of the interior 28-quart aluminum pot.

Then came the Digital Electric Smokehouse, an outdoor refrigerator-style box smoker that features a digital control panel offering precise temperature and time control and an automatic shut-off feature – and it keeps food warm until it is removed.

However, the McLemores were not satisfied with simply increasing the number of new products they would market under their own brand name. They saw an opportunity they could not resist -- producing and marketing barbecue products that would bear one of the names most familiar to backyard barbecue chefs. Thus, the McLemores signed an exclusive licensing agreement with The Kingsford® Products Company to develop an extensive line of charcoal grills and smokers to be marketed under the Kingsford brand name. The products are available in stores nationwide. The McLemore brothers enjoy wide public acceptance of their products which can be found in home centers, mass merchants, and hardware, sporting goods, department and specialty stores. They are recognized in the industry for their accomplishments, as well as by their home community of Columbus, Georgia. The brothers, who are both accomplished outdoor chefs, serve as media spokespersons for Masterbuilt, and on a number of occasions they have served as industry spokespersons on national, regional and local TV, including ESPN, Fox News, TNN, CNN and Comcast cable.

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