

Employee Spotlight: Carla Steele



Carla's official "title" is receptionist at General Films. But that is just the beginning of the start of the story. Carla is not only the friendly voice at the end of the phone but the lady who really is the "Jack" or in this case "Jill" of all trades. Carla is instrumental in tracking, costing, accounts receivable

and production reporting. She started her General Films career in 1999 and now has over ten years of dedicated service. During her free time, Carla enjoys reading, fishing and watching deer at the back of her farm.



- Record levels of PE resin exports (weak dollar) coupled with constrained North American polymer production continue to support price level.
- Crude oil's move to \$80/barrel is also bullish to PE pricing.
- While domestic demand remains poor, producers remained very determined to support pricing.
- Result is surprising four cent increase in September price and additional announced pricing actions of 5 cents and now, 3 cents per pound.
- Bottom line; flat pricing at best, and with lower dollar and/or higher oil, further upward moves.

Horizontal Form Fill Seal (HFFS) Machines Provide Unique Food Packaging Solutions



Image courtesy of www.multivac.com

Horizontal Form Fill Seal (HFFS) machines (also known as horizontal, thermoform, fill, seal machines) are designed to package luncheon meats, hot dogs, rising crust pizza and other food products. Users can configure these versatile machines to make a

variety of packages per cycle, and produce food pouches of various sizes and depths by changing the sealing and cutting dies.

Plastic films for use with HFFS equipment include a base, or forming, film that is drawn through the machine in which a heated metal die thermoforms a pocket. The food product is then manually or automatically inserted into the pocket. Next, the package is sealed around the edges by applying a top, or non-forming, film onto the base web. Then a knife or die-cutting device separates the pouches. This process

lends itself equally well to vacuumed hard pack products, such as hot dogs, and MAP gas flushed pillow packs for shaved meat and other applications.

In addition to the medium to high barrier films most commonly used on HFFS machines, certain applications may require low barrier and permeable (gas sterilized) films. However, typical films use nylon laminations or coextrusions with polyethylene, while high barrier versions use EVOH or coatings to reduce gas permeation. Base webs, which must allow for thinning during the thermoforming process, are usually 4 to 6 mils thick. Top webs may be as thin as 2 to 3 mils.

If you are a food processor or an HFFS machine manufacturer, General Films is happy to provide special considerations to develop and test film products for your specific equipment. Often H1/BW is used as a forming layer and VF/1M for non-forming webs. Please contact John Annarino for more information.

How Roy Weikert Created General Films, Inc.

This story is about curiosity. The kind that sets visionary entrepreneurs apart from other business people. It's also about a family business, innovation, tenacity and a 25-cent steam tank (more about that later). Mostly, this is the story of General Films, Inc. founder Roy Weikert who, at age 96, walks 4 miles each day for exercise, plays the stock market for fun and profit, and is Chairman of the Board of the company he began in 1938.

Covington, Ohio based General Films, Inc. serves a wide range of industries with custom extruded film solutions, bag-in-box systems and industrial packaging. But the company began with a young Roy Weikert, his new fedora and a jar of Brilliantine.

In 1935, discontented with the effects of the Great Depression, Roy decided to leave his 10-cents-per-hour job in a Covington, Ohio grocery store and head west. Driving a 1929 Buick loaded with outdoor gear, Roy and two friends set out to camp their way across the country. Eventually the friends opted to hitchhike home, but Roy pushed on to Salt Lake City before heading back and finding himself in Davenport, Iowa with 40 cents in his pocket. There he landed a job as a stock boy in an F. W. Woolworth store. He quickly impressed the store manager who helped him advance in the company, and eventually become an assistant store manager in Winona, Minnesota.

Although grateful for such opportunities during the Depression, Roy always felt the desire to have his own business. His first attempt, with one of his Davenport boarding house neighbors, was to try his hand at making and selling candy. Fortunately, he kept his day job. Then, one day, in Winona Roy bought a new felt hat. Like many young men, Roy used a pomade called Brilliantine to give his hair the neat and shiny look made popular by the movie stars of the day. However, Roy found that the greasy residue from the product coated the inside of his hat. While visiting his family in Covington in 1938, Roy set out to develop a solution to this hat problem.

At Woolworth, Roy had become familiar with a number of products such as rain bonnets, umbrellas and rain capes made from a new plastic material, Pliofilm, that was a great improvement over its predecessor, Cellophane. He decided to see if he could use this new material to protect the inside of hats. During his 2-week vacation, Roy handcrafted a hat liner of Pliofilm and sewed a stainless steel wire into the hem. The wire snapped under the sweatband to hold the liner in place. When he set out to market his creation to retail hat buyers in nearby Dayton, he found an even greater interest in Pliofilm covers that could protect hats during shipment and storage.

Sensing an opportunity, Roy took a leave of absence from Woolworth and, with his life savings of \$600, set out to reinvent the hat cover business.

He hitchhiked to Akron to learn more about Pliofilm from the manufacturer, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, and then convinced a hat-maker in Piqua to lend him some hat forms on which he could shape the covers. Finally, he found a steam tank for 25-cents and some other scrap items that he used to stretch the material. Soon he perfected the hat covers and made his first sale of \$6.00. Roy reinvested to automate the process and soon was pumping out hat covers day and night on three specially designed machines.

Then came World War II. Pliofilm was made from rubber, and available supplies of that material were needed for the war effort. Roy's business ground to a halt about the time he was called into service with the Army Medical Corps. When he was discharged after the war, a number of things had changed. For one, the men's hat business began to decline. Additionally a new plastic film, Polyethylene, appeared that had several advantages over Pliofilm, including the ability to protect items from ultraviolet light rays. This characteristic made it ideal for use in food packaging, especially, for dairy products. Roy had some experience with the dairy industry prior to closing down for the war, when he packaged rubber tubes used with 5-gallon milk containers.

With his brother, Wayne, now joining him in the business, Roy's curiosity turned to how the polyethylene film might apply to the dairy industry. He soon found that both the dairies and government health agencies disliked the metal cans in which milk was then shipped. Roy wondered how he could adapt the new plastic film for transporting milk products. Then he discovered a bag-and-box system used to transport battery acid. This led Roy to design a bag-and-box system for milk, ice cream mixes and other dairy products.

By the 1960's General Films began manufacturing its own plastic film, which allowed the company to more easily



Roy during one of his daily 4 mile walks at age 96!

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create customized products to address a variety of customer packaging and protection issues. Steady growth through the early 1970s prompted the company to build a second facility to compliment the Covington plant. Over the next few years, however, the nation suffered from severe inflation, an oil embargo and a failing economy. These pressures coupled with the debt load from the new facility forced the company to reorganize. The Sidney facility was sold, key personnel – some family members – left to start another business, and Roy and Wayne retrenched in Covington.

In the years that followed, the company expanded into additional markets and developed new products, fueled by Roy's insatiable curiosity and inventiveness. Along the way, others joined the family business, most notably Roy's nephew and Wayne's son, Tim Weikert, the current CEO of General Films, Inc.

"I can't remember not being around this business," Tim recalls. "It's always been a part of my life, and Roy was always here dreaming up new products and solving technical problems. His many patents and innovations have allowed us to move into a variety of markets and solve myriad problems for our customers. In fact, one of his greatest contributions may be that he created a company culture that encourages all of us to be creative, look for new opportunities and tackle any application challenges that come our way."

"Certainly our greatest asset is our employees – some with over 40 years of experience – who make sure our customers get the best solutions possible, on time and on budget."

"Perhaps Roy's other legacy is that there are more than a half-dozen businesses that spun off from General Films, Inc. These companies were started by former employees and some family members who took what they learned here and applied it to their own enterprises."

All this from a 25-cent steam tank, a \$2.95 felt hat, and a jar of Brilliantine. Oh, yes: and the curiosity and inventiveness of a young man from rural Ohio.

Chronology: Roy Weikert & General Films, Inc.

- **October 22, 1913:** Roy Weikert is born near Arcanum, Ohio
- **1925:** Weikert family moves to Covington, Ohio
- During the Great Depression, Roy works in a grocery store earning 10 cents per hour
- **1935:** Roy decides to head west with 2 friends. They load up a 1929 Buick with camping gear. Roy ends up in an F. W. Woolworth store in Davenport, Iowa
- **1938:** Roy develops hat liners and hat covers made from Pliofilm
- **1943:** Roy enters the U.S. Army to serve in World War II
- **1947:** Following the war, Roy restarts his business in Covington with his brother, Wayne
- **1950s -1960s:** As the hat business declines, Roy investigates other opportunities, including bag-and-box systems for dairies.
- **1960s:** General Films begins making its own plastic film
- Early 1970s: Roy builds a second factory in Sidney, Ohio
- **Late 1970s:** Inflation, business fall-off and debt force the company into reorganization. The Sidney facility is sold off and the company retrenches in Covington
- **1980 – present:** General Films, Inc. grows through product innovations and expansion into new markets. Today Roy, age 96, remains Chairman of the Board while his nephew, Tim Weikert operates the company as CEO

**General
Films, Inc.**

INNOVATIONS IN PACKAGING

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