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MASTER WALL ^{INC}
20th Anniversary
Building a Culture of Excellence

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Steve Smithwick, president and founder of Master Wall, Inc., poses with the company's first mixer, used when the firm was founded 20 years ago. Today, the firm has two manufacturing facilities with a national distribution network.

Building a “Culture of Excellence”

As Master Wall, Inc. prepares to celebrate its 20th anniversary, it is unveiling a new company slogan, “Building a Culture of Excellence,” that will soon appear in all of its advertising and products.

“We intend for this ‘Culture of Excellence’ slogan to be reflected inside our company and out in the field with our people and our products,” explained Steve Smithwick, founder and president of the 48-employee firm that today boasts a national distribution network served by two manufacturing facilities.

For those who have dealt with Master Wall since its humble beginnings in 1987, it’s clear that a “Culture of Excellence” has been at the heart of the company all along, and has been a major reason for its steady growth.

“We’ve had a dip here and there over the years, but almost every year our sales have increased by 5, 6, 7, or 8 percent, to as high as 30 percent,” Smithwick said, noting that a stable staff and strong relationships with customers have been major factors in the company’s success. “We like to say that we consider ourselves

Master Wall Founder Proud of 20 Years of Success in EIFS and Stucco **By Jay McNally**

large enough to meet your needs and small enough to remember your name. We have a great staff, and we could never do what we’ve done without them. Nearly a fourth of our employees have been with us 10 years or more and we are very proud

of that. We take care of our people.”

He also attributes Master Wall’s success to its Mission Statement. “We stress that we are a faith-based company, not religious, but spiritually based and spiritually conscious. We are American-owned and privately held. You’d be amazed at how many people see that in our Mission Statement and are impressed. They can hang their hat on our integrity and honesty in doing business.”

Smithwick hails from a manufacturing family. His dad was a plant superintendent for General Motors in Lakewood, near Atlanta, Ga., and after he attended Southern Technical Institute (now Polytechnical) he worked for a company owned by RJ Reynolds, specializing in flavors and fragrances.

After spending seven years as a plant manager for a major EIFS and stucco manufacturer, Smithwick formed Master Wall at the urging of some friends in the industry. At the firm’s founding were others who had extensive experience in the industry, including Billy Joe





Master Wall products are used on both new and old buildings throughout the United States.



Master Wall's original mixer, shown at left, produced only three pails per batch and was operated only during the night shift. Today's state-of-the-art machinery (at right) is able to produce thousands of pails of product in a single shift.



Donaldson and Elton Palmer. Those who helped but were unrelated to the industry are his father, Gerald Smithwick, John Bonner and Steve Davis. Those playing a critical role in growing the business the past 10 years include: General Manager, Mike Irving; Technical Manager, Dennis Deppner; Controller, Mark Walker; and Steve's son, Steven Smithwick, sales.

The company started in a 5,000-square-foot plant in Lithonia, Ga., then opened a corporate facility in nearby Columbus, Ga., both of which now occupy a total of 60,000 square feet.

Master Wall met with success from the start, as it focused on residential and commercial construction in the Southeastern United States, providing products for the EIFS and stucco industries, always expanding and adapting to new challenges.

Today, the firm manufactures an extensive line of exterior and interior coatings and systems, including EIFS, Drainage Systems, One-Coat Stucco,

Portland Cement Plaster (stucco) and Elastomeric Coatings. It backs up its sales with back-room technical assistance and plan reviews.

"We've always bragged that we have one of the highest levels of acrylic solids in our finishes in the industry. We've called them our Superior Finish line for 20 years," Smithwick said.

Finish coat sales account for between 35 and 38 percent of the firm's annual volume and Smithwick is especially pleased with the market acceptance of the new Vintique Antique Coating stucco stain, which simulates century-old plaster.

"We create products necessary for us to compete, and we do well in wall systems, hard-coat with wire lath, and water management systems. We have half a dozen systems to serve the market in these areas. Our products are as good as anyone else's, if not better."

Smithwick doesn't hesitate for a moment when asked what his best

memory is of the two decades since he founded Master Wall. "Certainly, when we opened our plant in Payson, Utah, that was a very happy day," he said. That memory is followed closely by the satisfaction of "adding some very large companies to our distributors list. Some of these are well-known heavy hitters, along with specialty building supply companies." Today Master Wall has 90 distributor locations.

Smithwick sees strong growth ahead for the EIFS and stucco industry in the United States and fully expects Master Wall to continue to be an important player in that growth. As he looks back on his own 27 years in the business, he's convinced that Master Wall is well positioned for the next 20 years.

"We survived the ups and downs in a sometimes tumultuous industry and we've got a great staff that has been building a real Culture of Excellence. We see great things ahead," he said. **W&C**

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