

From Our Founder

Greetings to Everyone at J.N. White Designs!!



Did you notice the date 1960 on our corporate stickers? It reads "Since 1960." That means the company started in 1960. Well...not exactly. You just don't press a button on, say, June 1, 1960 and have everything in place. People, machines, buildings, materials, and know-how have to be developed over time.

Here is how Designs really started, a behind the scenes look. It took 10 years of uncertainty. There was fear of not making it, of doing jobs over for free, of making labels from materials that never existed before and of taking gambles.

Between 1950-1960, my main job at Champion Products was drawing designs for T-shirts for colleges and resorts. I developed the first photo screen process for Champion by squeegee-coating the fabric with a light sensitive emulsion. Screens were exposed to sunlight or to a bank of 48" fluorescent tubes.

In my home, I printed pressure sensitive labels and POP cards for Robeson Cutlery and others. I tried, under the name of J.N. White Designs, to sell screened pictures to gift stores for resale. I tried selling my services as an artist to advertising departments. I failed. I took a correspondence course in commercial art and oil painted calendar cheese-cake. I failed to sell any of my works. Becoming a sign painter and learning how to handle a brush with great dexterity, I hand lettered panel trucks. To make matters worse, as the decade proceeded, my Champion working hours were sadly cut to 20 hours a week.

So I had to find additional employment as a product designer for Jerry Moberg at Robeson Cutlery during the hours when I wasn't at Champion. I designed huge cutlery displays for Chicago's Housewares Shows. We designed and built smaller cutlery displays for stores like J.C. Penney and Nieman-Marcus in the building now occupied by the offices of J.N. White Designs. This experience refined my respect for detail and quality because Japan, at the time, copied everything we made in America but made it better and cheaper. So we designers had to be on our toes to beat the competition by putting a halt to the manufacture of shabby merchandise or we would wallow in our own incompetence.

I learned that you couldn't be a salesman, a manufacturer and an accountant at the same time. So I searched for a company that had a sales force to sell my products. Suddenly I struck gold finding the connection I needed.

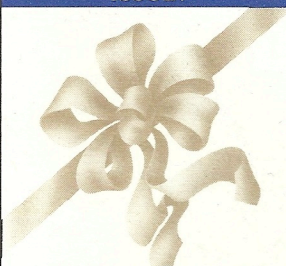
At the age of 36, in 1960, I joined Allen Bailey, a printing company in Caledonia, and served as an artist and an assistant to the sales manager.

They made paper tags with a hole and a string. Paper tags were the chief means of identifying products on the market. In 1960, pressure sensitive labels were practically nonexistent. I recognized the need for labeling products like lawn mowers with labels made from weather resistant vinyl, aluminum and mylar. At sales meetings, I introduced my products to the dozen salesmen fanned out into New York State and sold what I could produce in my garage in Perry on weekends and evenings. Business boomed. Marty Benzinger was one of these salesmen who first sold lexan nameplates with mirror image printing.

By the time I was 48, I quit the printing company in 1972 and opened my own business in the old Perry Knitting Company on Water Street. Bob and Andrea Dudzic and Lynn Wood were the first persons to take a gamble that we would survive. The place where we worked was unfit for a screen printing company as I envisioned it. The roof leaked. The overhead water pipes burst one cold winter night and flooded our work space. We had to burn wood in George Traber's office fireplace to keep warm. We stayed there for 5 years. Lynn made sure that UPS picked up every day. Then we move in 1977 to our present location, which was Robeson's wood shop, when Pokie Penner, Marideth Lewis and Carol McClurg and a couple more came on board.

I have been wanting to say this to you for a long time. You are all to be congratulated for carrying on the quality banner to heights I never dreamed were possible. With Randy and Sue at the helm, you are in good hands. Thank you for keeping the faith. You have made my dream of excellence come true.

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Happy



Holidays