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Weil-McLain: Celebrating 50 years in Canada

When Weil-McLain sold its first boiler in Canada, Elvis was topping the charts, and the average cost of a new car was \$2,200. Plenty else has changed in the five decades since, including how Canadians heat their homes, but Weil-McLain Canada has held fast to its commitments of exceptional service and putting customers first.

Since taking over the reins of the Canadian Weil-McLain office in 2002 as co-owners of Weil-McLain Canada Sales Inc., Bill Palamar and John Goshulak have continued to watch the company grow as a result of these commitments, and delivering innovative products and dependable service – the foundations of the Weil-McLain Canada name and brand.

Weil-McLain: 1959 to 2002

As Weil-McLain Canada's longest-reigning employee, Paul McKay has been in a prime position to watch Weil-McLain Canada grow from its modest distributor roots to a burgeoning and successful national company. His long and varied tenure with Weil-McLain Canada spans the company's entire half-century history, starting in 1959.

At the time Paul worked for Ferrous Products, a division of Emco Ltd., overseeing heating layouts across Canada. "This was when I was first introduced to Weil-McLain products," says Paul. "I believe Emco and Weil-McLain had a working agreement (partner company) that lasted up until about 1962 or 1963."

In 1962/63, the company's name changed to Weil-McLain Canada Limited and the partnership with Emco ended. The company itself was strictly distribution-focused until the late 1960s/early 70s when it took on some manufacturing and machine work and assembled residential boilers.

"The company was certainly much smaller than it is now – a close-knit family. It was the people who made it a family. Some of my fondest memories are of the relationships I had with coworkers," says Paul. "We had good times both on and off the job, hosting open houses for customers, and parties and barbecues for staff at Christmas, Easter, whenever."

Filling in whenever he was needed, Paul continued to change gears at Weil-McLain, becoming in turn a sales rep, sales rep/manager, manager of marketing and customer services, and overseeing shipping, receiving and production. In 1997, he became second-in-command of Canadian operations until a corporate downsizing occurred in 2001 and he retired. The downsizing also marked a new beginning for the company: in 2002 Weil-McLain struck up a master distribution agreement with Bill Palamar and John Goshulak to form Weil-McLain Canada Sales Inc.

Paul continues to work part-time for Weil-McLain Canada, consulting on a number of projects. He feels the company's continued success is due strongly to its customer commitment: "Whatever it takes to satisfy the contractor, engineer or homeowner – Weil-McLain Canada backs up everything they sell. The company was built on this kind of family-type relationship and it still is today. Customers know that Weil-McLain Canada has been there for 50 years and is going to continue to be there for them for another 50 years. They can rely on the name and the products."

Weil-McLain: 2002 to present

“Our Canadian headquarters are staffed by those who live and work in this country and have first-hand knowledge of Canada’s demanding weather,” says John Goshulak, Vice-President, Sales and Marketing. “We’re in the best position to both understand and deliver what Canadian residents and companies want and need – a comfortable indoor environment.”

The company’s ongoing passion for listening to its customers and delivering what they need is part of why Weil-McLain Canada continues to demonstrate strong leadership and success. The company also keeps an eye on industry developments, actively participating in many industry associations like CIPH, HRAI, and COHA, as well as various technical committees at CSA as spokespersons representing the boiler industry to the rest of the heating industry.

“One of our core strengths is the depth of our resources and personnel. The majority of our team has 20+ years of experience. Paul himself has 50 years and I recently surpassed 25 years. That is an incredible knowledge resource for our customers – a lot of competency in technical support, product integration and system understanding.”

Since joining Weil-McLain in 2002, John has also had opportunity to watch the company grow and adapt to changing needs – particularly the shift in product efficiencies from mid to high-efficiency, and from non-condensing to condensing technology. “We continue to focus on being innovative and staying ahead. We’ve put together a dynamic and passionate crew to deliver this.”

Over the last 50 years Weil-McLain Canada has strived to be at the forefront of product development says Goshulak. “We were among the first to launch high-efficiency products. And we’re always right in the thick of things like steering through codes, building requirements and certifications. We meet with the federal government on efficiency guidelines and the provincial governments on their specific requirements. It can be daunting at times, but it’s always rewarding.”

In addition to expanded training capabilities at the Weil-McLain head office in the United States, Weil-McLain Canada has also opened a new training facility at their Burlington office to offer hands-on, live-fire training sessions and additional value for customers.

“We’re constantly looking for new ways to add value for those who choose Weil-McLain. We hold customer appreciation events, luncheons and yearly promotions like the free boots program that is currently running. We also set sail earlier this year on our first Canadian customer appreciation cruise celebrating 50 years in Canada, with 50 of our top contractors and representatives.”

The new year is already shaping up to be a busy one for Weil-McLain Canada. The Ultra Commercial Boiler will be launched shortly, as will as a retooled Ultra Series 3 Residential Boiler with significant efficiency improvements. “We’re already in step with delivering the newest technology and we’re not looking to slow down – the last 50 years have seen tremendous growth and we’re looking to keep that going for the next 50 years.”

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