





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H. Gardiner Inc.

By *Melissa Kvidahl* -- *Gifts and Dec*, 10/1/2007 12:00:00 AM

This year, H. Gardiner Inc. is celebrating its 60th anniversary as a sales and service organization. With a permanent showroom in the Dallas Trade Mart in place since the mart opened in 1960, this family-owned firm has a strong foothold in the gift industry. *Gifts & Decorative Accessories* spoke with Judy Gardiner Louden, principal of H. Gardiner Inc., about how the company has changed and developed since its inception.

Gifts & Decorative Accessories: What was the product line like when you started?

Judy Gardiner Louden: It was greeting cards, stationery and stationery-related products. Dad had one line in the '50s called Picture Craft, which was one of the first paint-by-numbers kits. I can remember having to sit around the TV to wait for the ad that was coming on. He represented Samuel Ward, which produced albums. We had T.V. Allen stationery for 40 years, till it was bought by Crane. It's always been stationery and stationery-related products.

GDA: What's your product line like now? Do you find that it changes frequently, or do you try to maintain consistency?

JGL: We still have stationery, stationery-related products, general gifts and kids' things. When I talk to manufacturers, I tell them that we specialize in moderate to better product. We don't do well with items that might show up in the mass market. I've ceased to think in terms of numbers of lines. For an independent rep firm, it's important to have enough to get a buyer's attention. So we think in terms of packages.

GDA: What was your biggest challenge?

JGL: We had to look within ourselves to survive after Midwest left because it was 70 percent of our business. I had six reps that were only selling Midwest, and all of a sudden we didn't need them anymore. You have to be kind of like an accordion; you have to grow and shrink with opportunities.

GDA: Are there any significant changes in the way you do business compared to when you first started?

JGL: The Internet is changing a lot. Manufacturers email images to the reps. It's a good thing, since we used to have to wait for a printed catalogue or a sales sheet.

GDA: How do you expect to grow in the future?








JGL: We have to be on the lookout for new products and manufacturers who understand what it is they need to do in order to be successful, and who are willing to work with the sales reps in the field during good and frustrating times.

GDA: How are you celebrating your 60th anniversary?

JGL: Just what we do every day: trying to help our manufacturers and our customers succeed. For us it's always been a work in progress.

This is the sixth in a series of articles honoring gift industry companies that have been in business for several decades and, like Gifts & Decorative Accessories, are celebrating a milestone anniversary this year.

Sixty years ago, just after World War II, Howard Gardiner joined a greeting card company and started traveling Texas and Oklahoma as a sales representative. Not long after, he started his own firm traveling the same territories. And it wasn't long before the business became a family affair. With his wife tending to their 1,100 square-foot showroom at the Dallas Trade Mart, Howard looked to his son, Bruce, and his daughter, Judy, to "treat it like the army and do it for two years" to see if they enjoyed the work. Needless to say, H. Gardiner Inc. is alive and well throughout Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and New Mexico, now under the watchful eyes of co-principals Bruce and Judy. And their original square footage at the Dallas Market Center is still a part of the almost 5,000 square feet they occupy today.

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