

2017 Hall of Fame Inductees

BOB AND FRAN JERMAIN, Pocono Sew & Vac

Robert (Bob) Jermain: May 10, 1943 -
Frances (Fran) Jermain: September 16, 1951 -

To describe the success of Bob and Fran Jermain in the Sew and Vac industry, one word comes to mind: Partnership. Bob first started with The Singer Company in 1969 as an Outside Salesman. "Back then we would carry a machine into a customer's home to demonstrate it," says Bob. "I had the backseat of my 1962 Nova removed just so I could make deliveries!" In 1972, he was promoted to Store Manager where he met his wife Fran, and then District Sales Manager in 1974, running the prestigious Rockefeller Center Flagship store.

After Singer announced the closing of its retail stores, the couple decided to build their own retail business together, one that would meet the wants and needs of customers like nothing else before. Bob and Fran purchased the Stroudsburg Singer Store in October 1979, located on Main Street in downtown Stroudsburg overlooking the beautiful Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania.

In the early years of business at Pocono Sew and Vac, Fran repaired the vacuums and Bob, the sewing machines. With their dedication and knowledge of the market, sales rapidly increased, more employees were hired, and one store grew to four. In 1994, the couple moved to a new 12,000 sq. ft. location that carries some 10 brands of sewing machines and almost as many vacuum brands plus an extensive fabric department. Bob and Fran feel Pocono Sew & Vac's success is due to having great employees, many of whom have been with them for years. Also, store managers Fred and Paul Bombicca have been instrumental in promoting the business, making it the elite dealership it is today.

"We can think of no finer representative of the best our industry has to offer. Lifetime partners who started a small home-grown business to one of the top dealers in the U.S. exemplify what every dealer should strive to be," says John Ryan, Director of Business Development for Janome America. Living by the motto, "The customer is King," Bob and Fran both agree that success in today's retail environment doesn't come automatically; it takes hard work, dedicated employees, and excellent customer service.



JEFF BRAY, Brother International

February 1, 1970 -

Jeff Bray was born in 1970 in Amelia, Ohio to Jane Bray, a home economics teacher and Frank Bray, an award-winning salesman for the Singer Sewing Machine Company. Being born into the sewing world, it was natural that he would find his passion and calling in the sewing industry. At 16 years old, Jeff started pushing a broom and fixing sewing machines at his father's dealership in New Jersey. Even at that young age, he was bitten by the sewing bug. For a summer job, he would travel throughout New Jersey fixing sewing machines in local schools.

After graduating from the University of Dayton in 1992 with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, he took a job with Singer Sewing Machines as District Sales Manager for the New York metropolitan area. In 1995, Jeff was transferred to Nashville as their mid-south Regional Manager. He was offered a promotion to head the entire Dealer Division for Singer in 1997, becoming the youngest Senior Executive in sewing history.

Never one to shy away from adventure, Jeff left his position, moved to Ireland, married his Irish sweetheart Amanda, but quickly found he was missing the sewing industry. Upon moving back to the U.S., Jeff started a family and a new business. Concentrating on the sales of sewing machines and vacuums, he became a Brother, Singer, Janome, and Tacony dealer, and in the ensuing 10 years sold over 200,000 sewing machines.

In 2013 when Jeff was offered an opportunity to join the Dealer Division at Brother, he jumped at the chance. He is proud to now lead the Brother Dealer Division with the most innovative products, creative marketing, and the best sales team in the country. His love for this industry is reflected in his positive attitude, his desire for dealers to succeed and grow, and his gratefulness to be part of a team that's taking sewing to the next level. For all of his accomplishments, he is most proud of being a good father, loving husband, and loyal friend.



RICHARD GRUNEWALD, SVP Worldwide

February 21, 1948 -

Richard Grunewald was born February 21, 1948 in Grosse Point, Michigan and gained his start in the Vac and Sew industry in 1987 when he was hired by Electrolux/White Consolidated Industries, the owners of Husqvarna Viking and White Sewing Machine Company. Starting his career as a Regional Sales Manager for the state of Michigan, he soon expanded his management into Indiana. In fact, Richard served as Regional Sales Manager for Husqvarna Viking and White Sewing Machines for 21 years and continued in the same position with SVP Worldwide since 2007 with Singer, Husqvarna Viking, and Pfaff Sewing Machines. Today, Richard lives in Macomb, Michigan and is responsible for the Midwest states of Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio for SVP Worldwide.

Prior to joining Electrolux/White Consolidated Industries, Richard was an ad account representative for Michigan Snowmobile, ad account representative for Sealy Mattress Co, area representative for the Dixie furniture group, independent representative for Desoto Furniture Co, and from 1984-1986 owned and operated The Office Deli and Restaurant in Southfield, Michigan.

While many people shaped Richard's path, he credits three people in particular for molding his beliefs and helping him reach his goals. Bengt Gerborg, President and Stan Ingraham, Vice President of Husqvarna Viking and White Sewing Machines allowed Richard the freedom to be creative and offered him the tools of success. Dale Houghtaling, owner of Viking Sewing Center in Ann Arbor, MI also taught Richard the view and needs of the retail sewing machine dealer, which he has carried forward since beginning in this industry.

Over the past 30 years, Richard has received numerous awards, including Salesman of the Year 1976, Sealy Mattress Co; Excellent Sale Performance, Husqvarna Viking/White 1987; Increased Sales Award 1988; Consistency in Excellence Award 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003; Runner-up Salesman of the Year 1993, 1994, 1995; Salesman of the Year, Husqvarna Viking/White 1992, 1996, 1999, 2005; and Salesman of the Year, SVP Worldwide 2008, 2015.

Richard is married to wife, Patricia, who is an avid sewer and inspires him daily; father to two children; and a grandfather of five. When asked words of advice, he lives by the following: Be a great listener, live by the sunset rule in returning calls, and follow through with your ideas as creatively as possible.



STEVE JEFFERY, Tacony Corporation / Baby Lock USA

March 9, 1958 -

Steven Jeffery began his career in the sewing business in 1976 as a stock boy in a Tacony retail store. In 1980 he took over as manager of one of the Tacony stores, and in 1983 he purchased that same store and became a sewing retailer with the opening of the Jeffery Sewing and Vacuum Center.

In 1989, Steve was offered a job in Tacony's Technical Service Department as Manager. From there, he rose through the ranks as Product Manager, Marketing Manager, Senior Product Development Manager, and Vice President of Product Development. In 1999 he became President of Baby Lock USA.

In 2006 he joined the Tacony Chief Executive Council as Senior Vice President of the Sewing Division, managing Baby Lock, Koala, Tacony Sewing Central, and Nancy's Notions Retail. For the past 26 years, his travels have taken him to the top sewing factories in the world with one goal in mind: bringing the latest and best products to market for Tacony retailers while staying on top of industry trends.

Outside of Tacony, Steve has served as a member and advisor on several boards including the International Quilt Market Board, the Sewing Advisory Board, the National Sewing Council, Home Sewing Association, Fontbonne University St. Louis, and *Classic Sewing Magazine*. He is also a past recipient of awards such as the Industry Appreciation Award from the American Sewing Guild, the Best Contributor to the Sewing Industry Award by the American Sew Expo, and most recently the Best Partner Award from the Baby Lock Serger Factory in 2016.

Steve is honored, grateful, and humbled by the countless opportunities and experiences he has had. Working side by side with an amazing Tacony sewing team, the Tacony family, and world-class vendors both domestic and around the globe in addition to building many friendships and customers have made his career a memorable experience and rewarding journey.



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PAT AND BRIDGET MULQUEEN, Mulqueen Sewing Centers

The story of Pat and Bridget's journey in the Sewing Industry began, in fact, across the sea. Born in Ireland, Pat Mulqueen immigrated to the United States and took his first job with the Museum of Natural History in New York City. His tenure with the Singer Sewing Company began in 1963 when he became a Singer Sales Representative, still in New York. When a position with the company became available in Phoenix, he took a chance and moved to the expanding American Southwest.

In 1977, Pat opened his first retail store in the region, which is also when his wife, Bridget, took a place beside him in the industry. At the store together, Pat and Bridget never hesitated to get involved in any aspect of the business to better understand their market and cater to customers. As the years passed and their family grew, Pat and Bridget raised their three sons – Ken, Keith, and Darren – to have a hand in the business, adapting the company to change and taking advantage of the newest technologies. "Together we have made Mulqueen Sewing Centers a top 10 dealer for many brands. We are so proud of our parents," say their sons.

Known as The Lake Sewing Centers for many years, Pat and Bridget changed the company name to Mulqueen Sewing Centers more recently in 2007. Recalling their start-up years, the Mulqueen family appreciates each other's commitment to growing such an outstanding legacy. They operate three successful stores across Arizona in the cities of Chandler, Glendale, and Mesa. In fact, customers often to refer to Mulqueen's East Mesa 14,000 sq. ft. store as "a sewing Disneyland" that attracts sewists from far away and leaves them in wonder. When you shop at Mulqueen Sewing Centers, you will find dozens of machines, over 20,000 bolts of fabric, over 20,000 sq. ft of notions plus lines of cabinets and vacuums.

Pat and Bridget have received many awards over the years such as: #1 dealer for Singer; Top 10 dealer for Janome, Brother, and Pfaff; and a top dealer for Gammill, Handi Quilter, and Juki as well. For over 30 years, they have traveled the world as winners of incentive trips from many major brands, but also have loved connecting with other dealers, leading discussions that help everyone grow.



KEN CHAMZUK, Best Built-in Centre Ltd

August 1, 1945 -

With 34 years of experience in the vacuum business, Ken Chamzuk stands as one of the biggest proponents of independent retailers. Prior to joining the central vacuum industry, Ken worked at Hudson Bay Company, one of the fastest-growing department store retailers in the world, for fifteen years. However, Ken moved closer to the independent channel in 1983 as friend and owner of BEAM Canada, Paul Muser, presented him the opportunity to set up the BEAM B.C. Division.

For the next ten years with the help of wife Diane, Ken served as BEAM of Canada-B.C. General Manager, and in 1993 purchased the Vancouver retail store from BEAM Canada and established his company: Best Built-in Center Ltd. In the following years, he purchased stores in N. Vancouver, Coquitlam, and finally a Surrey location in 2008.

Ken and Best Built-in have earned many awards through the years, including Largest BEAM Dealer and Dealer of the Year several times. He credits his success to three people in particular, which include John Cogan, Paul Muser, and wife Diane to whom he has been married 48 years. Ken and Diane have three children, two of whom joined the Best Built-in staff and one who is pursuing a career as a lawyer, in addition to three beautiful grandchildren.

"Ken Chamzuk is like the face for central vacuums in Canada," says Tami Frankford, West Canadian Manager-Electrolux Homecare Products. "When no one knew what a central vacuum was, Ken was there pushing to get people to understand. I honestly feel that the market would not be where it is today, if it were not for Ken."

As for business philosophy, Ken strongly advises dealers to not only sell vacuums and to hire the best people they can, giving them the tools to do the job and succeed.



BILL ROACH, Creative Sewing Centers

March 2, 1938 -

Bill Roach was born March 2, 1938 in Chicago, learning the value of work early as his dad passed away when he was five. As a teenager, he joined the service becoming part of the 11th Airborne Division, spending two and a half years in Germany. While there he was a medic and became part of the paratroopers so he could earn additional money from airplane jumps to send home to his mother.

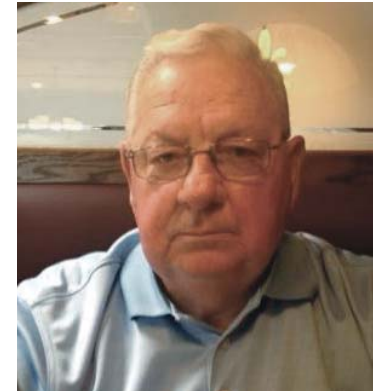
Upon his return home, he worked 2 years for Muntz TV until he was approached in 1960 by Singer with the goal of becoming a manager – which he readily achieved. Seven years later, he went to work for JC Penney selling sewing machines, TVs, air conditioners, and other appliances, though in 1969 Singer asked him to return. Rejoining with Singer, he worked in various positions as a National Training Manager, District Operations Manager, and more. When Singer exited the retail business, he found employment with Fabri-Centers of America, converting Singer Retail locations to set-ins for JoAnn Fabric stores. He also spent time with Elna/White based in Cleveland as a Regional Sales Rep.

In 1983, Bill undertook the mission of starting his own business – Apple Valley Sewing Center in Apple Valley, MN. Two years later, he formed a partnership and went on to open several locations that carried multiple brands, but knowing the company name was no longer applicable, it was changed to Creative Sewing Centers. Today there are four locations in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area and a centralized service center/office.

It was not easy starting a business from nothing, but Bill always loved a challenge. He never listened when people told him something could not be done. Instead, he found a way. He often said, "Things don't work when you stop trying, but if you keep on moving it always works out."

Reflecting on his career, Bill appreciates all of the people who have helped him along the way and pays it back in kind. He loved his position of trainer because his greatest joy is seeing people succeed. He encouraged employees and customers alike to take chances and always celebrates their success. Even today, people from 40 years back thank him for his encouragement, tough love, and helpfulness.

Bill has been married to wife, JoAnn, for 57 years and has 4 children and 9 grandchildren. He has won several sales and leadership awards, is a founding member of the Minnesota State Fair Foundation, and participates in many local school/work education programs.



JEAN BEAULAC, Johnny Vac

June 3, 1950 - December 9, 2015

Jean Beaulac, a visionary who gained respect in the industry for the last 35 years, is commendably inducted into the Vacuum and Sewing Dealers Hall of Fame.

The late 1970s stand as the starting point of Jean's great adventure in the industry. At that time, he was doing repair work on sewing machines and vacuum cleaners from the basement of his home in Rawdon. He had bigger plans in mind, but was unsure of how to realize them. After attending several trade shows in the maintenance industry, he negotiated a distribution with Trendvac. He soon opened his first store in Rawdon and then moved to a larger city to expand his customer base.

In 1978, he opened his second store in Joliette called Accessoires Electriques Beaulac Inc, and as a retailer noticed an important player was missing: a parts distributor for all brands of vacuum cleaners. He pondered this for a while and came up with the solution: He would be THIS distributor. In 1982, Mr. Jean Beaulac established his company, Distributions Jean Beaulac Inc, in Montreal, making a wide range of replacement parts available to retailers.

The response to his new company became so overwhelming that he quickly ran out of office space. In 1986, the company moved to a larger location to better meet customers' needs. He also founded the company Fibrofiltre 2000 Inc in order to manufacture his own filters for the AP100 Electrolux vacuum as well as output filters for built-in vacuums. One of the defining moments of his career came in 1992 when the Johnny Vac trademark was born.

Throughout his years, Jean never lost his focus to have his own line of appliances offering the best value. In 2008, Distributions Jean Beaulac Inc changed its corporate name to Johnny Vac Inc, more appropriate for expansion in the U.S.

Jean was the proud father of two children, Amelie and Alexandre, and grandfather to four. He passed away December 9, 2015. Today, with a 45,000 square foot building located in a leading industrial sector, 40 employees, and son Alexandre as President, Jean and Johnny Vac's legacy is well cared for.

