

Harris Brothers enjoy long, rich heritage



Nimrod Harris Jr. with grandson Harris Moss.

Close to 30 years ago, the late Nimrod Harris Sr. placed a call to his two sons, Nimrod Harris Jr. and Hooper Harris.

It was a call that would change the career path of the Harris brothers and one that would engrave their names in the annals of hosiery industry history.

Nimrod Harris Jr. is owner and president of Pickett Hosiery, a company with a long and rich history in the industry in North Carolina and beyond.

Hooper Harris is owner and president of Lakeside Dyeing and

Finishing, operating in the same facility that was built in the late 1800s and in fact listed as a North Carolina historical site.

Nimrod Harris Sr. told his sons in that 1975 telephone call that due to health reasons it was time for him to retire and asked his sons to come help with the business.

Both young men responded and left their jobs at that time to return to Burlington, N.C. to work for the company.

While over the years the sons would form separate hosiery operations, both are still in the business today.

in Burlington, Nimrod Harris Jr. speaks proudly of the heritage behind Pickett Hosiery and the hosiery industry in general.

It's not just the name of the companies or their track record that Harris takes pride in – its the people behind those names and those responsible for the industry's 200-year success.

Nimrod Harris Jr. is disheartened somewhat because he believes its a group of people – and a history – that seems to be forgotten in the nation's capital these days.

Perhaps this November they'll be reminded, he says.

Politics and manufacturing used not to be so entwined but today's business climate of globalism has sewn a tight stitch



A North Carolina Historical Site marker adorns Lakeside Dyeing and Finishing's property in Burlington.

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Harris Brothers

between the two.

Nimrod Harris Jr. doesn't know how the final chapter in this new book entitled world marketplace will be written but he's inclined to believe that global competition for the sock industry is here to stay.

But Harris believes the fundamentals of his business' success will reserve Pickett Hosiery a place in the hosiery industry's future.

Innovation, he says, will remain a constant at Pickett hosiery.

Nimrod says his company also has utilized a conservative management style and that it has served the company well at a time when many of his competitors have shut their doors due to the changing face of the hosiery industry.

Second on Pickett's keys to success is loyalty to employees and vice versus employees' loyalty to Pickett.

It's an aspect of doing business that seems to have dissipated in many aspects of American business, he says.

And third on the list of how his company has maintained its very visible appearance in the industry is Pickett's "eminent desire to please customers."

As testament to that three-ingredient plan, Nimrod says his company has continued to work regularly with almost no short time.

LAKESIDE

As Hooper Harris obviously steeped on the same family history as Nimrod, the younger Harris brother also enjoys another historical marker – the facility he is operating under is listed as one of Alamance County's historical sites.

The Lakeside Mill, incorporated in 1893, by the sons of James Henry Holt, is the last and most intact of the cotton mills within Burlington's city limits.

Hooper purchased the Lakeside Mill building in 1982 and what began as a three-person venture is today a 75-employee operation.



Family tradition

Nimrod Harris J. is pictured, right to left, with daughter Susan Harris Moss, brother Ron Harris and sister Amy Deal

"We've been very, very fortunate", says Hooper. "It has been hard work, but we have had a lot of good luck and we feel truly blessed to be operating today. Hopefully – longevity – will not only play a roll in the history of the Lakeside facility; but also will be an indication of the future of the Lakeside operation."

"One of the most important attributes of our operation has been a good and lasting relationship with suppliers and customers. If there were any way we could fully extend to them our gratitude, then we would truly feel some measure of success."

More than anything else, at the top of Hooper's reasons for the company's current position is the employees. The people working at Lakeside are the company, he says, and his management philosophy is hire the right people and they will get the job done – without having to ask him how to do it. "Why do I want to hire someone

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Floyd Klinger is in charge of Lakeside security.

to do a job and then have to tell them how to do the job,” he says. “I want them to tell me how to get the job done in the most efficient way.”

Hooper muses about the fact that he now spends as little time with hands-on management as he has to – and that’s the way he likes it. “When I’m here they are glad to see me leave”, he says.

Hooper says it is gratifying as owner of a company to know that the company has a team of employees that are working to make the company as effi-

cient and effective as possible. Maria Gegen was one of the first key additions, as she came to the company 18 years ago. More recently, Jim Foster, Bibiana Vargas, Fred Carden and Aaron Patrick have all made very important contributions.

Looking to the future in light of some of the pressures the industry is facing from outsourcing and other global economic issues, Hooper says his company plans to stick with a tried-and-true principle in his business plan – innovation.

“A lot of people talk about innovation but we’ve been using innovation here for a long time”, he said.

Hooper says delivery times will continue to be one of the most important factors in maintaining his customers.

“I remember 10 years ago people talking about shorter delivery times and how there was no way it was going to happen,” he says.

“Now look at the industry today.”

CONTINUED TRADITION

As most fathers would want, Nimrod Harris Sr. perhaps hoped to be able to stay active with the company to help his sons learn more about the business. But just a year after placing that call to his sons, Nimrod Harris Jr. passed away.

Taking on the business was a difficult task in itself but doing it without the vast expertise of their father made it even tougher.

Their continued presence as two of Burlington’s strong job providers is testimony to Hooper’s and Nimrod’s meeting the challenges presented to them when they first began in the business.

Continuing the family tradition that they were once called upon to join appears destined as well for both men. Nimrod’s daughter, Susan Harris Moss, is currently sales manager at Pickett and plans even

a greater role in the future. In addition, Lon Harris, another Harris brother, Amy Deal, a sister, are employed with the business.

Christine Harris, the Harris family matriarch, also is still involved with the business.

At Lakeside the family ties also continue as Hooper’s son Nick is employed there and may decide to follow in his father’s footsteps.



Melinda McCulley is boarding a batch at Lakeside.