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IGA Glove Hall of Fame inductee Frank Stucke

Walk through the history of industrial glove development over the past 40 years and you'll discover at least four major product categories and staples of the business linked to one creative, hard working and very humble man; Frank Stucke.

The Early Years

Stucke grew up in Buffalo, New York, during the 1960's and 1970's. It was a homeroom announcement over the PA system about a mechanic job that led Frank to join the Perfect Fit Glove Company as a knitting machine mechanic at age 16.

Frank kept that job through high school and after graduation. He enjoyed the work and the people he worked with – especially a beautiful young woman who was working her way through college in Perfect Fit's sewing department, Maria Mesanovic.

By the time he reached 21, Stucke was a Supervisor at Perfect Fit, happily married to Maria and expecting their first child. They were about to have a life-changing year.

A Momentous Move

It was 1977, and the management at Perfect Fit had a plan to expand. They asked Frank and Maria to move to Puerto Rico to set up and run a new company, Guayama Glove. The ideal candidate, Frank had both the supervisory skill and the knowledge of knitting machines and how to keep them running. Maria could train and manage the sewers.

Frank is frank in explaining their decision to pack up and head to Puerto Rico. "I said yes. That's what you did when management asked. I never considered saying no." He's quick to point out that, without saying yes to the Guayama Glove opportunity, "none of this would have happened."

When they arrived in Puerto Rico, Guayama Glove was just four walls, a hollow building. By the time their first child – son Matt – was born, Stucke had the business up and running.

After fulfilling that commitment, Frank brought his young family home to Buffalo, returning to work at Perfect Fit while continuing to oversee the Puerto Rico operation.

New Beginnings for Perfect Fit

In the early 1980's, Perfect Fit experienced a downturn. By 1983, the work force dwindled to Frank and a co-worker, Joe Hoerner. Ready to leave the business but not wanting to close the company, the former owner offered the two best friends a very workable financing plan. In 1983 Stucke and Hoerner became the new owners of Perfect Fit Glove Company.

With ownership, Frank entered a period of almost 20 years when his ideas, designs and business deals would make a resounding impact on the glove industry.

The first breakthrough happened in the 1980's. To improve durability and extend wear life, Frank coated cotton string knit gloves with a blue block grip. In doing so, Frank invented "the Blue Block" coated glove that 30 years later is still a standard offering by practically every knit glove company worldwide.

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By designing and perfecting various glove coatings, Stucke put Perfect Fit into a leadership mode. Eventually, the Coatings division of Perfect Fit became so successful, the company was even coating gloves for its competitors.

The next idea he would pursue: A US-made Kevlar dipped glove. “They told me it was impossible,” Frank recalls. “They said there would be as much latex on the inside of the glove as the outside.” Not one to quit a good idea, Frank worked with Abbott Labs to find the solution, and successfully developed the first US-made dipped glove with Latex on a Kevlar seamless knit.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, Showa was also finding success with a dipped glove, and introduced their Atlas Fit glove. Sensing an alternate opportunity, the two companies agreed that Perfect Fit would bring Showa’s new Atlas Fit line to the US as the brand’s master distributor. In short time, Perfect Fit became number one the world’s number one seller of Atlas gloves. Today, the brand is one of the best-known and most widely used gloves on the market.

After conquering coatings and dips, Frank was on to a new design idea: a hybrid glove that would combine the benefits of a Kevlar seamless knit with a leather palm. And, with the successful introduction of the Junk Yard Dog, Perfect Fit brought another glove innovation to market. Twenty-five years later, leather-palmed para-aramid knits are strong sellers for practically every industrial glove company, and the Junk Yard Dog remains the benchmark.

While developing each new glove idea, Stucke was also building a dynamic sales team that became known for their expertise and passion for the industry. One other thing Frank and the team became known for: The most entertaining social events at most glove industry occasions.

By 1999, Perfect Fit had grown from less than \$1 million in annual revenues to more than \$72 million. The company filled 300,000 square feet of manufacturing space with 850 knitting machines and more than 450 employees supporting sales throughout the US and Europe. In April 1999, Stucke and Hoerner sold Perfect Fit to Bacou USA. Frank stayed on to manage the business for another 3 years, until it became Bacou-Dalloz.

Worldwide Protective Products Takes Shape

Having grown up with the glove business in his blood as well as in his living room at times, son Matt Stucke had by now achieved an advanced degree in textiles, purchased a small sock company then developed and patented his own product innovation in that category. Frank joined Matt and they incorporated glove production along with socks. They named the company Worldwide Glove and Supply.

Through mergers and acquisitions, the business grew rapidly from 2004 through 2011. Worldwide Glove and Manzella Knitting came together; expanded operations and most recently became Worldwide Protective Products.

Lasting Impact on the Glove Industry

By the mid-2000’s, Frank had a new design in mind. Understanding the strength properties that fiberglass could provide, Frank had the idea of blending fiberglass with aramids.

His development of engineered, high-performance yarn technology led to the 2005 introduction of Advanced Technology Armor®, or ATA® brand gloves, and generated a sea change in the industrial glove market, offering greatly increased cut resistance at a lower cost.



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The finished product would be the first high-performance fiberglass and aramid blend gloves, brought to market under the brand name Advanced Technology Armor® or ATA®. ATA continues to be the flagship brand of Worldwide Protective Products.

That Frank's contribution to the PPE industry left a permanent mark on cut protection and hand safety is clear. First, the ATA® gloves delivered strength 2 to 3 times that of 100% aramids while reducing costs. Soon other glove companies introduced their own fiberglass/aramid high performance blends, and gloves achieving ANSI levels 4 and 5 became more commonplace. The ability of glove manufacturers to create gloves with protection levels up to 6000 grams most likely contributed to the decision by ANSI to introduce new ANSI standards.

Finally, in a 2016 report, Analysis of the North American Industrial Hand Protection Market published by Frost & Sullivan, the adoption of gloves made of aramids blended with glass is cited as one of six overarching trends impacting the market.

Today, Frank Stucke sits on the Board of Directors of Worldwide Protective Products, keeping his fingers on the pulse of the glove industry while thoroughly enjoying retirement.

Under the equal ownership of Matt Stucke, Ed Mesanovic and Kerry Dyer, Worldwide Protective Products is a leading manufacturer of PPE with its primary business in cut-resistant gloves, sleeves and garments, and manufacturing facilities in North Carolina and New York, as well as the only US production of steel mesh located in Massachusetts.

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