



Larry  
Fattori

I came to Portugal in 1968. The story why we can to Portugal goes back to the year before that, 1967. One of our clients was Fabergé and the chief engineer for Fabergé was German and we had him to build a series of moulds. For Fabergé he wanted to build in Germany. So we went to Germany, Döbburg, I forget the name of the company, and I made the moulds, good moulds. We inspected them, but when it came down to the cores, the blade knockout on the cores, they wanted them nitrided and we didn't want them nitrided, we wanted them flash chromed and we couldn't get together about what to do. So I called the chief engineer of Fabergé and told him the story and his solution was buying both... So I decided, I think we get enough of the Germans, so let's get a look elsewhere, so we went to Switzerland, then we went to Italy and then to Portugal.

EUROPE, 1968

What we found in Italy, we ended up in a company called Allimpo Stamping, in Brescia. He had a wonderful factory there, but he really didn't want to talk about moulds, he was interested in automobiles... in racing automobiles... And we got talking and asking him about deliveries, well, "we tell you 13, 14 weeks... we mean 13, 14 weeks, except when they have strikes, we may have a coffee strike, we may have this kind of strike, another kind of strike", so we got out of there and we said that's enough of that.

We came to Portugal, we checked-in to the Ritz Hotel, and we hired a driver, Armando. So he drove us in a Mercedes up to Marinha Grande. I never forget the story... we got to the intersection, in Marinha Grande where the cop ("polícia sinalizador") used to be in a pedestal, he had white gloves on... and Armando stop to ask for directions... and after he asked the directions he turned to me and said "thank you jackass". I said: "Armando you're getting in trouble", and he said: "he doesn't understand English".

PORTUGAL AND ANIBAL H  
ABRANTES

So we went to first factory. We inspected the equipment and it look like what

we refer to the salvation army: the equipment was very old, did not impress us at the time...

Then, I don't know if was that day or, it is hard to remember (it was many years ago), but we went through Abrantes and the equipment was day and night. They seem to be more organized, the gentleman spoke English very well, he was impressive. We didn't do anything with Abrantes for I guess maybe a year, a year and half, two years...

MOULDS IN MARINHA  
GRANDE

One of our customers was Trans World Display and they gave us the first job – Seegrams. It was a one cavity mould to produce a Napkin Holder which required side cams and hot bushing. It was a large piece, a part may be 12 inches long, by 6 inches width, and 7 or 8 inches height and had engraving of Seegrams on the side which was formed by the cams. Based on that, the workmanship of that tool was very good and the parts were approved by Seegrams, the parts were submitted by our client Trans World Display to Seegrams and everybody was happy.

Based on that we got more work from Trans World and I think, in between that, we have placed other tools for other companies but I can't remember who they were, what the moulds were but...

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We landed the big job from Trans World - it was Spydel and we had a concept for, what they called TT One O' Eight. They wanted to put 180 watch bands into the cabinet, but the cabinet only displays on the front, and all the reserves would be in the back, so we designed a system where the panels opened up and all the watch bands were putted through the back. We did all the engineering on that and we submitted the plans to quotation to Abrantes at the time, and we won the approval of Trans World and we placed the tools, and I think they were eight or nine moulds involved in the project.

That work out very well and we put it at the production line at the factory, we moved things around and we had a conveyor with 260 feet long and we started in moulding with the machines thru the conveyor.

We started the first moulding, then the second moulding and the operation with hot stamping, with grain on it, the all job went down the line, finished, was ionized with the ionizing gun, was wiped down with wax, and went to a trailer. No stock, we didn't keep anything in the warehouse. Went down to the trailer and was shipped out that night.

We did a lot of work for other companies. We did a Salton ice cream machine for Abrantes. They came over there, husbands and wives, they were four of them and we put them in the Inn of Batalha (the Pousada) and we spent many nights trying out the moulds, experimenting moulds. Not only they tried out the moulds, but they want to produce them in the right colour, the package, the boxes coming out for them. We spend many nights until midnight producing mouldings,

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One of the big moulds we made was for Sony, it was a Sony display and the part looked like a large S and had 4 foot from one end to another end and 3 feet in height, so it went like that and we put two of this together and then we manage three of those up and Sony put there their equipment for display in the stores. But the interesting part about that mould, when we tried it out, it was that we couldn't stop the parts from cracking. I had to go back to the United States, I can remember, I flew back, next week I came back, and Firmino and I made some changes, worked on a Saturday, thinking how we are going to fix this, the mould is sliding, and we injected and the moulding cracked, so eventually we had to interlock it some how and we did not know if we changed the injection point, but finally we got the mould to work.

One of the biggest projects we worked on was a nine mould project for B Bar B Company. The project intent not only the design and the developing of the moulds but also to install the factory for them. The factory was built, we designed the entire electrical system, the water system, the material feeding system, we installed the machines, we installed the moulds and we produced everything according to our projection. We initially accorded with them with the fact that we produce, I think it was a four cavity mould, we would cycle four shots for one minute in perfect parts and we did that to all the moulds.

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We had our own tooling shop in USA at that time. We had 18 men at there and we used them most to repair, but we also did build some of our own moulds. The equipment that we saw in Abrantes was far advanced to what we had in our shop.

SHOP IN AMERICA

First of all, going backwards - the finish of a mould, I couldn't find a company that could finish a mould like Abrantes did. When we said number one finish was number one finish, if we said number two finish, number two finish and if we said it is EDM finish, it is a EDM finish. We got what we asked for as far as the finishing of a tool.

I can remember also Louro. I cant remember what mould it was, but he was so proud for what he was in charge of the finishing department, and he would come over and put his finger and push a cam, push back and forward the way a cam should work. We never saw something like that.

So, in comparison, we became very loyal to Abrantes and we disbanded most of ours toolshops. We had there 4 or 5 man.

They use to kid me around, calling me Senhor Zarcon. I was called Senhor Zarcon because I make them "blue" in every mould. I wanted so see how our mould

SENHOR ZARCON

looked, I just couldn't accept a tool that wasn't perfectly machined on the face, on the parting line. I enjoy that, to be Senhor Zarcon.

I used to walk in and they said: "Here come Senhor Zarcon", but I walked in not only the Zarcon, but I walked in with measuring and testing equipment, with thermometers and thermocouples ... I wanted to measure the temperature of the mould face, I wanted to see how the cooling system was, I went thru a complete inspection of every mould, because this was what we told our customer that we did. I think we were successful doing that, and we achieved what we wanted with the group.

One of the numberless things that I remember: after they formed the company, they had offices in the rear of Leiria, they were cold ... I remember going up there one day and they had there, what look to me as a radiator full of oil and the heat coming out of there and everyone was shivering like hell and I remember Almeida was working on a drafting board and he had a incandescent lamp and he bend over and burned his head and made a scar that was... ugly!

Most of those nine moulds that I talked about for B Bar B were made by Portu-  
molde. We were very pleased with their interaction with us.

OLIVEIRA DE AZEMÉIS

There was no reason to try Oliveira de Azemeis. For all the moulds we made in Portugal they were made in Abrantes initially or with the Iberomoldes Group after they formed their company. That's an interesting point to ... I guess we were the number two customer for Iberomoldes. Bernard Yellin, from Chicago, was number one and we were number two. But I like to say we were there before Berny ...

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PORTUGAL AND THE OTHERS

We did purchase moulds on the United States prior to that time, but after we have started working with Fabergé and placed the moulds in Germany, that we saw Europe as our source to build our tools.

Quality was a factor. I think one of the main reasons we starting working here in Portugal, against Germany, was that the Portuguese mould makers did listen to us and built to our American standards, which is very important.

The Germans only built on metrics, well nothing wrong with metrics, as far at the metrics goes, except for replacement parts ... to replace a minor part ... a leader pin, a bushing ... to get those in metric parts was difficult.

Well we can get American standard parts from Portugal, they got the parts for us before we saw it. If we built a hot runner mould, if we said we wanted such, and such type of hot runner mould they would get it, they installed it, no arguments, and they did what we wanted, engineering wise.

I think we are all firm believers of the fact that the money in mould making is made on the drawing board and ... I think, evidence of that is the work they would put in the mould drawing, in the engineering, and we go over with the fine look and scratched out, and they would change it, adjust it. Couldn't get that in

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Germany, couldn't get that anywhere.

In Italy, you got frightened because of the coffee strikes. Who wants to deal with a ten minutes coffee strike? Because a ten minute coffee strike could be an hour, or two hours, or five days, or months, who the hell knew...

We were not buying tools for ourselves, we were buying tools for our customers, and we were committed to... So what do you do?

We started the company in New Jersey, on the name REL Manufacturing Corporation. We started out with the manufacturing of toys and sunglasses. As we work along that line we became the world largest producer of model boats, little power boats. What happen at that time, I can't place the year, the maize of the toy industry of that time was because of the influx of the Discount Houses. They just ruined the sales by Department Stores, that felt it that very much.

REL MANUFACTURING  
COMPANY (USA)

That was a down stream to the jobbers, the people we sold to were the jobbers. The jobbers sold to department stores, they sold to mum and pap stores in their area. But it got to a point that it was no money left for anybody, no incentive to develop, so we got out of the toys business and thankfully and we went to custom moulding.

One of the things that really got us going in custom moulding was, I invented a valve. I hold 60 patents by the way, over sixty patents ... the numbers are going up, we just applied for two more. I developed a valve for the milk industry which delivers two and half gallons of milk in a bag, you know that product today as the "bag-in-a-box" delivers wine. You can see it through Portugal ...I have licensees thru out the World, in Australia, in Japan, in South America, in Chile, in Argentina, Canada, United States.

That was the start, and I developed that for a company that branched away in Louisiana, and they were producers of craft paper for the Walt Matteson Company. With the demise of home delivery of milk in the United States, they gave up the project because they were producing a "bag in a bag", so I continue with the patents with the licensees who were developing the "bag-in-the-box". You can buy it in Pão de Açucar... One thing let to another and we started to develop clientele, we picked up Faberge, AMF, Salton, Plastic Reel, goes on and on...

One of the moulds we still built on our own shop, all of the moulds for Plastic Reel, except the last one that we built in Iberomoldes. Basically we had them to develop a system...

In the United States when they ship videos from place to place by the Post Office, if a video weights a pound and a half, they would charge for two pounds, so if they put two of this together they had 3 pounds, and save a lot of money in the overall situation, so we developed a pick-back box, where two of these units would go together. And then pick it back, like lipstick holder to interlock one to another. They were happy with that.

We were dedicated to develop intelligence product design, were committed

to our customers to produce what we said we were going to produce. It was a guarantee and we provided it. The mould had to do what we said it was going to do. And promise that's what we got, that was what we deliver.

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**AGENTS IN PORTUGAL** I met a lot of agents, they were after me in the Eurosol hotel. I was my own agent. I didn't need somebody. I didn't think that anybody as an agent could do the work that I personally could do - on the acceptance of the mould, and on the mould design. I went to engineering rooms and I spent hours in there. We played, "we'll do it this way, or this way". The same thing in the acceptance of the mould, as I refer to – Senhor Zarcon, the world knows me as such. The mould had to be made to our specifications. And they produce it, they did it. I don't know anyplace else in the world that could do it. Not in love with us, we were tough, and we wanted what we got.

**FIRST INJECTION MACHINES IN USA** My father had two partners, one was an ex-priest, Joe Bernerti, and the other was a German engineer. The three of them were working for a company in New Jersey. They manufactured eye glasses, sunglasses. In those days there was no injection machines. They glued the parts together, and put glasses in it, that's how they made it, they were horrible looking spectacles. My father started the business. And his two partners continued to work at the factory. Like any other business they work hard, they had it going and eventually the partners came in to the business actively.

I guess the German engineer heard about this crazy machine in Germany, which produced eyeglasses for them, without having them to bend the rods and glue them together. So they put it on a boat and it came over from Germany. They showed up six months later with the machine. It's was a great invention but with an awful design. It was a power press lay on the side with an injection cylinder in it. The machine was able to produce a moulded eyeglass frame, which they would take from the machine and on a rowdier, they would row the inside groove and then they would heat it in a tray, which would soften the material and then snap in the bends, pin on the temples. It was primitive but it was better than the rods that they developed. I can't remember exactly what happened with that company.

My father came in charge of a metal plant. I went into service: I was accepted into the Aviation Programme. When I came out of service, I went back to college and got my engineering degree as a mechanical engineer. Every summer I worked in the Engineering Department at my father company. They had me doing all kinds of crazy things.

In 1948, my father sold his interest in the company, and the company was sold to another company which was an aircraft manufacturing company. I don't understand why they bought the company. They move the all facilities to a city in Pennsylvania, with a couple thousands acres of ground. The company had his demise within a year.

I graduated from Stevenson's Technology in June of 1949. I already started the REL Manufacturing Corporation in May of 1949. Even as undergraduate I went in

to the injection moulding with Reed Prentice machines. And with those machines we used to kick and spit at and sweat at, you name it. I guess that with all of that, you learn the business the hard way. "If is to most pressure, lower the pressure, or maybe the temperature is too much, lower the temperature... Shut it down, lets go home, go to bed"

The old story about Aníbal, is that when he quoted the initial price for a man in Switzerland, he was told that: "Yes you can made plastic moulds", but Aníbal said: "I don't know anything about that", but they respond: "You make moulds to the glass industry, so you can make moulds to the plastic industry. So here is a piece, how much did you think that costs to make?". Aníbal look at the sky and told the price, he took it out of the air.

ANÍBAL ABRANTES

I found Aníbal Abrantes to be a very king gentleman, he was always very good to me. I just thought he was a good Portuguese gentleman.

Primarily I negotiated with Vitor Hugo. He was the commercial director. Abrantes company seemed like a family ... I walked through that plant and everybody waved at me, say hello, I felt at home, which was important.

Since 1992, we got away from the consulting end of it, and became proprietary in the manufacturing of maritime high security seals. This is what we do today.

PLASTIC INDUSTRY

After I sold REL Manufacturing Corp. I retained the corporate structure and I retained the engineering division and I sold all the physical assets and I went through an open-heart surgery ... I moved down to Florida and my son Jimmy, came down with us- he was a graduate of North East University, an engineer and we set ourselves as consultants. Our son Paul, who now runs the company, at that time was in the University of Florida, going to school.

We had several big contracts as consultants, the biggest one, as I described before, was B Barb B contract, there were several million dollars involved in the construction of the moulds, in the factory, in the machines, you took over all the game, and we produced what we promised to produce. They turn around and took ours efforts, and within three months they sold the entire situation for more then twice of the initial concept cost ... they were happy. We were happy for what we did, but it hurts to see something you created going down the tubes, with someone else managing it ...

Then it was when we set what we stand for now, manufacturing security seals for the maritime industry, truck industry and so on ...

Last time we bought moulds, we bought three moulds in Portugal for our seals, and one we built in the United States. The one we built in the United States, we built it there because we, as we were developing it, as we built it we didn't know what we want to do, is a very unique tool.

Today we run a plant we have a nice volume revenue, with the minimum number of people, they are all Columbians, all Cubans. They work hard and again we are like a family, everybody birthday we have a party, we all come out to the front, for one hour or two, singing, then we all go back to work. So with the minimum number of people and having the robotics-designs doing the work for us primarily, it has been a lot of fun.

*We have spend a great deal of time here, in Cascais, in the back we had the views of mountains of Sintra and in the front we had the view of Cascais bay. It was beautiful, beautiful*

*It was my Shangri-La. I got tired of living in the Ritz Hotel and in the Sheraton Hotel.*

MARINHA GRANDE AND  
CASCAIS

We have spend a great deal of time here, in Cascais, we have had an apartment, here in Cascais which I'm sorry that we sold, Torre do Pinhal. In the top floor, we owned half of the top floor, in the back we had the views of mountains of Sintra and in the front we had the view of Cascais bay. It was beautiful, beautiful. Had an office there, bedroom, bathroom, kitchenette, dining and living room, on the outside a terrace, beautiful, couldn't ask for more ...

It was my Shangri-La. I got tired of living in the Ritz Hotel and in the Sheraton Hotel. The problem was I commuted up and down in the same day ... before autoestradas. I remember waiting in line at the airport, in the circle (Rotunda do Relógio), sitting there for half an hour, trying to get into the circle, in those days .... The Portuguese drivers are something to be careful of..

*people said to me "Why don't you go back to Italy?" What for!?, I have everything I want in Portugal*

PORTUGAL

The driving force in Portugal, asides from mould making quality, and of course the friendships, there are the people, the Portuguese that I remember, I think it is the people that we remember, the food ... its here, the willingness of the people to help you, they would go out of their way to help you because they recognize that you are in a far and strange country, they would help you. You certainly don't find that in France. My love of any country, other than the United States, obviously, is Portugal. I'm an Italian extraction ... and people said to me "Why don't you go back to Italy?" What for!?, I have everything I want in Portugal.