



**GETZEN**

Special Edition

**G A Z E T T E**

**Happy Anniversary!!!**



The year 2009 marks a great milestone for the Getzen Company. It is the 70th Anniversary of the company's founding. That means over 70 years of family involvement in the brass musical instrument industry. It also means four generations of family tradition and commitment. In an industry dominated by corporate giants, that is truly something special.

This special edition of the Getzen Gazette celebrates our great achievement. Please join us as we take a look back at what got us to where we are today.

# A Family Tradition Begins



*Anthony J. Getzen*

It all started in 1939 when Anthony Getzen decided to take a chance. He had recently resigned his position as the Plant Superintendent of the Frank Holton Company to take his shot at achieving the American dream. After nearly 20 years in the musical instrument industry, Tony put his knowledge and skills to the test and the Getzen Company was born.

Things started out slowly on Geneva Street in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. On its first day of business, the company opened with just Tony and his three employees working in a converted dairy barn behind the Getzen family home. At the time, the company's focus was on band instrument repair. The Getzen Company quickly began to earn a name for itself as a well respected repair shop thanks to the hard work of Tony and his staff. Working so closely with so many brands of instruments exposed Tony and his crew to the good and the bad of instrument design and build quality. All of that acquired knowledge would come in very handy, but new horn manufacturing was still years away.

In 1946 the benefits of a rapidly growing, post World War II America prompted the shift from instrument repair to instrument manufacturing. It all started with a relatively small line of trombones. Only 1,000 trombones were built that first year, but a quickly growing market and fan base showed that there was indeed a place for Getzen in the world of brasswind manufacturing. Capitalizing on that success, the first Getzen trumpets and cornets were being delivered to customers around the country the next year. It wasn't long before these new Getzen instruments were gaining popularity in the music world. Tony and his staff drew on their experience in both production and repair to design instruments that not only had an emphasis on playability and performance, but also on durability. As market share continued to grow, another product line expansion came in 1949 with the addition of a full line of piston bugles. In just under a decade, the company had gone from a small, repair shop to a full fledged manufacturer of brasswinds.

During the growth of that first decade, the family tradition of the Getzen Company was firmly established. Tony's three sons, J. Robert, William, and Donald all worked for their father during breaks from school and after returning home from the military at the war's end. After working closely with his father since the early days of the company, Tony's eldest son Bob was promoted to the position of Plant Superintendent in 1949.

Over the next ten years the company continued to grow. By the end of the fifties, the Getzen Company employed over 80 people and the annual production ballooned as well. Following this boom came advances in the quality and design of Getzen instruments, most notably their industry leading student instruments. The company was an undeniable success and even the competition took notice. In 1956 Vincent Bach was quoted in a Getzen print ad as saying, "They certainly are very beautiful horns, and Getzen can be proud of being able to turn out such a fine instrument..."

Following in his father's footsteps, Bob Getzen resigned his position with the Getzen Company in 1959. Later that year, Bob founded Allied Music Corporation, a wholesale instrument repair shop. Allied Music opened in a brand new, 3,000 square foot building less than a mile from the Getzen Company's location. The first day of business for Bob and his one employee marked an exciting new start. However, that first day was a quiet one as they opened the shop with zero customers. Around this same time, Bill Getzen decided that the music business wasn't for him. Instead, he chose a career in law and became a very successful attorney. The third brother, Don Getzen, remained with the Getzen Company having made the shift from manufacturing to focusing more on the management side of the business.

The following year, family ownership of the Getzen Company came to an end. Late in 1960, after 21 years in business, Tony sold the Getzen Company to Milwaukee attorney Harold M. Knowlton. Initially, the terms of the sale had Tony staying on with the company in a management role. However, this working relationship lasted less than a year. Shortly after the purchase, Mr. Knowlton moved the company from its original home in the old "barn" to its new location at 211 West Centralia Street. All of the original employees remained with the company, including Don Getzen. He was the final Getzen to be involved with the company for years to come. It would take another 31 years and the success and prosperity of two generations before the family would own its namesake once again.

# Family and Company Move Forward

Two years after purchasing the Getzen Company, Harold Knowlton wanted to put his mark on the company and began making a push into the professional instrument market. With the help of a young, up and coming trumpeter named Carl "Doc" Severinsen, Getzen seized on an opportunity. The company was already well known for its popular student horns and they looked to capitalize on that popularity with a new line of professional instruments. Through the union of Doc and Getzen, the 900 Severinsen Model Eterna trumpet was born. Word quickly spread through the trumpet world and it wasn't long before everyone wanted to try this exciting new horn. Following the stunning initial success of the Eterna trumpet, Getzen began working to expand its product line. New cornet and flugelhorn designs were in the works and the company was quickly carving out a place for itself in the professional instrument market.



*Harold M. Knowlton*

Everything was going great for the company until shortly after midnight on October 14, 1963. That Monday morning a fire was sparked in the extreme rear of the factory in what was the bell and small parts department. A passing police officer noticed the flames and called it in to his dispatcher. Several explosions rocked the factory as flames reached flammable and volatile liquids (lacquer, solvent, etc...) used during production. Those explosions and a brisk fall wind quickly spread the fire through out the factory. By the time the fire department arrived, flames had already broken through the roof and much of the factory was burning out of control. The fire department remained on the scene until after six o'clock in the morning when the flames were finally extinguished. When it was all said and done, the entire production section of the factory had been leveled by the fire. The warehouse storage area and offices had also sustained severe damage from the fire as well as smoke and water damage. This effectively rendered the factory on Centralia Street a complete loss. News of the fire made the front pages of several newspapers across the Midwest including the Milwaukee Journal, Kansas City Star, and Chicago Tribune. Immediately after the fire, fellow instrument companies in Elkhorn extended offers of help. Both the Holton Company and Allied Music offered the use of their facilities to salvage the instruments damaged during the fire. Many Getzen dealers also sent in letters of sympathy and encouragement pledging to continue doing business with Getzen as soon as the company was back on its feet.

Despite the devastating loss, just hours after the flames were extinguished plans were already underway for the construction of a new factory. In less than a month, the debris of the destroyed building had been cleared away and construction of the new building had begun. A target of January 1964 was set for the opening of the new Getzen Company factory. That target date was missed by just a month when the new factory opened in early February. Initially, production was limited to just a few select models as production slowly ramped up. However, it was only a matter of months before Getzen was up and running at full capacity again, rapidly trying to fill orders that continued to come in during reconstruction.

In the following years, Getzen's popularity continued to grow with every instrument they shipped. This was thanks, in no small part, to the stellar success of Doc Severinsen and the 900 Eterna trumpet. The Eterna trumpet was so successful that for a time it was the best selling pro trumpet in the United States. Professional musicians from around the world coveted the Eterna trumpet and were eager to work closely with Getzen. Through these relationships, Getzen was able to draw on the musicians' expertise creating a vast network of designers and play testers. With this invaluable tool, Getzen was able to continually improve their entire product line. Soon the company was rolling out new, professional cornets, flugelhorns, and trombones. During the second half of the 1960's the Getzen Company grew faster and larger than its founder could have ever imagined. That same meteoric rise continued throughout the 1970's. The Getzen Company had moved from a small, four man repair shop to being firmly planted in the upper echelons of manufacturers in the industry.

During these same years, Bob Getzen was experiencing great success with Allied Music. Bob's extensive knowledge in the field of instrument repair combined with his unequalled work ethic and a large customer base rapidly propelled Allied Music from a small, two man operation to a nationwide leader in band instrument repair. By 1966, Bob had once again entered into the field of manufacturing when he started to work with his brother

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*J. Robert Getzen*

Don Getzen. Don had, in 1965, resigned as Executive Vice President of Getzen to venture out on his own. At that time, he founded DEG Music Products Inc. in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Don hoped to take advantage of the skilled employees at Allied Music and their experience with brasswind instruments. The two brothers worked together and Allied Music expanded to begin the production of a complete line of marching bugles for DEG.

The expansion continued in 1967 when Bob saw a void in the industry just waiting to be filled. It was then that he founded Allied Supply Corporation. Allied Supply serviced instrument repairmen around the world by supplying them with instrument parts, repair tools, and replacement cases. Supply's real forte was specializing in carrying replacement parts for almost any wind instrument, including obsolete and hard to find parts. For the first time, repairmen had a one stop shop for all of their store's needs. That same year Bob offered an even greater service to repair shops when he founded the Allied Music Repair School. The program was designed to offer a comprehensive course of hands on training to teach students the finer points of band instrument repair. Each participant went through an in depth, forty-eight week course that covered all aspects of brass or woodwind band instrument repair.

The students would study under the experienced employees of Allied as they worked on hundreds of instruments during their stay in Elkhorn. The program also covered non-repair related aspects of the industry including business practices, customer relations, shop management, pricing, etc... This advanced education combined with their own natural talents allowed many of the graduates to go on and open their own successful repair shops, many of which are still thriving today. Some have become well known and respected within the industry with names like Wayne Tanabe and Dave Monette to name a few.

Much like the Getzen Company, Allied Music and Allied Supply continued to thrive during the early seventies. In 1972 the partnership between Allied Music and DEG grew as Allied began to expand its manufacturing base. That year production began on a full line of trumpets, trombones, cornets, and marching brass horns under the DEG name. At the same time, Allied Supply was expanded from just a few shelves in the shipping department to its own dedicated section of the factory. In 1974, with both companies growing larger, Bob decided to sell Allied Supply to his two sons Thomas and Edward Getzen. The brothers had several years of experience working in both instrument repair and manufacturing. Just like the companies they founded (Getzen, Allied Music, Allied Supply, DEG), the Getzen family's involvement in the band instrument industry continued to grow as Tom and Ed marked the third generation of Getzen horn builders.

The decade of the 1980's brought with it more and more changes for both Getzen and Allied Music/Supply. In 1985, after twenty-five years at the helm, Harold Knowlton sold the Getzen Company to Charles Andrews. This marked the end of an era for the Getzen Company. Three years later, at the age of sixty-two, Bob Getzen decided to "retire". That year, Bob sold Allied Music Corp. to his sons ending his twenty-nine year run as the company's owner and president. Despite his retirement, Bob kept an office in the factory and remained heavily involved in its operation for the next several years. In 1989, Allied Supply's continued growth required it to move out of its corner of the Allied Music factory and into its own 9,600 square foot building next door; a stark contrast to the company's humble beginnings. Perhaps the biggest change of the decade came in 1989 when Allied Music seized on the revolutionary development of the Axial Flow Valve and began the production of the first generation of Edwards trombones. Through the Edwards Instrument Company a goal was set to build a trombone unequalled in quality and unparalleled in design that met the demanding needs of the world's top musicians. This was the first step in the journey to craft what is now, arguably, the world's finest trombone.

With the initial success of the Edwards trombone came a need for a shift in the company's priorities. It was then that Allied Music began to make more of a switch from instrument repair to instrument production. In 1990 that new manufacturing emphasis paid off when the company teamed up with the world famous brass quintet, The Canadian Brass. The two worked closely together to design a line of instruments that were to be manufactured by Allied Music and played/ marketed by the quintet. With that, the stage was set for yet another successful decade for the Getzen family and its company. Nobody in the family could foresee the once in a lifetime opportunity that was looming just over the horizon. It would be another year before the life long dream of a generation would become a reality.

# The Company Comes Back Home

Following the founding of the Getzen Company and after decades of success with Allied Music and Allied Supply, the Getzen family was firmly established within the musical instrument industry. Those years of hard work and great success provided the family with an amazing opportunity in 1991. That year, the family was finally able to regain control of the family namesake. Several years of production problems and financial hardships came to a head and the Getzen Company, under Chuck Andrews, was forced to file for bankruptcy. Although it was a dark time for the company, it was a high point in the lives of Tom and Ed Getzen. The grandsons of the company's founder were able to purchase the Getzen Company out of federal bankruptcy court. After 31 years apart, the Getzen family and the Getzen Company were finally back together again.



*Thomas R. Getzen*

Immediately after the purchase, the hard work of bringing the Getzen Company and Allied Music together was started. The first step was to begin moving Getzen's employees and equipment from its location on Centralia Street to Allied's home on the outskirts of Elkhorn. Of course, the factory was overwhelmed by this new influx of staff and equipment. To accommodate this sudden growth, an 18,000 square foot addition was built onto the Allied Music building effectively doubling the size of the factory. The addition included a new bell department, buffing room, water treatment center, dent department, and several offices. As the Getzen employees moved into their new home the skilled Allied Music staff met them with open arms. They were also met with new and repaired equipment along with improved working conditions. Shortly after the addition was completed, both two companies were once again up and running at full speed. Resources and manpower were split between new horn manufacturing and instrument repair with Getzen as the parent company and Allied Music operating as a subsidiary. The long journey to return the company to its former greatness had begun.

The first obstacle that had to be overcome was the degraded reputation of Getzen. Years of production and design changes had led to a product line that was sub par when compared to past levels. Re-establishing the company's place in the industry was difficult. Changing the public's negative perception of the Getzen name became a key goal as Tom and Ed pledged to do everything possible to improve the quality of the company's products. The first step was working closely with the employees to let them know that things had to change and that the company needed their help. Together, management and the employees wasted no time as the entire product line and manufacturing standards/techniques were re-evaluated. All existing models were closely examined and necessary design improvements were made. New models were added to incorporate successful instrument designs previously used by Allied Music. At the same time, every single aspect of production was evaluated to improve not only labor time, but also finished instrument quality. As Tom Getzen put it, "It wasn't a quick or smooth process by any means, but it had to be done."

The remaining years of the 1990's saw many more changes with both Getzen and Allied. In 1992, Getzen capitalized on the great success of the Edwards trombone line with the introduction of the all new, Getzen Custom Series trombones. This marked the first serious re-entry of the company into the professional instrument market. With the introduction of new models and a surging demand for instruments, production needs prompted Tom and Ed to discontinue the Allied Music repair school in 1993. In 1994, production demands forced the discontinuation of Allied Music's reed instrument repairs, freeing up more factory space for expanded production. Continually improving quality led to even higher production demands. Just a year later, Allied Music was dissolved entirely when brass instrument repairs were stopped. All of the company's resources, both man power and equipment, were free to focus entirely on new horn production. The revolving cycle of increased production leading to increased orders leading to increased production etc...continued. The increased sales allowed the company to continually make more advances in quality. It also led to the introduction of even more new models and improved designs. Finally, the Getzen Company started to regain some of the respect it had lost within the industry.

One of the biggest changes for the new Getzen Company came in 1999. That year, after several decades of working together Tom and Ed Getzen went their separate ways. Tom purchased all of Ed's shares in both the Getzen Company and Allied Supply and became the sole owner and president of both companies. At the time,

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two of Tom's four children worked full time at Getzen and his youngest son worked part time during breaks from high school. This continued family involvement, along with Tom's purchase, ensured that the company would stay in the family for many years to come.

With a renewed family dedication to quality and performance, things at Getzen really started to take off in the following decade. In 2000, Edwards Instruments had outgrown its small corner of the Getzen facility and was moved into its own building next door to Allied Supply. This provided Edwards with a dedicated showroom from which to sell their top of the line trumpets and trombones while the production of Edwards instruments remained in the Getzen factory. In 2001, Getzen took a substantial leap forward in the trumpet world when, after nearly 30 years apart, Doc Severinsen and Getzen teamed up once again. Together with Doc, Getzen launched the 3001 Severinsen model trumpet. Soon after, Getzen expanded on this design and introduced an all new line of Custom Series Bb and C trumpets marking Getzen's return to the ranks of the world's finest trumpet builders. The partnership between Doc and Getzen remained in effect until 2003 when Doc once again left for other ventures. The 3001 & 3001LE trumpets were renamed "Artist Models" and both remain in the Getzen line of Custom trumpets today.

That same year marked a sad time for the Getzen family and company. In February, J. Robert Getzen passed away following a lifetime dedicated to the music industry. Throughout his life, Bob had worked extensively in both instrument manufacturing and repair. Over the years, he was responsible for advancements in both production and repair techniques including the invention of several tools used by repairmen around the world. His skills and dedication were passed on to countless other repairmen through his commitment to the Allied Music repair school program. Bob was also influential in the formation of the National Association of Band Instrument Repair Technicians (NAPBIRT). NAPBIRT is an organization intended to bring together instrument repairmen from around the world to share everything from repair techniques to shop management skills. Through his years of technician education and involvement with NAPBIRT, Bob Getzen was able to give many great professionals their start. Not only did he cement his own family's presence within the industry, but the positions of many other men and women as well.

Over the past five years Getzen has demonstrated its continued dedication to quality instrument manufacturing. Constantly striving to meet the needs of musicians everywhere has prompted Getzen to introduce seven new models including the 3001MV Mike Vax and 907S Eterna Proteus trumpets. The dedication doesn't end there. Getzen has also recently partnered with Griego Mouthpieces and Blackburn Trumpets. With Griego, Getzen is supplying top of the line Griego mouthpieces with all Custom Series trombones, elevating an upper level instrument to an even higher point. Through their partnership with Blackburn, Getzen is answering the call of many players by combining the tried and true 940 Eterna piccolo trumpet with the outstanding performance of Blackburn leadpipes. Quality, American made instruments and unmatched customer service have combined to elevate the Getzen Company back to its position at the top of the musical instrument industry.

The long standing tradition of the Getzen family and the Getzen Company continues to this day through two of Tom Getzen's four children. Brett Getzen, Tom's second oldest, spent years working in both instrument repair and new horn production starting at the age of eleven. Today, at 31, Brett is involved in many aspects of the company from production to sales and marketing as Getzen's Special Project Manager. At 24, Adam Getzen, Tom's youngest, has worked for the company for nearly half of his life. As a student, Adam worked part time in several different departments within the factory. Since making the switch to full time, Adam has taken over and now runs the company's plating department. Together, the two sons make up the fourth generation of Getzens in the band instrument business. Both are striving to ensure the company's success for generations to come.

In recent years, the band instrument industry has seen many changes, such as the emergence of more off shore production, the consolidation of many independent companies, and the closing of others. It is refreshing to see a thriving, family owned company like Getzen that still holds dear its founding principles after 70 years. A commitment to crafting the finest, American made instruments possible at affordable prices while providing the service their customers deserve.

# A Look Back On 70 Years



# On 70 Years

*From our family to yours, thank you for 70 great years.*



2001



1991



1992



1959



1963



1953



2005



1991

the student's link to the artist



GETZEN 390



1967



1963

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