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Profiles In Enterprise: Entrepreneurship Personified Through The Life of Clark David Belden

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PROFILES
IN
ENTERPRISE



ENTREPRENEURSHIP
PERSONIFIED
through the life of
CLARK DAVID BELDEN

by
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Clark David Belden, the innovator who started the company that today is Lomanco (Louver Manufacturing Company of Jacksonville, Arkansas), believed in the power of the individual. This belief was evidenced by his life. Born in 1896 in the small town of Gallesburg, Illinois, Belden began working at various jobs, from farming to retailing.

In 1909, at the age of 13, he had a thriving enterprise in hauling water from a creek and selling it to housewives by the bucket or by the barrel. Progress being what it was, a well driller soon took over the market. He was married to Laura J. Fetterly in August of 1916. Clark David Belden was employed by the Shields Illinois Bank in 1929 and, therefore, was hit hard by the Depression.

During the critical years of the Depression when government trucks were sent to cities and towns across the country to parcel out food items, Clark David Belden refused to accept them, even though most people were gratefully receiving the desperately needed goods.

Clark David Belden used to say that as long as he had two arms and two legs, the government was not going to feed him; and thus would not allow his wife to take any government handouts. He would say, "We may have to cut down on what we eat, but we certainly are not going to take anything from the government."

Because of his pride and trust in the free enterprise system, Belden felt that the government should not be obligated to take care of him or his family as long as he was able to work and provide for them.

In an attempt to support his family, Clark David Belden experimented with different business undertakings. Under the pressures of a strained economy, success was not always within his reach. He was unsuccessful in his service station business in Raleigh, North Dakota, because he was willing to pass credit on to customers who could not pay their bills.

However, such losses did not discourage Belden or greatly affect the happiness and security of his home. Although the family did not always possess many material blessings, the children never went hungry, and their door was open to anyone. Their home was the neighborhood home; no one was ever turned away.

In addition, Clark David Belden's spiritual convictions were very dear to him. His personal relationship with God bound him to keep the high standards expressed in the Scriptures.

Later in his life, he began building fuel savers for H.A. Savers. His job was interrupted by World War II, in which he served as a precision grinder in a war plant in the Northern Ordinance.

After the war, started building fuel savers again and then began developing patents. Some of these included: Armored Cable cutters, Fluorescent Tube Removers, Docks and Canopies, Evacuators, and Minnow Savers. Clark David Belden's most successful patent was the Vari-Pitch Louver.



Clark David Belden was interested in satisfying unmet needs in the area of housing ventilation. His idea was to make an adjustable louver that would fit any pitch on any house.

A louver serves these three functions: 1) to eliminate condensations in the attic; 2) to keep the attic dry and to allow light to enter; 3) to cool the attic area. Prior to the adjustable louver, other louvers had to be made on special order to avoid the high storage costs necessary to stock nonadjustable louvers. The adjustable louver, known as Vari-Pitch, became a small stocking item and the first successful product of Lomanco.

However, an idea alone does not make a company. There are several tangible and intangible ingredients that are necessary for a successful business enterprise. The intangibles include: a strong desire to be independent, a dream for the future, and pride in being one's own boss. The tangible ingredients include: the goods and services of many people, the capital for the financial area of the company, and the entrepreneur that puts in all together.



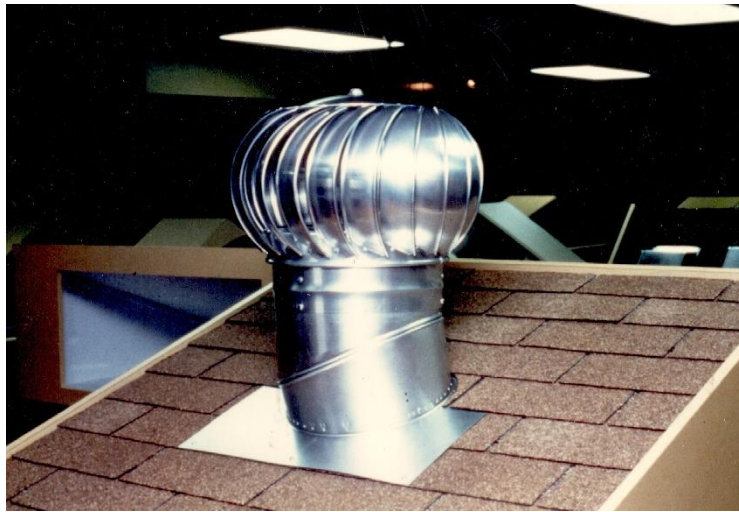
Clark David Belden enlisted the aid of a brother, two sons-in-law, and two sons to form the Louver Manufacturing Company known as Lomanco in April of 1946. They began manufacturing Vari-Pitch louvers, which became the “bread and butter” of the company for 15 years. Needless to say, the first few years were a struggle. The partners received \$.70 an hour for wages, and their wives worked for nothing.

Clark David Belden retired in 1951, and his brother followed suit in 1958. Clark David Belden’s share of the company was \$28,000 and, as far as he was concerned, he had total success. The Vari-Pitch had taken Lomanco to \$2 million a year in sales.

Because Free Enterprise still demanded that a company design new and better products, it was time for Lomanco to develop other products if the company was to grow. The shutter market was chosen.

Following Clark David Belden’s philosophy, Lomanco chose to introduce and manufacture metal shutters that looked like wooden ones painted with a flat-finish paint. The flat-finish made it impossible to tell a difference without actually touching the product.

By marketing a shutter at a price below the wooden shutter prices and offering the advantages of aluminum’s durability, such as resistance to rotting, warping and paint peeling, the company achieved success. Business sales rose to \$7 million. The approximate time involved was seven years, and with it came the retirement of two brothers-in-law ...



Once again, a new product was needed. Lomanco felt that company growth was dependent upon continuing to satisfy consumer needs. Consequently, they turned to the wind-driven turbine which would produce better ventilation than a gravity-powered ventilator. Today, Lomanco is the largest manufacturer in the country of wind-driven turbines for the home.

A subsequent issue of *"PROFILES IN ENTERPRISE"* will chronicle the amazing developments of the more recent quarter century of Lomanco's entrepreneurial achievements. However, the first issue focuses on the patriarch himself.

Clark David Belden totally personified the message of the Entrepreneur's Credo, originally penned by Dean Alfange:

I do not choose to be a common man. It is my right to be uncommon...if I can. I seek opportunity...not security. I do not wish to be kept a citizen, humbled and dulled by having the state look after me.

I want to take the calculated risk; to dream and to build, to fail and to succeed.

I refuse to barter incentive for a dole; I prefer the challenges of life to the guaranteed existence; the thrill of fulfillment to the stale calm of Utopia. I will not trade freedom for beneficence nor my dignity for a handout. I will never cower before any master nor bend to any threat.

It is my heritage to stand erect, proud and unafraid; to think and act for myself, to enjoy the benefit of my creations and to face the world boldly and say: This, with God's help, I have done. All this is what it means to be an Entrepreneur.

Clark David Belden had a strong belief in the free enterprise system which he wanted to share. Many times he tried to get others started in business for themselves. In fact, on several occasions, he provided all the money and talent for new enterprises in the hope that they would become self-sufficient.

Unlike his sons, who were taught and encouraged to take over and manage business matters themselves, these people were unable to succeed. His sons were successful because he had instilled in them a basic concept of free enterprise – you cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.

Clark David Belden's belief in self-sufficiency was evident throughout his productive working years. Even his retirement was worthwhile and enjoyable because he felt that, if he saved his money when he was younger, he could enjoy the fruits of his labor when he was older.

Clark David Belden was an entrepreneur who had a continued belief in the free enterprise system, even after retirement from Lomanco. He was constantly at his kitchen table drawing, designing or looking for a new idea, a new invention or a new device to make life better for someone.

In the quarter century since Clark David Belden's retirement, Lomanco has blazed new trails and achieved greater heights of success, honors and awards under the guidance of his son, D. R. (Del), who was Chairman during the crucially significant years of 1966 to 1984.

Lomanco continued to grow and prosper under third generation Beldens – all dedicated enterprises in their own right. A glimpse of Lomanco's colorful past and present can be summarized best in a letter from President John Belden as it was carried in a recent company newsletter:

I would like to share some of Lomanco's history with all of you. We were established in 1946 under the name of Dan Dee Manufacturing which was changed to Louver Manufacturing Company. In 1976 the change was made to our current name, Lomanco.

The original owners were Clark Belden, Don Belden, Merland Belden, Delbert Belden, and Arthur Swaboda. Our grandfather Clark Belden, invented the first adjustable gable end louver, which is

currently our "A Series." They then added other ventilation products and in the mid- sixties started producing aluminum window shutters.

The late sixties brought us to Jacksonville, Arkansas, when we purchased Hamlin Foundry Company to complete our line of ventilation products with foundation ventilators. In 1973 the big move was made from three locations in Minnesota to our current facility. The next major line addition was the Whirlybird, which we are producing here, as well as in Kingman, Arizona. The "Lomanco West" facility was started in 1980 and has been an excellent contributor ever since it was established.

We thank you for your participation in our growth since 1946, and look forward to the future when we can say we have grown from the basement of a hotel, past our current 450,000 square feet to a million square feet.

May God bless all of you.

Yes, a subsequent issue of "*PROFILES IN ENTERPRISE*" will appropriately chronicle these many and varied accomplishments. Clark David Belden would be proud indeed. This writer is convinced that, when the final chapters of the history of entrepreneurs have been fully written, the name of Belden will most certainly be in the headlines.

We salute Lomanco and the Belden family for keeping free, private enterprise in business and for their generous contribution, in the memory of Clark David Belden, to assist Harding University in passing the word about the economic system that supports us so well.

D.P. Diffine, Director