

TV TECHNOLOGY

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REPRINTED FROM DECEMBER 5, 2007

WWW.TVTECHNOLOGY.COM

Broadcasters Take Comfort in TBC

Long Island-based console manufacturer sees vibrant business in infrastructure upgrades

by James E. O'Neal

(This is the latest in a series of articles saluting broadcasting industry manufacturers that continue to produce their products on American soil with American labor.)

EDGEWOOD, N.Y.

For those not acquainted with this post office address, Edgewood is out “on the island,” as they say around here when referring to Long Island.

Getting here by car requires travel on the very heavily trafficked Long Island Expressway or “LIE.” (The name is a textbook oxymoron; the acronym says it all!) But once you’re able to put a little distance between you and greater New York City with its 22 million inhabitants, you begin to understand the logic in locating a business out here “on the island.”

Edgewood—home to TBC Consoles Inc.—has a decidedly small town feel and appearance. The town doesn’t even make it into the most recent census figures as such—it’s coupled with neighboring Brentwood, which is officially home to 53,917 souls.

Jerry Hahn, TBC president, and Frank LaPallo, a principal in its operations, couldn’t have picked better spot to set up a classic American business.

Long Island is rich with American history and technology—20 miles from here Lindberg launched his non-stop hop to Paris 80 years ago; Tesla built his Wardenclyffe laboratory just about the same distance away; the giant Grumman and Republic aircraft companies set up shop in these parts and churned out many of the aircraft that helped win the last world war, and later created the lunar lander mod-

ule. For a long time during the early days of wireless, Long Island was unequaled in the density of radio stations constructed, including a very large one in Brentwood.

Even as I park in the TBC Consoles lot, I know that this isn’t going to be like most other Made In America visits I’ve made. Through an



Tom Lazar, shop mechanic, readies a TBC TracWall unit for shipping.

open door there’s the sound of power saws at work and the sweet smell of lacquer being sprayed. No wave soldering machines, induction furnaces or vacuum pumps this time—this one’s all about wood and metal working.

The TBC story properly begins with the childhood interests of one of its founders, Jerry Hahn. He explained that early on, he was bitten equally hard by two bugs.



“Early on I had a passion for both industrial design and audio-video electronics,” Hahn said. “In particular, how various television manufacturers packaged their ‘tube’ in a cabinet fascinated me—and still does. Getting into the console business was a natural for me.”

Hahn and LaPallo followed the rather classic American path to a successful business—it’s something of a rags-to-riches story.

“We started out in 1988 with two people working in a 3,000 square foot sheet metal building,” said Hahn. “We referred to as ‘the cave.’”

Since then the two have steadily expanded their company, along the way supplying their products to most all of the major players in the broadcast business. These include three television networks, along with MSNBC, MTV, Fox News, A&E, ESPN, DirecTV and CNN just to name a few. And as is often the case in such stories, the TBC founders didn’t really start out to make broadcast console products, but were forced in that direction by the marketplace.

“We got into this end of the business by answering requests for custom work for New York City editing houses,” Hahn said. “There

