

**THE YEARS AT
GOLPER SUPPLY CO.**

- 1964: Purchased 40 acres on W. Edgewood Drive for new plant.
- 1968: Completed plant and started operations.
- 1970: Constructed a 110-by-80-foot steel enclosed nine stall truck dock.
- 1972: Built new offices with room for lower-level expansion and moved in.
- 1973: Installed 100,000-pound capacity scale, the largest in the Fox Valley.
- 1975: Completed steel building for railroad dock.
- 1976: Purchased warehouse on E. Newberry Street, Appleton, for storage and grouping of car loads.
- 1978: Completed maintenance building.
- 1980: Installed automatic baler and steel-belt conveyor.
- 1983: Added semi-trailer trucks to fleet and expanded shipping docks.
- 1984: Bought more trailers and acquired a computer system.
- 1988: Bought more trucks.
- 1991: Installed larger computer system and acquired five Soo Line rail cars for storage.
- 1993: Bought more forklift trucks and added a new phone system.
- 1996: Rented two warehouses for additional capacity and installed a new conveyor system for moving wastepaper.
- Dec. 1996: Plant destroyed by fire.
- 1998: Plant twice the size constructed and opened for business.

Bins of business



ROBBY QUANDT, an employee at Golper Supply Co., shovels newspapers into a baler for recycling at the company's Appleton facility. At right, Quandt uses a front-end loader to transport discarded items. **ON THE COVER:** Leo Golper, stands in his company's offices that have retained its 1970s decor, with the exception of an elegant black and white portrait of his father, Jacob Golper, from whom he inherited the business five decades ago.

Leo Golper built recycling business with determination, honesty

Leo Golper's credo for success: Never quit, even if the place burns down. Don't be an SOB. Work 12 to 15 hours a day. Be honest. Give customers the product they want, when they want it. Think globally. Forget protectionism. Golper took over his father's business about 50 years ago and converted Golper Supply Co., 1810 W. Edgewood Drive, from a scrap business into a large-scale paper stock recycler.

It burned two years ago, and at 69, Golper didn't just rebuild what he had. He doubled it.

There is nothing pretentious about Golper. He doesn't wear a suit or tie and an unlit cigar stub - he quit smoking - goes where he goes. He appears to enjoy rummaging through the warehouse, with its bins or outdated calendars, magazines and paperback books.

The new plant is left spotless every night, but the company office retains its 1970s decor.

The one concession to elegance is a black and white portrait of Jacob Golper, hung in the entryway.

A question about how he got interested in business is silly, Golper thinks. What is there but business?

Golper makes his business sound elementary.

"We buy material, sort it, grade it, bale it and ship it," he says.

He begins checking the overseas financial markets at 5:30 a.m. to stay on top of this simple business.

What their markets did overnight tells you what our market will do today, he explains. If Sony lays off workers, it affects business here. If the yen falls, it affects business here.

Golper talks currency with the retail lots of men reserve for football and deer hunting.

The euro - successor to the franc, the mark, the krone, the lire, etc. - is a good idea, he says, but just a good start.

"I think it is going to go really good for a while. We'll see how far it goes. Somebody will come up with another idea, something different. Instead of the euro, they'll have the

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Golper rides recent wave of product reincarnation

Unsold 1999 calendars fill a bin in Golper Supply's warehouse. Others hold paperback books, magazines and ad circulars.

Within seconds, the outdated discards are baled and well on their way to reincarnation.

There were a few businesses recycling paper when a young Leo Golper entered the industry about 50 years ago, even though paper recycling as an ecological endeavor was still unheard-of.

"Support from recycling arose from citizens' firm refusals to increase landfill space to contain waste," a 1997 U.S. Department of Labor study of the paper industry says.

As of 1996, almost 45 percent of the paper purchased in the U.S. was later recovered.

At the same time consumer demand fueled the scrap paper industry, U.S. paper consumption has increased 2 percent annually to a whopping 734.5 pounds per person in 1994.

Scrap material brokers and dealers, like Golper Supply, employed 130,000 people in 1996, the third largest labor segment of the paper industry and the fastest growing, according to the report.

Estimates put the demand worldwide for recovered paper at 150 million tons by next year, up from 110 million tons in 1993.

Leo Golper's interest in foreign markets and currency is understandable. U.S. paper exports doubled between 1985 and 1996, and recovered paper was among the fastest growing exports.

STORIES BY SUSAN SQUIRES
PHOTOS BY SHARON CEKADA



GOLPER: Looking forward, business forged ahead after devastating fire

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whole thing together," he says.

Within two generations, he sees the whole world using a single, common currency.

"It is something that is a long time coming that should have been here a long time ago," Golper says. "We have to understand we are talking world now. We're not talking about the United States, China and Japan."

Americans need to abandon "I-am-it-you-are-nothing," thinking, Golper says, and ask, instead, "Is it going to benefit the world, or will it just benefit us?"

Golper's friend, Warehouse Specialists Inc. president Jerry Van Hoof, says Golper is very good at forecasting.

Jacob P. Golper, who immigrated to the United States from Russia as a small child, founded Golper Supply more than 70 years ago.

His son, Leo, took over the business after two years of college and another two in the Army, stationed in Germany after World War II.

The junior Golper saw a future in recycled paper, and went knocking on doors.

"I used to travel an awful lot, three days a week, all over the United States," Golper said.

"You have to make your acquaintances first, then you go. You start working, getting customers so you have a commodity you can sell.

"Once you have a commodity you can sell, you got to go to the paper mills and sell it to them. It was very hard, dog-eat-dog."

The greeting was often, "The little guy on the block, what can he do?" Golper said.

Bergstrom Paper Co. - now a P.H. Glatfelter Co. division - was one of Golper's first customers.

D.W. Bergstrom, who later became the company's president, "was just an employee, then, in charge of scrap paper," when he met Golper.

Leo came around and Bergstrom signed him on as a supplier.

Bergstrom thought Golper was "a very likable, accomplished young man." And driven.

"He's always been that way," Bergstrom said.

Golper met Van Hoof the same way.

"He used to come by every day, and stop in and visit," Van Hoof said.

By 1996, Golper Supply had 50 employees, was running three shifts a day and was a major supplier for several mills.

Another Golper business edict: Taking care of employees is a good policy.

"Always has been, always will be. Your good people, not people who take advantage of you," he says.

Office manager Jane Gebert has worked for Golper 23 years.

She didn't recognize his voice when he called, early on the morning of Dec. 17, 1996. It was somebody talking about a fire, a bad fire. Eventually, she figured out it was Golper.

Nobody knows what started it.

The alarm went off at about 11 p.m., Dec. 16 - roughly 30 minutes after the last employee left the 40,000-square foot plant.

"... Take a football stadium, fill it 15 feet high with bales of paper, build an oven wall around it and light a match," *Post-Crescent* staff writer John Lee wrote the next day, describing the immensity of the blaze and how difficult it was to contain.

Almost 200 firefighters from 15 departments reported to the scene during the fire, still burning when Gebert came into work.

"One end of the building was engulfed. Flames were coming out of windows and everything," she said.

She told firefighters she had to get into the office building and they let her in.

"I said, 'I have records in there. I really want to get at my books,'" Gebert said.

"There was no electricity. I had to use a cell phone. I had loads I had to move. I kept shipping things I knew had to be taken care of.

"We never really quit. I think within a day we had already rented a tractor. We called people in who could do as much as we could here. The dock, after we got the debris clear, as long as we can get trucks in here, I saw no reason we couldn't back them in here and keep running."

Delbert Carter had been retired from Golper Supply for about eight years when the plant burned.

He began working for Golper part time in 1955, to supplement his income.

"I just got married and I wanted a little extra money," Carter said. Golper showed up to help Carter with the house he was building.

"Leo did his share of work already," Carter said. "A lot of people don't think so, but I know Leo. He knows what a day's work is."

Eventually, Carter became plant foreman.

"When I started full time, I pretty much called my own show. He left me alone. He told me what he wanted done and left it up to me to see it got done," he said.

Carter came back to work the day after the fire.

"Leo. Because he needed me, because I knew the lay of the land, so to speak," Carter explained.

Van Hoof sent over a forklift. Don Schneider, owner of trucking giant Schneider National Inc., sent down semi-trailers.

George Mueller, the retired president of Wisconsin Tissue Mills, called.

"He says, 'Leo, look forward, don't look behind. Keep your head up,'" Golper remembers.

Almost immediately, he decided to rebuild.

"I had to have something to do," he says. "I can't take pictures all the time." He also says he didn't want to put his employees out of work.

"Knowing Leo that long, I figured he wouldn't just walk away from what was going on here. Golper Supply, of course is his life," Gebert said.

Golper says it cost him \$1.98 to

rebuild. It's a joke. The fire damage was estimated at over \$1 million.

The new plant is twice the size of the old one. One new baler does more work than three did before. Instead of 50 employees, he now has 12.

"Customers are returning, slow but sure," Golper said. "All of our paper mills we had before we still have, and then some."

Besides his recycling operation, Golper is involved in banking, warehousing and paper converting with friends he doesn't name.

Golper knows he's what you'd call "direct." He hedges sometimes, worried a frankly stated opinion will hurt somebody's feelings.

Golper on government: "Anything the government gets involved in, the government screws up. I read today the IRS doesn't know how much money it is owed? If they'd take the politics out of politics, it would be great. If they don't know what that means, they better learn."

Golper on the economy: "The economy is not good. We got so

many people being laid off. Sony is laying off 17,000 people in Japan ... All of the paper mills are hurting very bad. Pulp is very, very stagnant. The market is very, very poor, and paper mills are not running full."

Golper knows he's stepped on some toes.

"You are always offending somebody, someplace," he says.

He's not planning retirement any time soon.

"Why should I do something else, when I enjoy what I do?" he says.

Golper Supply



Ten Construction, J. P. Jansen, CMA, and the Jansen Group, along with Gene Frederickson Trucking and Vos Electric Co., are proud to have been part of the re-birth efforts of Golper Supply Paper Recycling Center.

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