

(CAPITAL PRESS)

(HEADLINE)

Hallco Manufacturing Keeps Things Moving with "Live Floor" Technology

By Laura Swanson

Tillamook, OR -- For years Ole Hallstrom's inventions and innovations were just ways to make doing certain jobs on his family's dairy farm easier and faster. "I tinkered around with this and that," said Hallstrom. "He was always fixing things," added his wife of 54 years, Mary. In the early 1970's, Hallstrom looked around Tillamook County at all the industry hauling -- cannery waste, silage, manure, wood chips, and wondered what could be done to improve the efficiency of the loading and unloading of all these trucks. "Carl Blaser was the guinea pig for the first slat-type conveyor, with wooden slats," said Hallstrom. "But when we loaded wet silage, it expanded the boards and they wouldn't slide." Before long, Don Averill purchased the original trailer with the wooden slat conveyor and encouraged Hallstrom to try building the system with something else. "That's when I had aluminum slats made," said Hallstrom. The rest is Hallco Manufacturing Company history, as the patented "Live Floor" technology began to revolutionize the way a wide variety of materials are loaded and unloaded, saving haulers money and time.

It's been 25 years since the first experiments, and Ole Hallstrom has continued to enhance the moving floor concept. Engineered for maximum durability, reliability and performance, the Hallco Live Floor is a hydraulically powered conveyor system. A powerful system, using a series of moving slats that ride on a bearing surface to handle a wide range of loads, from dry materials to wet, soggy refuse to recyclables. Hallco manufactures a full line of live floors for both trailers and stationary conveyor/bin systems. Each floor is custom designed for a specific application. Hallco's two-way, variable speed moving floors provide controlled loading and unloading in virtually any terrain or in confined situations. According to Don Hiatt, Puget Sound Freight Lines, "Hallco Live Floors work great, and their people really listen. It's hard to believe we've been working together for nearly 30 years. All I can say is I'm looking forward to a continued partnership."

It all began in the mid-1920's, when the Hallstrom family purchased 188 acres in the Tillamook area with plans to clear the land, and sell it to the expanding dairy farms in the area. With the onset of the depression, no one was buying land, so the Hallstroms acquired a dairy herd to provide milk for the creamery. Born in 1929, Olof "Ole" Hallstrom grew up helping on the dairy farm with a keen interest in mechanics, and was sent off to Oregon State to study engineering. His college years were interrupted by World War II, as his family couldn't get help on the dairy farm, and he had to go home to operate the farm. "The farm became my permanent occupation. My interest in mechanics continued with small scale manufacturing of equipment for the dairy industry, and then expanded into material handling," said Hallstrom. With 30-40 patents ("I've lost track of how many patents," Hallstrom commented) on a variety of inventions, he continues to improve the technology and develop new applications for the Live Floor system. "It was better for me to learn from life experience. I spent a lot time under trucks, experimenting with the moving floor with silage dripping on my head," added Hallstrom.

Hallco Manufacturing, from its inception 25 years ago, is a family business with Hallstrom's sons, Steve as company president and Dan, Vice President. The family farm (now grown to 220 acres) is no longer a dairy. "My son Dan got the family farm gene, and runs 100 head of beef cattle," said Hallstrom. "My wife Mary has always been involved, and a very important part of the business, running the bookkeeping department," he added. "Until I walked out about 10 years ago," said Mary. "I never got paid a penny, but the fringe benefits were great," she added with a laugh. The Hallstroms also have three daughters -- Vickie, Cynthia and Penni, and Vickie's son, Brent is a part-owner of the company and actively involved in the business.

Originally established on the Hallstrom's farm, Hallco Manufacturing soon needed room to expand, and with land zoning restrictions, the company couldn't add any more outbuildings on the farm land. From his family home with unmatched views of Tillamook Bay and the surrounding dairyland, Hallstrom looked northeast to the nearby Port of Tillamook industrial park, the former blimp base, and acquired use of land and an existing concrete building. "I fabricated other buildings to suit our manufacturing needs," said Hallstrom. The aluminum slats are extruded in Portland, and the rest of the components are manufactured and assembled at the Tillamook facilities. Hallco also has distribution warehouses and service centers in North Carolina and Texas, and has about 50 employees company-wide. The manufacturing facility produces 800 to 1,000 units per

year, and the vast array of components that go into each customized live floor system are produced in Tillamook. From raw materials, plastic beads, metals and more, Hallco employees assemble these high performance flat deck floor surfaces customized to a wide variety of applications. The assembled units are shipped to trailer manufacturers and trucking company customers worldwide for installation. Many of the machines and plant operations utilized in the manufacturing process at Hallco were designed by Ole Hallstrom. "It was too expensive to outsource the plastic bearings. So, I developed and built my own machines, and we manufacture the bearings here," said Hallstrom. Two high-tech C.N.C., (Computer Pneumatic Control) machines guide the process of turning blank metal slabs into exact fitting components for the live floor systems. The company also has manual metal lathes that pre-date World War II. "They don't build 'em like these anymore," said Hallstrom. He purchased the English metal lathes, originally used for aircraft components, and had them brought over from England. Hallco Manufacturing utilizes the most advance technology as well as time-proven equipment to ensure each live floor system lives up to the company's high standard for performance and reliability.

At 74-years-young, Ole Hallstrom continues to take an active role in product development and research at Hallco Manufacturing. As he opened an envelope beside his chair, he said, "This is the patent for a rapid materials handling system for handling of general cargo, palletized freight. The rapid transfer from the trailer to the dock or plant into a trailer in less than one minute; the usual unloading time is 45 minutes to an hour," explained Hallstrom. Later during a plant tour, Hallstrom is like a kid as he demonstrates how efficiently the prototype for this trailer-to-dock rapid material transfer system operates as it swiftly unloads a full trailer in under one minute. "It's speed and careful handling. The system reduces damage to freight with less handling," added Hallstrom. This will surely be another Hallco Manufacturing product that will continue to revolutionize materials handling. At the other end of the materials handling spectrum, the company has applied their live floor technology to utility trailers. These heavy duty trailers, available in 10 ft to 16 ft., equipped with the Hallco Live Floor can unload up to 6 tons of bulk material in less than 3 minutes. Farmers, contractors and landscapers will find many uses for the Hallco Live Floor trailers.

As he continues to come up with better ways of doing everyday things, Hallstrom keeps busy with a variety of things, including timber management on the family acreage. "Built our home, and our two sons' homes with timber from the property, cut in our sawmill. One of our daughter's is planning to build here, too. So I guess I'll need to get the mill fired up," said Hallstrom. He'll continue to keep Hallco Manufacturing fired up with the ideas and inventions.

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(CUT-LINES – 6 photo options)

#1 – Utility Trailer

Brent Blaser, grandson of Hallco Manufacturing company founder Ole Hallstrom, demonstrates one of the company's newest products – heavy-duty utility trailers equipped with the Hallco Live Floor system.

#2 – Metal

Greg Davis checks the precision CNC computerized metal lathe equipment at Hallco.

#3 – New Floor

Ole Hallstrom shows how Hallco's new rapid materials handling system is capable of saving time and money as freight is quickly out of the truck ready for distribution.

#4 – Ole and Mary Hallstrom

#5 – Plant

Assembled Live Floor systems await shipment at Hallco's Tillamook facility.

#6 – Plastic bearings