

Scott Halsey - Adapa

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Do you have hang-ups? No, I'm not talking about your pet peeves. I'm referring to a type of hardware called a hang-up which is useful in hanging items from acoustical ceilings. That's one example of an item produced by an innovative company which now manufactures carts and other products for the workplace. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Scott Halsey is President of Adapa USA, the innovative company which produces hang-ups, shop carts, and more. This is truly a family business, started by Scott's father Paul Halsey in 1964.

After working in the aviation industry, Paul Halsey started a construction company in Wichita with a partner named Dan Tevis. They looked for ways to help their workers and improve their efficiency.

At contractor conventions, Paul Halsey's peers would ask him why he was winning so many competitive bids. He explained it was because his labor costs were lower due to his labor-saving devices. His friends wanted some of those devices as well.

In 1964 Paul Halsey started producing and marketing these items as a sideline to his construction business. His company got the bid to do the interior work at White Lakes Shopping Center in Topeka so he relocated his family there.

He continued to look for innovative pieces of equipment to help his workers. One of the first products was called a "hang-up." It looked like an upside down coat hanger with wire clips which are useful when used with acoustical tile. Those kinds of custom-made products may be simple but can be invaluable for a particular task.

Mr. Halsey's whole family was involved in the business. "The wire company would ship us a big clump of those clips and my brothers and sister and I would sit around the table, separating them and counting them out," Scott Halsey said.

By 1980, the demand for Adapa products became so strong that it became a fulltime business based in Topeka. Scott graduated from Washburn and joined the family business himself, eventually becoming president of the company. Over time, older products such as hang-ups were phased out and others were developed to join the product line.

The company is named Adapa Incorporated. Why Adapa? "The name comes from `adaptable products for increased productivity,'" Scott Halsey said. "But I've also heard that the name comes from the first two letters of the founder's names – Dan and Paul," he added.

Either way, the company's products definitely do enhance productivity in the workplace. "You see a problem on a construction site, you try to solve it and make life easier for the workers," Scott said.

Many of these products involve handling materials. "When Dad worked at Boeing, he saw them use these rubber clamps," Scott said. "He figured out a way to use those in his business and it really helped the workers." Another company specialty became carts of various kinds, from drywall to residential, all terrain, trash carts, door carts, tree carts, and more. These are especially useful for drywall stockers and construction workers.

The company's shop carts became so popular that the Halseys created a sister company called Shopcarts USA. These carts are especially useful for woodworkers.

Adapa and Shopcarts are selling their products all across the U.S. and Canada. "Our products and our designs lead the industry," Scott said. "But we started as a family business and we're still a family business," he said. "Mom still works here."

Paul Halsey passed away in 2010. One of his ingenious designs was a side-loading trash cart. "This was modeled after a grain cart that he saw unloading feed for dairy cows on farms where he worked," Scott said. Mr. Halsey grew up working on farms near the rural community of Viola, Kansas, population 212 people. Now, that's rural.

For more information, go to www.adapausa.com or www.shopcartsusa.com.

Do you have hang-ups? Those wire hangers were one of the first products produced by Adapa which is now a leader in the shopcart and materials handling industry. We commend Scott Halsey and all those involved with Adapa and Shopcarts USA for making a difference with innovation and entrepreneurship. With that, I guess I'll hang up.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.