

MUSCLE SHOALS RUBBER COMPANY

BATESVILLE, MS

The business originated in Muscle Shoals, AL in 1948, moved to Batesville, MS in 1965. Founded by Cowles Horton, Jr., the facility is currently owned by his son, Cowles “Pete” Horton, III, Huntsville, AL and his daughter, Susan H. Gray, Dunwoody, GA. The business is the manufacturing of cores for Major League Baseball. We have manufactured these cores for different companies that have held the MLB contract. For over the past 30 years, that company has been Rawlings Sporting Goods. We currently employ 27 people that will be without jobs when the current PO is completed around the end of February.

The reason for our closing is simple. Rawlings Sporting Goods has decided to take more jobs away from American people. They are using another supplier. This new supplier has “office space” in Fort Worth, TX, but their products are made in Costa Rica.

In the past MLB has required that all components of their balls be American. The American components were then shipped to Costa Rica for assembly. Now, that has gone by the wayside. Now the core will be made in Costa Rica.

I know that our 27 people are just a drop in the bucket in the large scheme of things, but it just means more Americans out of jobs due to work going overseas. This time, the work consists of a large part of American history as baseball is “America’s pastime”.

As you can see from the enclosed articles, we are not the only company that Rawlings has done this to. D & T Spinning in Ludlow, Vermont supplied the yarn for the baseballs. Rawlings pulled the contract from them in 2007 causing their doors to close.

Muscle Shoals*The Panolian*

1/23/2009

Longtime plant will close after 'America's game' goes overseas

By John Howell Sr.

Muscle Shoals Rubber Company will close its doors after 60 years, its co-owner and president said Wednesday.

The decision came after Rawlings Sporting Goods Company, Inc. moved the manufacturer of Major League baseball cores to Costa Rica.

Manufacture of the center cores for the baseballs used in the major league was the primary product for the Batesville facility that employs 27 workers in two shifts, Cowles "Pete" Horton III said.

The company was founded in 1948 in Muscle Shoals, Alabama by Cowles Horton Jr. and retained the name of its place of origin with its 1965 move to Batesville. The company founder died in 1967, but his widow continued its operation at the Highway 51 location.

In 1973, Pete Horton moved to Batesville to enter the family business. The company rebuilt in its same location after the facility was destroyed by fire in 1977 and continued its manufacture of a variety of molded rubber products including components for golf balls and softballs. Its peak production in the late 1970s and early '80s included 80 to 110 workers in three shifts, Horton said.

"Everything else has gone to China," Horton said. "It used to be [with] Major League Baseball and Rawlings that all components were made in the U. S. and just assembled in Costa Rica," the Muscle Shoals president said, noting the irony in the slogan of Major League Baseball: "America's Game."

Horton, who co-owns Muscle Shoals with his sister, Susan Horton Gray of Dunwoody, GA, lives in Huntsville, Alabama. He served as Batesville's Fire Chief from 19?? To 19?? After a catastrophic fire and gasoline storage tank explosion at the Panola County School Bus Shop while Horton was fire chief, he initiated an aggressive program of firefighter training and equipment procurement that moved the Batesville Fire Department into the modern era.

"I almost got everybody killed in the school bus fire," Horton said. "Eleven people went to the hospital and three stayed," as a result of the injuries to volunteer firefighters, he added.

When Horton decided to run for ward one alderman in 1985, his main concern was a lack of city-owned public parks, he said. He served only one term and did not seek re-election.

"I saw things as alderman that were a whole lot scarier than fire fighting," he said.

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Ludlow's D&T Spinning closes doors

By STEPHEN SEITZ Herald Staff

LUDLOW — The parking lot was empty on Tuesday, the building quiet and a note on the office door at Ludlow's D&T Spinning Co. read, "Gone for the day."

X According to one of its employees, the company has lost its contract to supply fabric to the Rawlings sporting goods company. The company employed close to 30 people.

"We stopped production on the 31st of May," said Robert Davis, who has worked at the mill for 40 years. "Now we're selling off the machinery, so I'm still there. Little by little, the other mills are coming by to take a look."

Attempts to reach company owner Joy Grossman were not successful.

Ed Eagan, who until recently served as head of the Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce, said he was saddened by the news.

"Ludlow has a population of about 2,700 people," Eagan said. "Losing 28 jobs is the equivalent of 1 percent of the population."

Eagan said he was not surprised to hear of the closing.

"I was talking with Joy about eight or nine months ago, and she said she was really struggling," Eagan said. "But from a manufacturing standpoint, it's almost impossible for the United States to compete in the global market. We may design products here, but they're being manufactured somewhere else."

The company may be gone, but as of yet D&T Spinning has not asked for bankruptcy protection, according to a search of recent filings at the U.S. Federal Bankruptcy Court Web site for Vermont.

Davis, meanwhile, said there was nothing for it but to find another job.

"I feel bad about it," he said. "It's five years before I can start to collect Social Security. In all my time there, I never took time off except for my week's vacation. There's a mill in Putney, and a mill in Harrisville where I'm already working part time. We'll see what happens."

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This article originally included the wrong first name for Robert Davis, a 40-year employee of D&T Spinning.