

C O R P O R A T E P R O F I L E

Brithinee Twins Never Take the Electric Motor for Granted

By Molly Burgess

More than 100 years after its invention, we often take the electric motor for granted. Electric motor systems are energy converters, changing electrical energy into mechanical energy, into mechanical energy, and are the “engine” behind manufacturing, pumping, product movement, and many other applications. In fact, industrial electric motor systems account for more than two-thirds of the electricity used by U.S. industry. And that is roughly equivalent to all the energy used by automobiles in the United States.

One company that never takes motors for granted is Brithinee Electric.

Brithinee Electric was founded in 1963 as a motor repair shop located in a garage. It was truly a family business with dad, Wallace Brithinee, handling the shop work while mom ran the office and kept the books. Their twin sons, Wally and Don, were 14 at the time, and were kept busy making and inserting coils, making electrical connections, and replacing bearings. As business increased the brothers were asked to do more difficult tasks, and they became proficient in rewinding motors and learning what makes them run.

Celebrating their 40th anniversary this year, Brithinee Electric is still a family business. The company now occupies 33,000 square feet, has more than 40 employees. It repairs and sells electric motors and controls, and fabricates custom motor control panels for customers throughout Southern California. And, its remanufactured motor components are found on locomotives throughout North America.

While the Brithinee brothers have grown up in the motor business, they also bring a unique perspective to the industry through their formal education and outside activities.

As brothers, Don and Wally Brithinee have done things together; but it would require someone with their math skills to determine the odds of their remarkable lives. As identical twins they each earned three degrees in mathematics from the same university. In spite of their

family business commitments, they graduated with highest honors with Bachelor of Arts degrees in 1968. Two years later, they had earned Master's degrees. In 1971, they received their doctorates—at age 23. They have worked together for the next 32 years as business partners.

With the realization that Brithinee Electric was fast becoming a highly successful enterprise, they decided to pursue the family business full time. They now co-own Brithinee Electric, which services and sells electric motors for industrial customers and is one of the largest companies of its kind in the Inland Empire.



Today, Brithinee Electric is a complete motor resource to its customers. They repair and sell new motors as well as fabricate commercial control panels used to properly run today's variety of high efficiency and variable speed motors in industrial settings. So a customer can get advice, assess the alternatives and place the order in one call.

One demand is the absolute need for reliability – “uptime.” Factories and plants rely on motors to keep production lines going, materials moving and liquids flowing. “When a motor stops running, our customers are losing money, some times many thousands of dollars per hour,” states Wally Brithinee. “So our processes are built around the customers’ need for a speedy and reliable repair.”

Brithinee Electric serves a diverse customer base, including

municipalities, utilities, food processors, rock and gravel producers, cement companies, air conditioning contractors, chemical companies, paper and plastic producers, wind farms and OEMs. They repair AC and DC motors ranging in size up to 1,500 HP. The firm also stocks and distributes a number of motor lines, plus electronic controllers and components for motors up to approximately 1000 HP.

Brithinee Electric produces motor control panels to customer specifications and built to meet UL Standards 508A or 845—a growing business segment for the company. Supporting their sales of variable frequency drives (VFD's) with system in-

Each brother has served as president of the local Electrical Apparatus Service Association Chapter.

During the Clinton administration, Wally was invited to the White House by the White House Office of Science and Technology, where he worked with corporate leaders and directors of the national laboratories to formulate ways in which industrial companies and government agencies can work better on long term research and development, especially in the area of pollution prevention technology. Improving energy efficiency is a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Brithinee brothers have also found special significance in their continued support and association with the University of California Riverside, including the UCR Alumni Scholarship Program, which Donald helped to start. The Brithinee Scholarships are awarded to continuing UCR Alumni Scholars and are based on merit. Since 1987, more than fifty scholars have received over \$80,000 in financial assistance. Don was a member of the UCR Alumni Association Board of Directors from 1974 through 1985, serving in all the offices in that organization, and presently serves on the UCR Foundation Board.

DuPont's Advanced Fibers Systems has had a long relationship with Brithinee Electric that goes back to 1983. Most recently, Brithinee Electric has been selected as the only participant from the western United States for a new DuPont Motor Repair Alliance Program. The DuPont product NOMEX is used as an integral part of motor repairs. This alliance has allowed Brithinee Electric to work closely with DuPont marketing and engineering to increase the awareness of the ingredients, or “building-blocks”, that contribute to the reliability and durability of electric motors.

Motors will continue to be a large although mostly hidden feature of our economy, and you can bet that the Brithinee brothers and Brithinee Electric will continue to serve Southern California businesses' motors in new and innovative ways.

tegration and fabrication provides a clear competitive edge.

Don Brithinee is proud of the firm's reputation for quality. “We pride ourselves on being a leader in the industry, offering the best service and quality in the area, around the clock.” Many of the motors Brithinee Electric repairs are special in nature and not easily replaced. Customers often cannot wait for three to four months to replace a failed motor. Some motors are no longer available at all.

As leaders in their industry, Don and Wally encourage their staff to participate in industry, government, and educational partnerships, and to interact with regulatory agencies in order to streamline compliance. This includes work with the California Air Resources Board, the California Energy Commission, and the U.S. Department of Energy.

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