

# General Metals celebrating 65 years in business

**Robert and Richard Goettel**  
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*This is an account of General Metals' history written by General Metals President Robert Goettel, with contributions from his brother, General Metals Vice President Richard Goettel.*

After World War II, my Dad (I prefer Dad, not father, because it just sounds too formal), came back from India where he was stationed. He was flown out on a C-47 transport plane, which I have a floor-to-ceiling photo of in my office. The plane is casting a shadow onto the Taj Mahal in the background.

When he got back, Dad, moved from his family in Mansfield, Ohio and went to Phoenix, Ariz. to work in his sheet metal trade. Working out of a hangar at Sky Harbor Airport, he made crop duster spreaders for Stearman Aircraft. He told me that the standard engine in the Stearman aircraft didn't have enough horsepower to lift the additional weight of the chemicals, so they would swap out the old engines with 450 Wasp engines for additional power. By the way, did you know that dry ice was sometimes used to seed clouds for increasing the precipitation?

Before I move on, another story must be told. My Grandfather and Grandmother arrived at Ellis Island from Yugoslavia when my Dad was two years old (1922). The importance of this is to establish the true spelling of Goettel vs. Goettl. As told to me, the other family that migrated to the United States did not know the German translation of 'Goettel.' So they put down 'Goettl' on the immigration papers instead of 'Goettel.' It has been a point of contention between the families forever. But to prove whom was correct and whom was in error, we had a photo that showed the name 'Goettel' on the front of German blacksmith shop in Yugoslavia. By the way, don't ask me to find the photo.



Robert Goettel keeps this photo in his office to remind him of his father's production or retransmission.

arrived on his door step one Saturday (let's call them "Guido Doco" and "Luca Brasi"). They convinced Mr. Dry that he wasn't going to make vending machines (most vending machines were controlled by the Mafia at the time). He called John Goettel who had just started a wholesale company called General Metals to explain his situation. My Dad told him, "Why don't you make registers and grilles? I am looking for a line of them." John Dry replied, "What are registers and grilles?" The rest is history.

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ers are higher priced than at the Harlan Company." My Dad's response, "How much higher?"

"About \$5.00," said Dalton.

"Well, then go buy it at Harlan's," said Dad.

"I would but they are out," replied Dalton. My dad looked at Dalton and said, "Well, when we are out, they are free."

He was a black and white person, no shades of grey whatsoever. People who knew him will attest. He passed away in 1975.

Adam and Gus Goettl started a company after the war called International Metal Products which manufactured coolers under the name Arctic Circle and Alpine. They sold the company for a sizable sum (I was told \$9 million, bear in mind that was back in the 1970s) to The McGraw Edison Company, which sold the company to Adobe. When I was about 12 years old I remember walking in the plant with my Dad and he was told by Adam that the cost of a 4500 down draft cooler, in the box, ready to ship was \$34.00 no motor. Unbelievable!

Anyway, back to my story. My Dad's company name was changed in 1972 as I recall from General Metals to General Metals Mfg. & Sup. Co. because the company opened a manufacturing division. I had just returned from the Army in 1969, and my Dad was hell bent on getting into the light gauge sheet metal manufacturing business. He lent my brother, Richard, and myself a substantial amount of money—penny's compared to today. We ordered, shears, punch presses, brakes, the works at the time, and we were off to the races. Prefab Metal Manufacturing was born.

My brother and I started out making duct work for the mobile home manufacturers. 20"x8" 10' long duct by the miles. Roof metal by the hundreds of thousands of feet. Our biggest customer was Roofing Wholesale (still in business today). "Paid like a slot machine." When our layout guy got hurt on a shear, it forced me to learn sheet metal layout. No such thing as CAD programs back then.

American Metals, Air Flow Products, General Metals and Prefab Manufacturing later became General Metals Mfg. and Supply Company in 1974. Our slogan is, "We Don't Follow the Trends, We Set Them."

One of the great things of yesteryears, was that a man's word, was his bond. If the customer shook your hand it was good as gold, "you could take it to the bank." The sad disappointment of today is that you must cross every "t" and dot every "i."

In 1973, my brother Richard took over the tasks of the manufacturing division and I moved to our new location on Weldon Ave. to learn the wholesale trade. The company has given all we have today. We at one time had over a 155 employees before the crash of 2008. Once we weathered that crash, the company has done exceptionally great over the last six years. Richard has his son, Michael, working at manufacturing, and I have my youngest, Bobbi, working at the wholesale division.

Not mentioning the superior employees we have would be a disservice not to be taken lightly. Some of our exceptional people include Vicky Brecht (controller), Rich Rhodes (general manager), Dale Brumit (Tucson manager) J.T., Rojo, Mike Gonzalez, Michael Goettel, Bobbi Goettel and Manuel Alonzo Jr. (AKA Manny).

Manny's, dad, Manuel Alonzo Sr., I used to work for when I was at General Metals during summer vacation. He fought in Germany during WWII and was awarded the Bronze Star. He would take me on deliveries to help him unload product and then we would stop at the tamale factory on Washington Street. They were 10 cents in those days. I was 12 years old then. Richard would go to all the contractors' shops and pick up their scrap metal for free and cut it up into "S" cleats and "drive" cleats to size on a 3-foot shear and sell it back to them. He still has that shear. It must be 50 years old.

Needless to say we have seen many companies come and go through the last 65 years. We have seen shysters that have robbed the air conditioning industry of good will and damage the reputations of our industry. And we have seen the best of customers give back to the community its just rewards. General Metals is a company that has given much to the industry of air conditioning and the sheet metal trades. A special thanks goes to our customers. We stand for the Flag and kneel for the fallen.



The General Metals' main building on Weldon Ave. in Phoenix.

Unlike the other Goettl (owned by Ken Goodrich), we don't have free flash lights.

Back to my story. General Metals Supply Company was founded in May of 1952. The first sale was July 23, 1952, for \$103.42 less two percent total of \$101.35 to Phoenix Air Conditioning for paying within the terms. There are many stories, far too many to put in this article, but some must be told.

How and when Johnny Dry met or came in contact with my Dad, John Goettel, is somewhat obscure. But the story goes that John Dry, of the infamous Dry Manufacture in Winters, Texas (Air Mate registers and grilles) had purchased several shears, brakes, punch presses, etc. to manufacture vending machines (Hart and Cooley bought Dry Manufacturing several years ago and shut the plant down. Johnson Controls now owns Hart and Cooley).

In any case, as Johnny Dry was tooling up to go into production, two "gentleman"

Speaking of vending machines, when we were kids the old vending machines for soda, (we called it 'pop') were situated so the pop bottles were vertical in the machine. You would open the lid, put your five cents in and pull the pop out. Being the clever kids we were, we carried a bottle opener and a straw. A lot of empties as you might guess. Then the clever rouges came out with the vending machines with horizontal bottles of pop. Not to be out done, we carried a bottle opener and a cup. We didn't get all the soda out of the bottle, but what the hell—it was free.

Another story that I remember from Dad was about Mr. Charles Dalton. My dad called them the 'Dalton Gang'. The Dalton Gang was a group of outlaws in the Old West during 1890-1892. Three boys, as I remember. Ray Dalton and Charlie Dalton are still customers today—great people I might add.

As the story goes, Mr. Dalton came into my Dad's office and said, "Johnny your cool-