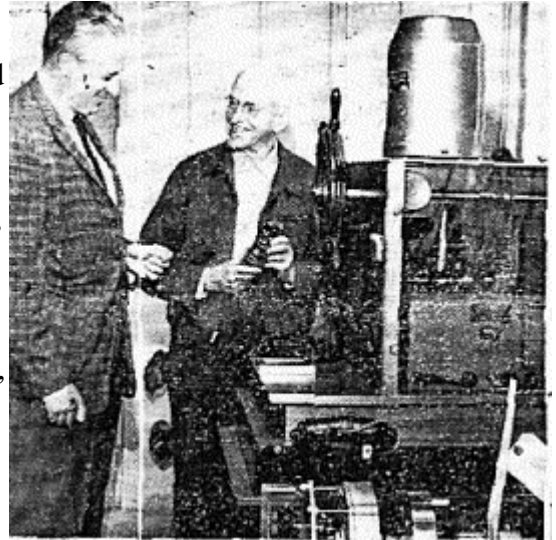


The Fisherman's Extra Hand by Lorie Waggner

Ask a fisherman what Metal Marine Pilot is, or what they do, and he might not know . . . but ask him about Wood Freeman and it's a sure bet you won't find one that couldn't give you a brief resume.

It all started back in 1929 when a fisherman named Wood Freeman almost lost his life aboard his fishing vessel when a fastening gave way and a swinging block struck his jaw knocking him unconscious. When the fisherman awoke he found that his boat was circling and that he was unable to stand to pilot the craft. As he lay on the pilot house floor using his feet to steer, he conceived the idea of an automatic pilot. Freeman lived through the treacherous journey back to shore and as a result, in 1934, turned out the first Wood Freeman Automatic Pilot for a customer.



This last week, The Fisherman's News made a visit to the Tacoma, Washington headquarters of Metal Marine Pilot, Inc., for an impromptu tour of their facilities. The factory today is a far cry from the original basement workshop, but the company still retains the "family business" type image. President of the company is Dr. Robert Freeman, Wood Freeman's son. A physician-surgeon, Dr. "Bob", as he is called, had headed the company since his father's death in April of 1966. Dr. Freeman's sister, Eleanor Jessel is vice-president of the company. Secretary-Treasurer is Carol Anderson.

Considering the volume of business that the company does - (Since they started keeping records - for years none were kept - 15,000 automatic pilots have been sold) that facilities seem relatively small, but nonetheless impressive. Each employee has a spacious work area. The general offices as well as the factory are very clean. Most impressive is the congenial atmosphere in which the employees work.

The company has outlets in over 17 different countries. MMP's 10-acre site, located at 2119 S. Mildred St. in Tacoma is adjacent to Oswald Airport where Freeman houses his private plane. Dr "Bob" finds their Tacoma location ideal. Although the Wood Freeman Automatic Pilot is shipped all over the world, the company has tried to locate its suppliers in the Tacoma area. One of its suppliers, Puget Die Casting is located next door. It might be considered loyalty, or more descriptively, "team spirit", but everybody at MMP takes pride in the product they produce. It is their speciality and they have the right to be proud. The Wood Freeman Automatic Pilot is the champion of the fleet. Metal Marine Pilot is number one in commercial boat sales.

As we see it, the marine industry has benefited a great deal from the efforts of the Freeman family and the employees of Metal Marine Pilot, Inc.