

OUR HISTORY

In 1967 James (Jim) McWilliam started California Tool & Die in a small shop in So El Monte, CA. His son, David McWilliam worked with him while attending college at Cal Poly Pomona, majoring in engineering. As the business grew, David became Jim's partner, incorporating in 1974 under the name of McWilliam & Son, Inc.

Fredrick Ramond became our first lighting customer. The first part produced for the lighting industry was the A46 and A40C body set. This launched us into the lighting industry. The company grew rapidly and moved to a larger building in So El Monte. It was not long before all of Jim's other children were working in the business. Dan became a die maker apprentice while also learning all about production. By the time he graduated from high school he was working full time and running the second shift. Susan did all of the inventory functions, including shipping and invoicing. In 1977, Dana came on as the bookkeeper and office manager, finally earning her BS in Accounting in 2003. Everyone started in the production shop running punch presses as Jim believed that the best training was from the

The E. Kazan Company became our stocking distributor and Jim and Gene would travel across the country in Jim's Cessna 360, visiting customers and trade shows.



California Tool & Die specializes in deep drawn stampings and some of the products we made in the early days were nested camping dishes for Campways and coop cups for the rabbit/pet industry. But one of the biggest product lines we worked on was the Johnson Industries rain lamps. We made thousands and thousands of the component pieces. This was our first large customer owned stamping product.

In December 1976 Jim and David bought our current 26,000 sq ft building in Azusa, CA. Business was booming so it took about a year to complete the move, moving equipment a little at a time so that production was not interrupted.

Jim wanted all of his kids to benefit and have a vested interest in the company so he began gifting some of his stock to Dan, Susan, and Dana. Jim's brother, Bob, came on board about this time as a production manager. Other family members came and went. Susan got married and had a baby girl so she left in about 1982 to become a full time mom. Jim retired in 1984 selling his share of the business to David, Dan, and Dana. Bob left to pursue other interests. This left Dan to completely take over as Production Manager in addition to helping to build the dies. The 3 siblings fell into a comfortable arrangement with Dan taking charge of production, David running the die shop as Die Shop and General Manager, and Dana working as Office Manager and Chief Financial Officer.

David's passion in the business was the die making aspect, particularly designing them, and learning AutoCad and Mastercam. He also excelled in designing and building equipment to run production, including a 3 head drill and tapping machine for glassholders and a spinning machine to flange the lamp bases. Those machines are still in use today.



In the early 1980s we began doing business with Capri Lighting. We have built many dies for them over the years for their recessed and commercial lighting lines. We have made various recessed lighting cans and retrofit parts and have manufactured hundreds of thousands of them. We built a strong alliance with them participating in their Vendor Management program through DayBrite. In addition to Capri Lighting we have done work over the years with DayBrite, Thomas Industries, Genlyte, Lightolier, and various other Philips companies, all in the capacity of customer owned tooling and production. The business shifted from being a catalog line producer to a 50-50 split of catalog and customer owned products.

In 1990 Dana remarried and her husband, Frank Matejka, became another member, of not only the family, but of the family business. He likes to joke now that Dana only married him because they needed a maintenance man. In addition to doing the equipment and facility maintenance, Frank learned to build dies and run the Wire EDM machines when they were purchased. He has been an invaluable asset to the business.

Right about that same time, Susie VanderLoop joined the team as our Customer Service Rep. Though not a blood relative, she was a classmate of Dana and Dan's and has been a longtime friend. She and Dana traveled to tradeshows and worked the American Made Component show in Dallas for the years it was in operation. She quickly became a customer favorite in both likeability and product knowledge. When Susie left the company she went to work for the Azusa Chamber of Commerce but retired and moved to Arizona. Even though the American Made Component show no longer exists, we developed and gained many long term customer relationships as a result of that show, including Avalanche Ranch, H.A. Framburg Co., and Hubbardton Forge to name a few. It was also through these shows that we met Debra Kelly who works with us as an independent sales representative on the West Coast. We are also lucky to continue to work with Shirley Brodacz, owner of the Lighting Connection, who has been our Midwest sales rep for more than thirty years.

Dana's oldest son, Shilo, (3rd generation) started working for the company part time while he attended college earning his BS in Finance. After graduation, he tried the world of finance but ended up returning to work full time for California Tool & Die in 1995. In 2003 when we started Eino Products, and later purchased the Diamond Chase line of screen printing frames, Shilo took over as manager of that division. When Dan retired in 2022, Shilo moved to production manager for both divisions and is currently General Manager of the entire company. He has also learned the basics of tool & die and assists in the die shop when needed. Shilo's son, Shilo Jr. (4th generation) began working part time in the production shop in 2023 but has since moved on. Susan's son, James (3rd generation), came on board in October 2016 as a production operator but moved into the die shop where Dan trained him in the art and skill of being a tool & die maker moving from apprentice to journeyman before Dan's retirement.

Many other family members have come and gone over the years but the real McWilliam & Son, Inc. family is made up of the experienced and loyal employees that have been with us for many years, ranging from Isidro with more than 30 years down to Ivan with 3 years (and the rest of them in between). Luis, our lead man and head welder for Eino Products came to us with the Diamond Chase line and now has more than 40 years' experience in aluminum welding and fabrication. And just as we celebrate life and holidays with our families, we also celebrate with our employees with annual BBQs and themed parties (carnivals, game shows) where they bring their entire families and we get to see them change and grow.

David retired in late 2001 after suffering some serious medical problems. He continued to help out with engineering and die design questions for many years before passing away in 2016. Since David's retirement, Dan managed both the die shop and the production shop until his retirement in 2022. Dan continues in place of David with engineering and die design questions.

Dana continues to manage all of the office operations but has recently hired her granddaughter, Natalie (4th generation) to learn office operations with the goal for her to take over Dana's position in the next few years. She is doing a great job and is a customer and vendor favorite!

And while the bulk of metal stampings sold are still used in the lighting industry, the company has embraced change and has diversified into many other industries adding assembly and fabrication services. The rabbit feeders, or coop cups as they are called, are still a regular sales item joined by new products like fire tools, kayak trailers, and home décor products. McWilliam & Son Inc. was not immune to the economic downturn in 2008 which caused us to look for new opportunities and changes in our operations. We now actively seek and offer outside tool & die services for both new tooling and die maintenance programs for shops that have closed down their own tool rooms.

The company recently partnered in community based learning by working with both graduate and under graduate classes at Azusa Pacific University. We worked with about 50 students using the company as a test case for review, analysis, and recommendations for change. The company is in the process with working with other colleges in helping graduate students using our company as their test case. Dana also participated in 10K Small Business Management program put on by Goldman Sachs, completing the program in 2017.

McWilliam & Son, Inc believes in giving back. Over the years the company has encouraged its employees to volunteer in organizations that are close to their heart. Several employees and family members did the Relay for Life in Azusa which Susie organized and ran for a number of years. Dana was on the Board of Directors for several years at Casa de los Angelitos a not-for-profit maternity home that has been helping pregnant women in crisis situations since 1986 located in Harbor City, California. The company continues to support their mission.

California Tool & Die is proud of the fact that our products are all Made in the USA here in our facility in Azusa, CA. The future is bright as we continue to look forward.