

was about this time the company moved its product line from mainly furniture to recreation room pool tables. The demand for recreational tables seemed to reflect the change in Canada's social nature: shorter working hours and the increased popularity of recreation rooms in new homes built during the baby boom years. By the mid-60s, the production of pool tables went up to 12,000 a year. Eighty per cent of the tables measured 4 by 8 feet, says Ken Stapley, a former designer at the McFarlane Gendron Company. He recalls filling up three city warehouses with the company made pool tables.

"People bought the pool tables only around Christmas. So we'd build them and fill the warehouses right up."

One of those warehouses used to be where the Brick furniture store is now located on Pinnacle Street, he adds. The tables were sold all across Canada through its main distributor - Sears chain of stores. The cheapest table, he says, was priced around \$149 while on the higher end, the price ran into hundreds of dollars.

Designing the pool tables was his favourite part, he recalls.

"There's not much you can do with a table except for maybe change the styling of the legs or the sides to make it look different from the other ones. I liked doing that."

His high school course at woodworking came in handy for his success at designing work. Later, Stapley became an assistant manager for five years before his retirement - a fact that earned him much displeasure from a superintendent who felt upstaged by his promotion.

Stapley still remembers an incident in which one of the employees became a subject of much discussion among the workers.

"A 'foreigner' came to work with us. He could hardly speak English. I don't think he was too happy to work there. He found out that if he cut his finger, the end of it off, he could get so much money, so he did. He got compensation, of course, something like \$500. He was off work for a while and came back to work later."

This figure was a princely sum in those days especially considering starting wages. Stapley recalls that when he first started at the plant as an 'ordinary worker', his earned 40 cents an hour.

Another employee, Don Sly worked in the company's shipping and receiving department in the late '50s. He started off with a bigger pay at 75 cents an hour, and frequently working four to five hours overtime. He thinks the company employed about 200 people at the time.



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The company's products were popular, he continues, because the finished products were of high quality. He recalls that although the women who worked there were treated and paid equally as their male counterparts. Women mostly performed sanding and upholstery work.

Sly recalls a fire in the stockroom, which was caused by a short circuit caused by a transistor radio hooked up to the wall by an employee. The damage from the fire was not much, he says, but it was enough to cause the offender his job.

McFarlane Gendron Manufacturing closed on July 15, 1977 after 31 years of operation in the community. The company then transferred its operation to Toronto.

The building was converted to a machine shop for a number of years and recently was turned into an indoor family play centre in the late '90s before the present owner of the Freddy's Fun City came along.

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