

History of Task Force Tips LLC

Helping First Responders Accomplish More and Risk Less



TASK FORCE TIPS
FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT



TFT.com



A Passion For Firefighter Safety



*TFT's founder, Chief Clyde H.
"Mack" McMillan*

In 1955, Volunteer Firefighter Clyde McMillan was using a primitive smooth bore nozzle to fight a fire at the Standard Oil Company refinery in Whiting, Indiana. While he was battling the blaze, three million gallons of naphtha exploded, and since Clyde's primitive smooth-bore nozzle did not have a spray pattern to protect him, he was forced to run for his life. He suffered third-degree burns down his back, legs, and arms, and was the closest firefighter to the explosion to survive. Clyde was able to recover from his injuries, but while he

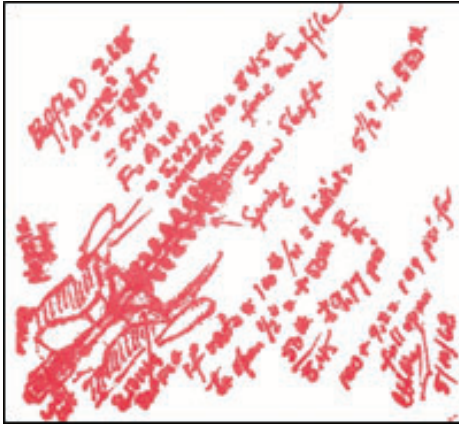
remained passionate about firefighting, he resolved to make sure that no one else would suffer due to this outdated technology that had failed him so completely.

In 1957, Clyde created the Fire Task Force – a Civil Defense Fire Department serving Lake County and based in Gary, Indiana – and served as its Chief as it provided backup for the Gary Fire Department. However, at every turn, Clyde and his firefighters were confronted with a lack of reliable water flow as



*Clyde and the Civil Defense Unit
doing nozzle training*

well as a lack of various sizes of fog nozzles to adjust for varying flows, something that other fire departments had historically accomplished by using different sizes of smooth bore nozzles.



The first design for an automatic nozzle, sketched by Clyde H. McMillan

a fabulous idea, but they claimed to have been working on it themselves for years. Instead of getting the deal he had been hoping for, Chief McMillan was offered a consulting fee. Reluctantly, he accepted their offer of \$750.00 because he was out-gunned, and to refuse meant that he would receive nothing. At least he felt his idea would serve firefighters.

Chief McMillan knew that a constant pressure was needed in order to have a proper water flow. On Friday, May 10, 1968, Clyde drew out his idea for an automatic fog nozzle on a white paper napkin. He then presented his idea to all of the era's manufacturers of firefighting equipment, but the industry was steeped in tradition and slow to change. Eventually, one manufacturer agreed that Clyde's nozzle was

A year passed, and the irritation of settling for a consulting fee was still nagging at Clyde, so he decided in September 1971 to compete with that company. In the time that had passed since his idea was taken he had discovered that there was an even better way to achieve pressure control. He founded Fire Task



Julie, Doug, and Stewart in the basement of the McMillan home. 1973

Force Innovations (known today as Task Force Tips Inc. or TFT) in the McMillan family basement in Hobart, Indiana. Clyde and his family worked tirelessly during weekdays and weekends to bring his product to market and to provide exceptional customer service. Chief McMillan set the bar for service extremely high back in the 1970s, and the TFT family continues to raise it year after year.

Friends Along The Way

Of course, Chief McMillan didn't create TFT all alone – along the way, many people have been instrumental in TFT's success. One of those people was Deputy Chief Frank Burke of the Syracuse New York Fire Department. In 1973, Chief Burke visited TFT's hospitality suite in Kansas City at one of the first Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) events that TFT attended, to the delight of the McMillans: he was the only attendee that year to visit the TFT suite! Clyde and Frank went out for dinner that evening and quickly became best friends.

Frank explained how Syracuse had recently lost a huge GE plant to a downsizing measure, and as a result, the fire department was under severe budget constraints. They were putting together a new concept using big pumpers running along with smaller pumpers to extend the capability of the fire department and to reduce the wear and tear on the big



Frank Burke in the TFT booth at the New York Fire Chief's Show

“They needed a nozzle that could provide a wide range of flow patterns that one fireman could operate safely.”

vehicles doing EMS calls. They were also transitioning over to the recently invented inch and three-quarter hose for their attack lines – called the Mini/Maxi concept. They needed a nozzle that could provide a wide range of flow patterns that one fireman could operate safely. Chief McMillan's automatic nozzle would give them the flexibility they needed. Together, they came up with the concept that later became the Nozzleman Flow Control – the idea of controlling the turbulence of a ball valve, so that the stream could be throttled and still usable.

The First Nozzle Order

Stewart (his oldest son) later made a prototype on a lathe (which is now in the TFT museum). After rushing the prototype to New York, they demoed the nozzle during a hurricane. Syracuse Fire Department Chief Tom Hanlon observed the demonstration but returned to his office without saying a word. Clyde's hopes faltered. Little did he know that Frank had the Chief's confidence, and soon TFT was granted their first order for handline nozzles.

Purchase Order in hand, Clyde went to the bank to obtain financing for TFT's first production run, but the bank declined to loan Clyde any money. To make matters worse, a silent partner who had invested \$16,000 backed out and sued Clyde for his investment. The stress took a toll on Clyde and put him in the hospital for a week.

The day after Clyde returned home from the hospital, Frank called him to see how things were going. Clyde told him the whole story, and Frank declared his confidence in the product and confirmed that this was what Syracuse needed to make their system work: "I trust you, Mack, so send me an invoice for those nozzles. I will get you paid, and then you make them as fast as you can."



The McMillan Family testing nozzles during the winter at Lake George in Hobart, Indiana

The money from Syracuse was enough to buy the parts for 500 new nozzles, allowing Clyde and his family to immediately begin making the nozzles in the makeshift factory in their home's basement. TFT then shipped the 42 nozzles to Syracuse and used the sale of the remaining nozzles to get out of debt. Without Frank Burke's trust, TFT never would have existed. To this day, TFT annually honors an employee who goes above and beyond the call of duty with the prestigious "Frank Burke Award."

The Shop



*TFT's first plant, located on Cascade Drive
in Valparaiso*

Clyde's hard work began to come to fruition in 1976 when TFT's first manufacturing plant – simply called “the shop” by the McMillan family – was constructed on Cascade Drive in Valparaiso. That same year, TFT's

sales reached a point where they could support a second salary, so Clyde was able to leave his day job at U.S. Steel, where he had worked as an engineer for 21 years. Stewart, who had been going to college at a commuter campus of Purdue University for his engineering degree, had been full time for four years. The company purchased more (used) equipment for the “new shop”, which allowed more of the manufacturing work to be done in-house. Task Force Tips purchased its first computerized piece of production equipment in December of 1980, ushering in a new era of quality and design capability.

The company continued to grow steadily, but in the fall of 1982, tragedy struck the McMillan family. Clyde collapsed inside a building while fighting a fire. Stewart and another firefighter got him out whereupon he quickly lit up a cigarette and declared he was fine! A stress test the following day proved he was not fine. An angiogram followed four days after the fire and Clyde died from complications of the angiogram at the age of 52. Clyde's wife Betty along with his two sons Doug and Stewart took over the company and continued Clyde's vision. Stewart became President and Douglas became Vice President of Sales. Stewart was then 28 years old, Douglas 24.

Growing Strong

Since then, TFT's growth remained steady. Sales tripled between 1982 and 1986. During that time, the sales and engineering forces doubled and three new products were released. In the fall of 1985, TFT broke ground on a second facility – three times the size of the original shop – on Evans Avenue.

That same year, TFT purchased KK Products, a California-based nozzle manufacturer that produced a line of fixed gallonage nozzles and forestry equipment. The KK Products' operations were moved to Valparaiso in January 1988. KK Products brought along new designs and technology changes that could be applied to old and new products alike. While KK nozzles had previously been used primarily in the forestry industry, as a division of TFT, KK Products branched out into all segments of the fire industry.



KK Products' nozzle design



Betty McMillan, TFT's matriarch and 'Mom to All'

In October of 1992, the extended TFT family suffered another devastating loss. After an extended illness, Clyde's wife and TFT's matriarch Betty McMillan died. Betty was a kind and compassionate woman who left a lasting impression on everyone she met. Her passing left a void that would never be filled. With Stewart at the helm, Clyde and Betty's children continued their father's vision taking the company to new levels in the market place.

During the spring of 1993, TFT introduced a totally new concept in large volume water delivery called Crossfire. In order to build this product, TFT constructed an 18,000 square foot addition to the Evans Avenue facility.

In 1998, TFT acquired the "South Plant" on Industrial Drive in Valparaiso. The material handling and saw cutting operations moved into this facility located on 25 acres. With visions of future sprawling facilities, South Plant became the TFT "field of dreams".

At around the same time, TFT made the decision to become registered in the ISO 9001 (International Organization for Standardization) standard. The adoption of this documented quality system was a strategic decision to enhance customer satisfaction through continuous improvement. In December 1999, TFT was issued a Certificate of Registration after an initial assessment to the requirements of ISO 9001:1994. In December 2004, and later in December 2015, TFT's quality system was assessed and updated first to the ISO 9001:2000 standard and then to the ISO 9001:2008 standard.



TFT's innovative Crossfire Portable/Deck Gun Monitor

Expanded Water Flow



Old Jaffrey Valve

In early 2000 TFT purchased the assets of Jaffrey Fire Protection, allowing TFT to move into the Large Diameter Hose fitting market. Now TFT can supply everything needed between the hydrant and the fire, except the pump on the fire truck. More space was again necessary, so TFT expanded the Evans Avenue plant once more.



New TFT Valve

By the fall of 2002, the company needed to expand the engineering staff to enhance production and assembly without affecting new product development and redesign capabilities. The engineering department was split into design engineering, led by Bob Steingass, and manufacturing engineering, led

by Laura Walker. This change led to the largest introduction of new products in TFT history at the 2004 FDIC convention. This steady flow of new and innovative products has since become standard operating procedure at TFT and is vital to TFT's future.

New Growth, New Plant

In 2006, TFT moved machining operations to the South Plant, and in 2008, groundbreaking took place for an addition of



TFT's current plant and headquarters

118,000 square-feet of manufacturing and office space at the South Plant, which would soon become TFT's headquarters. All operations moved to the new location in 2009 when the street was renamed Innovation Way.

The Headquarters is also home to the

Valparaiso Fire Museum which tells the history of firefighting, with apparatus on display including an 1883 Piano Style Engine from Westville, Indiana, an 1890 Silsby Steam Engine from Clintonville, Wisconsin, and a 1923 Seagrave Engine from the Valparaiso Indiana Fire Department.

The reception desk is an old American LaFrance Pioneer model that was struck dead center by a landing Cessna 150 aircraft while parked along a runway during an airshow. Stewart purchased the fire truck's front end and turned it into a bar for his basement. As the museum fell into place it seemed only fitting that the bar become a reception desk.



TFT's reception desk with working lights and sirens

The museum also features murals painted by artist Katherine Larson, daughter of former long-standing board member Ray Larson. The museum is open to the public, and tours of TFT are available during business hours.

The new TFT Headquarters is also home to TFT University, a state of the art training facility which hosts service seminars, product boot camps, and marketing workshops for TFT's distribution

network and customers. TFT U also hosts many customer fly-in visits every year. Visitors often comment on the pride that TFT's employees exhibit and their dedication to making high-performance quality products, and the clean technology driven facility. Fly-ins and visits give TFT the opportunity to build relationships with our customers – the backbone of our company since the very beginning.

In December 2010 TFT coated its first part with its new state-of-the-art hardcoat-anodizing system. By June of 2011, the bugs were worked out and the hardcoat-anodizing line was in full production. The ability to hardcoat in-house allows us to fulfill rush orders faster than ever before, a capability that is unique to TFT.

TFT Today



*Amkus's newly designed
ION series of Rescue Tools*

In 2016, TFT expanded into new territory by purchasing Amkus Rescue Tools, a manufacturer of vehicle extrication equipment, which enabled TFT to enter a new section of the fire and rescue industry. Changes have already been made that will help Amkus begin to revolutionize the rescue market just as TFT did

for water flow and firefighting. TFT's commitment to the market was renewed with the acquisition of 911 Tools in mid-2016, which added vehicle stabilization struts to the Amkus catalog.

However, the McMillans never forgot that planning for the future was paramount. In 2004, Stewart started the quest to find the right purchaser for TFT: someone that understood the deep cultural roots of the company and would not think that they had a better way – a 'big business' way – to do things at TFT. Stewart's primary goal in this search was to find a partner that would take care of the team members that had taken such good care of him. The search was long and arduous – Stewart started to refer to himself as the "Runaway Bride" of mergers and acquisitions. He knew that it had to be just the right company!

In March of 2016, Akron Brass – TFT’s largest competitor – was purchased by IDEX Corporation, one of the companies whose offer Stewart had turned down. Akron’s purchase led to a chain of events that resulted in Stewart meeting Larry Gies, the founder of Madison Industries. Madison is a company that is working to build a legacy by purchasing companies that have a culture like TFT and supporting them to do even bigger things that they could not risk doing on their own.



Stewart McMillan and Bob Steingass with a plaque Bob designed commemorating the ‘marriage’ of TFT and Madison Industries.

On January 12th, 2017, the sale was completed. Not that much has changed: Stewart is still a 10% owner and CEO and the management team that was in place pre-sale is all in place post sale - the only difference is that now they are owners as well.

Together with Madison, the management team of TFT and Amkus will carry forward into the future the ideals set by Clyde so many years ago, and Stewart has plans to remain heavily involved not only in TFT and Amkus but also by helping Madison identify other companies that would fit well with TFT.

Giving Back

With some of the fruits of his labors, Stewart has started the McMillan Family Foundation for purposes of investing in future generations. The first project of this foundation – which will be opened on September 16, 2017 – is called MAAC, the Multi Agency Academic Cooperative. (In honor of Clyde “MACK” McMillan). When opened, this facility located next door to Amkus’s headquarters will serve the five counties of Northwest Indiana as the most extensive fire training facility in the state. Mindful of the fact that as the incidence of fire is reduced overall it will become more difficult to train personnel to combat the fires which still occur, the site’s objective is to provide a safe and realistic training environment for local firefighters, police officers, and paramedics

to learn to cooperate and work better together (hence the ‘Multi Agency’ in the facility’s name) and to prove to areas elsewhere in the state that this model of public-private partnership is a viable means of creating and running their own future training facilities.



MAAC’s burn tower part of the extensive training facilities

“All products manufactured by TFT are factory tested and carry a five year warranty with a 24-hour factory service turn around guarantee.”

TFT now manufactures fire suppression and water delivery equipment for the forestry, municipal, and industrial firefighting markets as well as for the aircraft deicing industry. All products manufactured by TFT are factory tested and carry a five year warranty with a 24-hour factory service turn around guarantee. TFT products carry industry certifications from around the globe, such as NFPA, CCCF, EN, FM, CE, and ATEX. Additionally, TFT now has over four dozen product patents.

Through our in-house capabilities, TFT has produced an abundance of product videos which are available at www.tft.com and YouTube. TFT has multiple social media outlets and advertises in trade journals throughout the United States, Canada, and abroad. In addition, TFT produces a quarterly employee newsletter – the Task Force Times – and has an outstanding employee recognition program. TFT prides itself on “customerization” – the ability to produce nozzle labels with the fire department logo and information or laser engrave it directly on the nozzle can sometimes seal the deal. Additionally, TFT is now represented at over 88 fire related trade shows around the globe annually – we have come a long way since our lone visitor at the 1973 FDIC.

Many of TFT's employees are currently or have been involved in the fire service. Today, TFT is an ISO 9001:2008 UL Certified company with approximately 3,000 finished goods in its catalog, 250+ employees, 13 demonstration vehicles, 19 manufacturer's representatives, and multiple distribution partners all over the world. TFT is very much a global leader.

Since 1971, building relationships and providing top notch customer service has been the standard and is part of what sets us apart

from our competition. Real people – not computers – have always answered the phones during business hours, and the technical service team has always answered calls 24/7/365, ever since it rang in the McMillan home in the early years.



TFT's trade show booth at FDIC



Fixed, Selectable and Automatic - Standard, Low and Dual Pressure, Smooth Bores and Ball Valves - Pressure Gauges and Flow Indicators - Specialty Nozzles & Accessories
Foam and CAFS Nozzles, Tools and Accessories

Nozzles, Valves, Wyes and Tees, Foam Equipment and CAFS Nozzles, Tools and Accessories



Fixed and Remote Control Monitors and Nozzles
Intake Valves, Adapters, Elbows and Fittings
Monitor Manifolds Tools and Accessories

Fixed Station and Portable Monitors, Master Stream Nozzles, Self Educating Foam Nozzles & Attachments
LDH Hardware, Manifolds, Intake and Discharge Valves
Hazardous Location Monitors



Foam Nozzles and Attachments, Eductors
Self-Educting Nozzles, Foam Injection
and Application Systems

Intake Valves, Jumbo Wyes, Siamese and Gated Manifolds, Hydrant Assist Valves, Gated Wyes and Water Thiefs, Suction Hose and Strainers





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