



## Traditions run deep at J.J. Haines

I've been saying it for many years, ever since our own 50th anniversary back in 2002: There's something very special about the flooring industry. Let me explain. Businesses in America that make it to the second generation are very few indeed; the

number of businesses that make it to the third generation is miniscule. And yet, most of us can rattle off the top of our heads a dozen or more companies in the flooring business that are in their second or third generation, some even longer than that.

J.J. Haines, the nation's largest floor covering distributor, is one of those businesses. Lee Marston, a shareholder who retired from his post as chairman of the board last year and the great-grandson of the founder, helped celebrate his company's 135th anniversary (see cover story) by bringing employees, suppliers, customers, friends and family together at its corporate headquarters in Glen Burnie, Md. By the way, J.J. Haines is in its fifth generation.

The whole event had a homespun quality to it that was genuine, simple and fun. In fact, things got downright hokey with a reenactment of how Confederate Captain John James Haines won \$800 in a poker game while being held prisoner in a Union camp in New Jersey, money he later used to found his company. The cast of characters — and believe me, they were characters, at least while they were in full costume — included family members (Mort Creech, also a great-grandson of the founder and current chairman of the board) and company executives (Bruce

Zwicker, current president and CEO) and others. In a series of skits (mostly between bouts of laughter) they showed the audience the evolution of the company, including its then nascent partnership with Armstrong Cork, the forerunner of Armstrong World Industries.

In fact, those two companies — J.J. Haines and Armstrong — were also celebrating 100 years of doing business together. Frank Ready, current president and CEO of Armstrong North American Floor Products, said in his comments to the audience that J.J. Haines was successful because it helped its customers be successful. That shared legacy, he added, is the reason that the partnership between these two companies "will endure another 100 years."

Meanwhile, for the past several months and several more ahead, J.J. Haines is taking its anniversary celebration to its customers with promotions and opportunities. Part of it included the launch of a 25-year club, which includes more than 325 active customers. Stanley Ginsburg, of Floors Etc. by N. Ginsburg & Son in Hunt Valley, Md., was also on hand in special recognition — his company has been a customer of J.J. Haines for 110 years.

In the end, it all came full circle and as Zwicker said, the company's cornerstones are all about tradition, values and relationships. When J.J. Haines says "A tradition of service since 1874" you better believe it.

Kudos, gentlemen. Here's to the next 135 years.

— Santiago Montero