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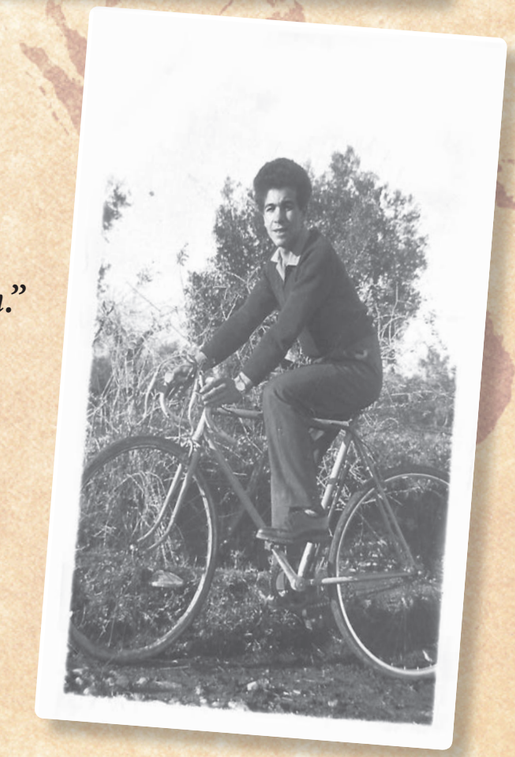


If one were to extract from history and impart what is profound, classic and perhaps inimitable one need only look at this generation of work to discover the roots of origin. Lo Gullo Industries Ltd. Represents many things – an adventure in design, superb craftsmanship and ultimately the evolution of place that brings together its divisions to capture a collaborative effort of well – crafted character.

As origins go this tale would begin with Franco Lo Gullo who has nurtured a passion for carpentry and woodworking since he was a young boy in Italia. For the past 40 year's he has used these skills in building his company, a successful and well-respected institution, which was launched in 1977 and today employs 25 people.

"Carpentry is what I know it's my passion," states Franco who was born and raised in Sartano, Cosenza in the region of Calabria Italy. He arrived in Calgary in 1965, a fresh – faced youth of 17 years, eager to join his brother Emilio and many of his father's relatives already living in Calgary. "In Italy, I was a cabinet maker and built doors, I started when I was 13 yrs. old with some relatives," says Franco musing, "I was young and got to learn the trade, but I didn't get paid!"

In Italy he learned to make interior / exterior doors and windows - skills learned at an early age that would serve him well years later as he made his life in Canada.

Franco secured his first job in Calgary with volume builder Jager Homes installing baseboards and kitchens. He then moved on to KP Nelson owned by the Smed family and honed his craft in restaurants, having had the luck and early opportunity of perfecting his skills in both commercial and residential sectors under the guidance of two industry leaders.

In 1967, young Franco set up a small shop with his cousin Franco De Rose. Frank's Woodworking was located on ninth avenue in Inglewood and specialized in kitchen cabinets and custom furniture. The shop closed in 1969 and with that closing brought further growth and change as Franco went to work for Balbi Homes building kitchen cabinets. After a year, he returned back home to Italy.

"Carpentry is what I know it's my passion."

Upon returning back to Calgary in 1971, Franco went back to work for KP Nelson. He then joined Scandinavian Wood Industries, a new company set up by the Smed family run by son Ole. The company specialized in veneer work, an entirely new concept to Franco but one he was eager to learn.

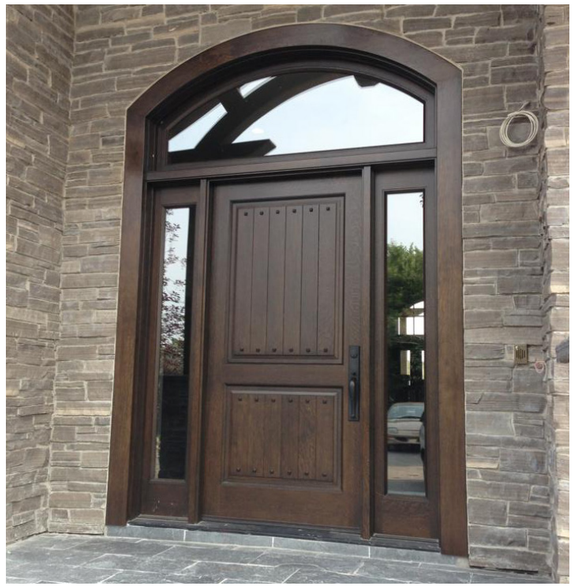
As the late 70's approached, and now a family man building roots in Calgary, Franco invested $5000.00 to enter into a partnership at 3800 19 Street NE – Balbi Wood Industries – the date February 28, 1977. There Franco made office doors, frames and office furniture. "1977 to 1980 was a booming time in Calgary," admits Franco, who in late 1977 bought out his two partners for $70,000. The company became Lo Gullo Industries Limited in 1981. Lo Gullo Industries Ltd. was housed at 3836 27 Street NE Calgary as it stands today. The 24 000 square foot building captures 18 000 square feet of shop facilities, office space and also encompasses Italyca Hardware known for its door hardware and accessories.

Now sole owner, Franco initially focused on office doors for the commercial sector as well as office furniture. "The Nova building was the biggest job I ever did. There were over 5000 doors and frames in that building and every morning we had to deliver 45 finished doors, it was supposed to be a year long contract but we had to do it in six months," shares Lo Gullo.

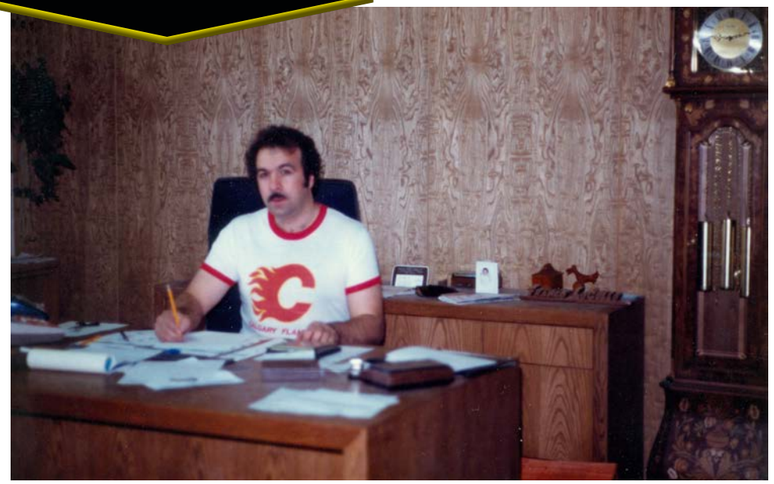
With fortune favoring the bold, an interesting opportunity presented itself. In 1989, as Desert Storm was about to break out in the Middle East, Lo Gullo Industries would take a chance in a new direction. This direction was in favour of a 47,000-square foot home in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Recalls Lo Gullo, "This man walked up the stairs into the office and states he has a plan he would like to show us. He had been around the world but no one wanted to touch this project, most were scared to do it given the scale and location of the job. As well it was working with solid teak, I had never heard of that – teak for the windows, doors – everything. They use teak in the desert because it's impenetrable to sand. "I looked at the plans and said 'so what's the big deal'? The perspective client said, "WHAT!"

Franco's cousin Ralph, manager at Lo Gullo Ind., chuckles when he hears the story, "anybody who knows Franco knows that's his signature line – what's the big deal."

"I looked at the plans and said 'so what's the big deal'? The perspective client said, "WHAT!"



Prosperity



Receiving a sizable deposit, Lo Gullo Ind. began work on the project. All work was done in Calgary where three full containers eventually shipped to Saudi Arabia. The last container was shipped and went missing for a time, eight months to be exact, due to the turmoil of Desert Storm. In the end all faired well as the container reached its destination in Riyadh. Inspired by the experience, Franco began a transition from manufacturing office doors to custom residential doors.

Today Lo Gullo Ind. is well known for its original custom interior and exterior doors. Prices range from the low two hundred all the way up to $25,000. In 2015 Lo Gullo Ind. manufactured close to 6500 doors.

Working with top designers and quality custom home builders like the Petrin Brothers Developments and Taradar Fine Homes, creativity and prolific production continued to satisfy massive undertakings such as The Princeton in Eau Clair and Bow Valley Square Calgary. “Our forty years of family history provided us with the cumulative experience to problem solve, decipher and capture the client’s point of view,” cites Ralph Lo Gullo. “We are a true, full – fledged door manufacturer of high end products, we do have competitors but we are the go to, concept to completion company to contend with,” admits Ralph.

“We’re one of the very few that can build doors using almost any material with our brand of creativity. In other words, show us what you want and we will build it to suit your style and environment. We never say no to a challenge and ultimately if we can build an exterior door in this harsh climate we can build it anywhere in the world, GUARANTEED,” states Ralph.

That ability is a reflection of its owner, one who has turned his passion for woodworking into a very successful business venture. Lo Gullo's success is directly tied to the vision of a man who was and is unafraid to tackle any challenge in business or life. "Franco is a man who is well respected for his knowledge, inspiration and many accomplishments," admits Ralph. Widely regarded as an innovator and a resourceful leader, Franco is a man who has helped and continues to help many through industry and personal endeavours. A problem solver and a clever entrepreneur, Franco's grounding influence persists in its supportive guidance with an approach that keeps things simple. "It's not complicated," continues Ralph, "his love and passion for life is contagious and his easy manner and laughter infectious!"

"Franco is a man who is well respected for his knowledge, inspiration and many accomplishments."

Franco came to Canada with a trade and a dream and built Lo Gullo Industries through his hard work, dedication and love of all things wood. Today Lo Gullo Industries moves forward by encompassing new design, new technology and new partnerships in a challenging and ever changing society. We celebrate Franco's creations, achievements and impact with this commemorative look at his legacy which will live on for generations to come.

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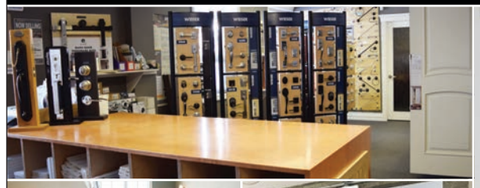

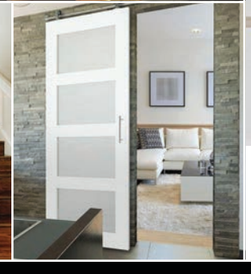

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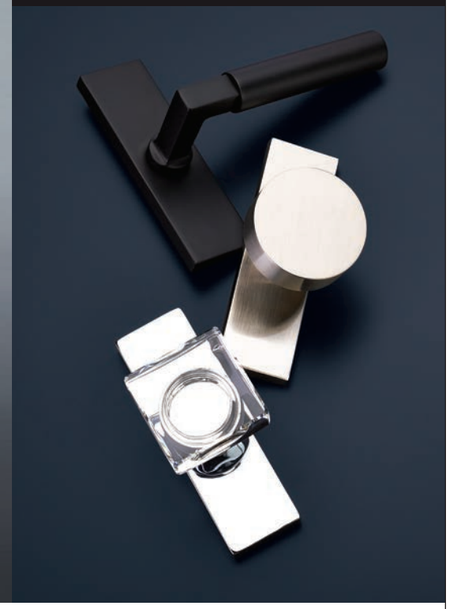

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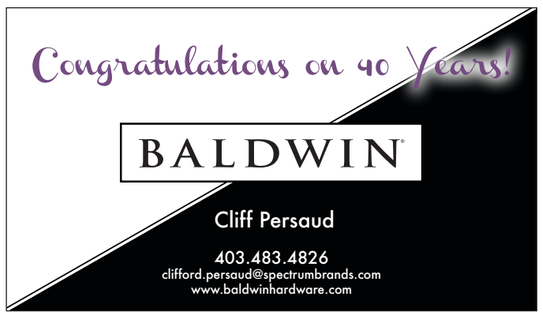

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