

Wolf X-Ray Corporation

80 Years and Counting

Headquartered in Deer Park, New York, Wolf X-Ray Corporation manufactures a full line of medical and dental imaging accessories used for radiology diagnostics. Wolf's product line can be found in medical and dental offices across the country and overseas and includes illuminators, radiation protective apparel and x-ray film specifically packaged for medical imaging. The family-owned and operated company has impressively cultivated and maintained a healthy percentage of the market by keeping a low overhead and competitive prices for its customers. Over the past three quarters of a century, the Wolf family has both enjoyed great company success and endured devastating financial loss, surviving and ultimately benefiting from both. The man who began the journey by starting the Wolf Corporation was Harry Wolf.

In the late 1920s, Harry Wolf had just completed a Pharmaceutical Degree at the Columbia School of Pharmacology in New York. He was working for Picker Pharmacy, just a stone's throw from Columbia. At the time, the use of radiology for diagnostic purposes was a fairly

Old Wolf building.



The Wolf family.

new practice. When the value of the diagnostic process became clear, a market for radiology film and accessories became evident. Mr. Picker, owner of Picker Pharmacy, met with George Eastman, the father of the Kodak Camera Corporation. Together they developed and began producing imaging accessory products specifically for medical use.

As Harry Wolf watched this growing market emerge, he realized that medical imaging could be a complete market unto itself. In 1932, Wolf left Picker to begin Wolf X-Ray, which marketed and manufactured radiology accessories for the medical field. He manufactured film cassettes, hanging devices for reading film, and other radiology lab equipment, some of which is still in use today.

Wolf's facility was first located in Brooklyn to accommodate manufacturing while maintaining a low overhead. The first few years were a bit unstable. Wolf's former employer was now a competitor with established customers,

and the market was still in its infant stage. Suppliers were few and prior relationships sometimes prohibited Wolf from gaining fair access to supplies needed to manufacture and sell to his customers.

Then World War II began and the need for this kind of equipment and goods grew exponentially. Wolf moved his operation into Manhattan and secured several government contracts while simultaneously securing a respectable share of the marketplace for himself and his growing company. Suppliers began to realize that Wolf X-Ray was a viable company with an expanding customer base. As a result, the goods and resources, heretofore denied, began to readily become available.

The Wolf Corporation grew steadily adapting to the changing needs in the radiology field of medicine. After the war, the need for more manufacturing space demanded a move back to Brooklyn. The company managed a healthy customer base with Harry at the helm. In 1956, Harry's son, Martin Wolf, joined the company. Just four years later, Harry died and the company was left in the able hands of his son.

Soon after, Martin was joined by his brother, Alvin Wolf, and together they managed the growing business. Under the brothers' guidance and planning, sales continued to grow. A unique way of packaging dental film was added to the company's growing line and a solid customer base emerged as the company steadily supplied dental offices.

In 1970, the brothers decided to sell to IPCO, a hospital supply conglomerate, in exchange for stock in the company. Alvin Wolf retired. Martin was offered and signed a two-year contract to operate a division of IPCO, and took on the role of President of the company. In 1972, his contract came to an end and he, too, retired.

Martin moved his family to Florida to enjoy his retirement, but his days in the sun were numbered. His stock in IPCO sank from a soaring \$36 to \$1. Only one



year after leaving the company, Martin Wolf was financially destitute. He had a wife and family to support and three children to put through college. A dedicated family man, he quickly began to devise a plan to support his family and generate income. He had run a company before and knew he could do it again, but he also knew he needed to bring something new to the marketplace.

Martin Wolf contacted his father-in-law, Paul Levine, a brilliant engineer, and together they started Flow (which, cleverly, is Wolf spelled backwards.) The market the company targeted was dental. Dental imaging film was Flow's staple product, and the company was off and running.

In addition to the new idea of marketing dental imaging film, Paul Levine perfected a way of packaging it. Just a few years before Flow's startup, Martin Wolf had traveled to Europe and

New Wolf headquarters.

purchased an antiquated film packaging machine. He showed the machine to Levine, who made significant changes to cater specifically to dental film imaging. "My grandfather took it apart, reinvented it and began building film packaging machinery for Flow," states Howard Wolf, Wolf X-Ray's current president. The unique, modern packaging was eagerly accepted by customers and Flow was established as a dental film company that offered modern packaging.

The company grew and was so successful, in fact, that Martin Wolf purchased back Wolf X-Ray in the early 1980s. Flow continues to flourish as a strong division of the Wolf Corporation.

Wolf X-Ray is now based in Deer Park and has approximately 80 employees,

many who have been with the company for more than ten years. On-site employees manufacture about 85 percent of its product line, which now includes PAC (picture archival computers) tables for shared viewing of images. The company also produces environmentally safe protective x-ray aprons for medical and dental technicians. Wolf uses an environmentally safe substance in place of lead for this purpose. The company is now exploring expanding into digital imaging.

Has Martin Wolf retired? "No," responds his son Howard, who became president in 2003. "His office is two doors down." Howard now manages the main operations of the company and is proud of his family-owned company. He states, "When you're part of a family business, the family heritage makes you feel pride and respect. You just feel good about it."