

TUOHY

HISTORY • 60 YEARS

History

TUOHY

THE STORY OF TUOHY STARTS WITH ITS FOUNDER, JOSEPH F. TUOHY, WHO AT AGE 14 ENTERED A MODEL REPLICA OF LOUIS XIV'S COACH IN A COMPETITION SPONSORED BY FISHER BODY FOR CHILDREN. HE WAS FORTUNATE; HE WON. HOWEVER, ONE JUDGE DOUBTED THAT A CHILD BUILT THE MODEL. TOWNSPEOPLE IN CHATFIELD, MINNESOTA, KNEW DIFFERENTLY; THE LAD WAS A DREAMER...AND A DOER.

CREATING AND MAKING THINGS WAS AVOCATION, A HOBBY, THROUGHOUT JOSEPH TUOHY'S EARLY LIFE. BUT AT AGE 42, WITH A WIFE, 13 CHILDREN AND TWO MORE TO FOLLOW, HE QUIT THE SECURITY OF HIS JOB TO DO WHAT HE HAD ALWAYS WANTED. HE SET OUT TO MAKE FURNITURE AND DID SO UNDER THE ONLY ROOF HE HAD -HIS HOME. HE HAD NO CUSTOMERS AND NO INCOME, ONLY RISK AND UNCERTAINTY, AND AN ABUNDANCE OF PASSION.







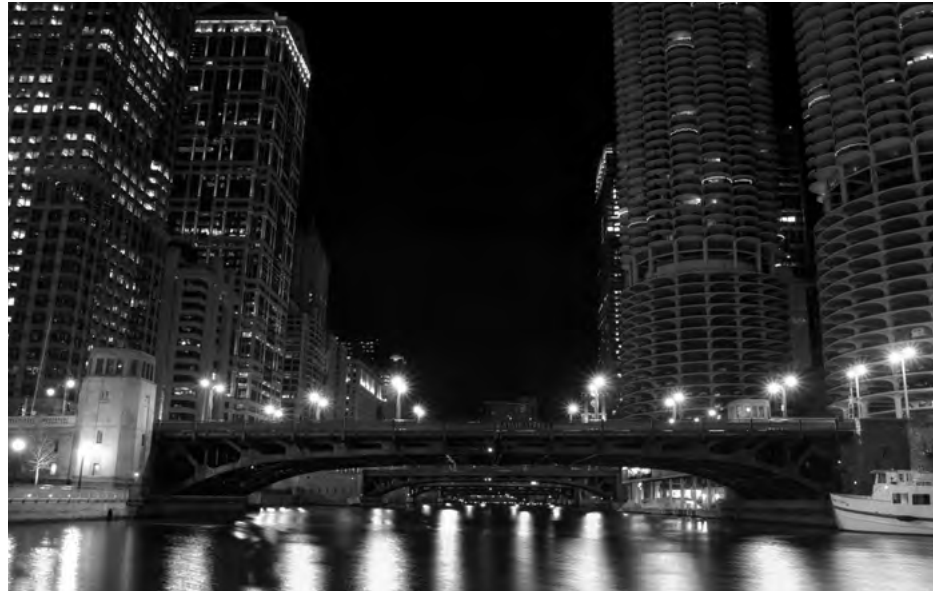
THE 1950'S WAS A PERIOD OF GROWTH AND EXPANSION NATIONWIDE. JOSEPH TUOHY BEGAN MAKING PERIOD REPRODUCTIONS FOR CLIENTS EAGER TO OBTAIN WELL-CRAFTED PRODUCTS. RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS WERE PART OF THIS POST-WAR BUILDING BOOM AND NEEDED ONE-OFF PIECES FOR THEIR SANCTUARIES. UNRELENTING SAWDUST PROVED TOO MUCH FOR HIS WIFE AND THE SMALL ENTERPRISE MOVED INTO AN ABANDONED BLACKSMITH'S SHOP IN CHATFIELD. THE FINANCIAL DEMANDS OF A LARGE FAMILY CAUSED HIM TO SWITCH TO THE PRODUCTION OF PEWS, A HIGHER VOLUME OF OUTPUT. THIS MARKED THE TRANSFORMATION FROM ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO PRODUCTION. THE BUSINESS GREW, LARGELY DUE TO THE USE OF GOOD MATERIALS AND A STRICT ATTENTION TO DETAIL. IN A HANDFUL OF YEARS THE SMALL FIRM HAD BECOME A MAJOR PLAYER IN CONGREGATIONAL SEATING OF ALL TYPES THROUGHOUT THE NORTHERN STATES. THE EARLY 1960'S BROUGHT A MAJOR COLLABORATION WITH INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED ARCHITECT MARCEL BREUER. THIS HUNGARIAN-BORN GIANT OF BAUHAUS ARCHITECTURE HAD RECEIVED A COMMISSION FOR A BENEDICTINE ABBEY IN CENTRAL MINNESOTA. JOSEPH TUOHY WAS SELECTED TO PROVIDE ALL OF THE WOOD FURNISHINGS. IT WAS A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY—A DREAM COME TRUE.





F. MIKE TUOHY, CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

JOSEPH BEGAN TO LOOK AT OTHER SEGMENTS AND BEGAN MAKING INSTITUTIONAL FURNITURE--LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS, DORMITORIES --AN ENDEAVOR THAT BROUGHT GREATER EXPOSURE TO ARCHITECTS AND INTERIOR DESIGNERS. BY THIS TIME, HIS SON, F. MIKE, HAD FORMALLY JOINED THE FIRM AND WAS ATTRACTED TO THE HIGH-END DESIGN PRESENTED BY FIRMS THAT PIONEERED NEW YORK'S ORIGINAL DESIGNERS' SATURDAY-ICF, STENDIG, ATELIER INTERNATIONAL, AND OTHERS. THESE FIRMS SAW THE MATURING OF NORTH AMERICAN TASTES FOR INTERNATIONAL STYLING AND IMPORTED PRODUCTS FROM ITALY, GERMANY AND SCANDINAVIA. MANY SOUGHT DOMESTIC PRODUCTION OF FINE WOOD TABLES AND PARTS/COMPONENTS. MIKE SEIZED THIS OPPORTUNITY AND BEGAN OEM PRODUCTION FOR THESE FIRMS THAT WERE FOUNDERS OF TODAY'S CONTRACT FURNITURE INDUSTRY. THIS EXPOSURE AND COLLABORATION WITH FINE DESIGN WAS A CRITICAL JUNCTION IN THE MAKING OF TUOHY'S IDENTITY. THE INFLUENCE OF THESE COMPANIES AND THEIR PASSION FOR QUALITY SPAWNED THE APPETITE TO REDEFINE TUOHY'S OWN IDENTITY.



FROM THESE BEGINNINGS, THE ATTITUDES AND CULTURE OF TUOHY WERE FORMED. OUR PURPOSE HAS BEEN THE SAME THROUGHOUT: TO PROVIDE FURNISHINGS, OBJECTS, THAT HELP MAKE PEOPLE'S LIVES MORE PRODUCTIVE, MORE PLEASING, AND MORE MEASURED ECONOMY FOR BUDGET AND ENVIRONMENT. WE MUST CONFIGURE OUR RESOURCES IN WAY THAT BEST SERVES THEM, RATHER THAN PRESCRIBE WHAT IS BEST FOR THEM.

THIS ELEVATED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARCHITECT, INTERIOR DESIGNER, FACILITIES MANAGER, OR WHOMEVER WAS ENTRUSTED WITH HELPING DEFINE THE CLIENT'S NEEDS. OUR RESPONSIBILITY WAS TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO THEM THE RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE ACCUMULATED OVER DECADES, THROUGH COUNTLESS PROJECTS AND PRODUCT APPLICATIONS.

OUR FORMULA IS SIMPLE, WHICH IS NOT TO SAY UNSOPHISTICATED (SIMPLICITY IS DISTILLATION). WE START WITH THE TALENTS OF THE BEST INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS WE CAN FIND. THEIR CHARGE IS TO GENERATE IDEAS THAT ARE PLEASING AND MAXIMIZE OUR CAPABILITIES BUT, FAR MORE IMPORTANTLY, ENGAGE THE CLIENT AND THEIR DESIGNER IN A DISCUSSION ABOUT CLIENT NEEDS. OUR FABRICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS ARE DESIGNED TO FLEX PARAMETRICALLY WITH WHAT THE CLIENT NEEDS. THIS ALLOWS FOR CONSIDERABLE CUSTOMIZATION WITHOUT INTERRUPTION TO NORMAL PRODUCTION FLOW AND UNDUE COST. OUR PRODUCTS ARE NOT JUST A BASKET OF SKU'S FROM A WHICH A CUSTOMER CHOOSES, BUT ARE CONFIGURED FROM A BASE LEVEL SET OF COMPONENTS AND PROCESSES THAT CAN BE DEPLOYED QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY PER THE REQUIREMENTS OF A PROJECT. TO THAT END, WHAT WE OFFER IS NOT SO MUCH JUST PRODUCTS BUT A PROFOUND CAPACITY TO SOLVE CLIENT PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS LISTEN FOR THE FUNDAMENTAL THINGS OUR CLIENTS WANT.

THE PHRASE "WORKPLACE FURNITURE" SUGGESTS A UTILITARIAN BUYING DECISION. FOR SOME, INDEED MANY, IT IS. BUT WE FEEL THAT IS MISTAKEN, EVEN UNFORTUNATE WHEN YOU CONSIDER WHAT EMOTIONALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY DRIVES PEOPLE IN THEIR PURCHASE OF ANYTHING: WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE, WHAT IS ITS UTILITY (WHAT DOES IT DO), AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST. IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE WE ADD TO THAT HOW SUSTAINABLE IS IT? THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU GO THROUGH WHEN YOU BUY ANYTHING THAT IS AN OBJECT IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE. WHETHER IT IS A BELT, SHOES, A LAMP, OR A WHEEL BARROW, WE CHOOSE THINGS THAT LOOK PLEASING, WHICH IS TO SAY FASHION PLAYS INTO OUR DECISIONS AND MAY EVEN BE THE MOST COMMON STARTING POINT. INDEED, TUOHY ASSERTS STRONGLY THAT WORKPLACE FURNITURE IS A FASHION INDUSTRY. BUT HERE A DISTINCTION IS IMPORTANT. WE HAVE LEARNED (NOT LEAST FROM OUR COLLABORATION WITH BREUER) THAT FORM, FUNCTION AND VALUE ARE INSEPARABLE, AND THAT GOOD DESIGN IS DISCIPLINED AND REGARDS ALL AND EACH OF THEM. INDEED, TO SUGGEST FASHION IS SAY SUPERFLUOUS. NONSENSE! FASHION DONE BY A DREAMER IS SUPERFLUOUS, EVEN NARCISSISTIC; THAT DONE BY A DREAMER-DOER REVEALS METHODOLOGY AND DELIVERY, ADDING VALUE AND UTILITY. ALL GREAT INVENTORS ARE DREAMERS; THOSE THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR LIVES ARE THE ONES THAT DID SOMETHING WITH IT. THE INDUSTRIAL DESIGN PROCESS IS ESSENTIALLY THAT: THE TRANSFORMATION OF AN INSPIRATION (A DREAM) INTO SOMETHING THAT MAKES PEOPLE'S LIVES BETTER.

OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY, THROUGH THE EBB AND FLOW OF DESIGN TRENDS AND BUSINESS CYCLES, THE CONTRACT FURNITURE INDUSTRY WAS BORN AND HAS MATURED. INTERIOR DESIGN ITSELF HAS BECOME A PROFESSION IN ITS OWN RITE, HEIGHTENING THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN IN THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE. TODAY, TUOHY HAS EARNED A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POSITION AS A PREMIER PROVIDER OF HIGH-END DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING FOR EXECUTIVE WORKPLACE FURNISHINGS. MUCH OF WHAT TUOHY'S PRODUCTS AND SERVICES ARE TODAY HAS BEEN DRIVEN FIRST BY THE COLLECTIVE VOICES OF DESIGNERS AND CUSTOMERS WORLDWIDE, AND OUR COMPREHENSION OF WHAT THEY ARE SAYING TO US. OUR MISSION IS TO PAIR THEIR DREAMS FOR A BETTER WORKPLACE WITH OUR DEPLOYMENT OF THE MIDWESTERN ETHIC THAT DEFINES US, TO MAKE THOSE INSPIRATIONS BECOME A REALITY.

