

## HARLEY KAY MARSLAND KNITTING MACHINES

### Notes from Karen Rempel Arthur

I first became aware of Harley Kay Marsland Ltd. around 1954.

I do know that some years before that, Stan Marsland of Kitchener, Ontario bought the company located in Georgetown, Ontario and Harley and Kay were no longer in the picture.

Around 1954, my father, Peter Rempel, worked for Stan Marsland as Plant Superintendent in his Kitchener based company, Marsland Engineering Ltd.

On a Friday evening, that year, the manager of Harley Kay Marsland left the bank, collapsed on the stairs and expired. That weekend, Marsland contacted my father and asked him to take over running the plant on Monday—which he did. On a humorous note, soon after, he suggested to my father that he trade in his Austin on a vehicle more in keeping with his position. A Ford followed.

By this time, the company had acquired some new product lines and was manufacturing pipe wrenches, vises and high-pressure air valves for mining as the knitting machine business was obsolete. The plan was to terminate the knitting machine business, and he would build a new precision machine shop for my father to run in Waterloo—which he did. That new company was called Marsland Precision Equipment Limited. The remaining knitting machine inventory and tooling was moved to Waterloo and sold shortly thereafter. I don't believe the purchaser did anything with it other than perhaps sell it for scrap metal. The demise of Harley Kay Marsland was complete.

Employees of the old company were invited to come and work at the new plant and several of them did, including Miss Olive Kennedy, the bookkeeper who was worth her weight in gold.

During the six months Dad worked in Georgetown, he took the family down there one Sunday afternoon to see the place. It was a dark, gloomy old factory, if memory serves me correctly, down in a hollow which he lovingly referred to as "skunk hollow."

I recall this dark old factory with all these amazing knitting machines sitting around. Already a knitter, I was fascinated by the idea that these complicated looking machines with a circular cylinder full of needles that went up and down could actually turn out socks. There were knitted samples lying around left from testing new machines, but these were mostly unfinished socks with ribbing missing or not sewed at the toes and there were many fat cones of fine colored wool yarns used for testing. When the plant shut down, Dad collected up all these cones and brought them home in a huge carton for my mother and me and we had years of fun out of them. One machine I particularly remember was the one designed to knit argyle socks. It carried several cones at once and somehow miraculously changed colors as it ran and produced the diamonds.

Thinking back now, I really wish we had kept one of those old sock knitters, but back then, they were just obsolete machines. Hopefully, someone had the presence of mind to salvage one or two. The only

things we salvaged was a complete pair of argyle socks and two steel hooks for picking up dropped stitches. Dad used them for cleaning drains. I use them on my own Creelman sock machine.

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