

*Serving the Fireplace Industry
for Over 30 Years.*

HotTimes

A NEWSLETTER ON WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT

Special Edition—Wayne Rourke Retires

1977—Wayne Founds Northwest Stoves

Accountant turns to fire

In the summer of 1975, Wayne Rourke went on an Okanagan vacation, where he ran into his childhood friend from Powell River, Bob Warman. Together, they travelled to the IPE, Armstrong's famous fair. Bob had started Okanagan Fisher Stove Works in 1974 and was taking the show on the road. While Bob was enjoying numerous "refreshments" at the show, Wayne was left in Fisher's booth to extol the virtues of the stove to all who would listen. It was then that his love for wood burning began.

Some weeks later while driving along Hwy 101 in Powell River, Wayne picked up a hitchhiker, who said he was on his way to Fisher Stoves. Wayne happily proceeded to explain to him that he knew the product and told him of his recent experience at the show. Imagine Wayne's surprise when his passenger turned out to be Claudio Querin, partner to Paul Ziri in Fisher Stove Works Canada.

At the time, Wayne was in his second year in the CGA program and working for a small accounting company. However, he also decided to take a part-time job at Fisher Stove Works. His duties included bookkeeping, placing advertise-



ments and buying the oxygen and acetylene for the welder. Wayne would make deliveries down to the old chicken coop where the stoves were welded together.

About 18 months later, Paul Ziri decided to move on and Claudio visited his brother in Australia, so Wayne bought the business. It was 1977.

Within a week, Wayne moved the business from the old chicken coop to the boiler room of the old Powell River Post Office. The business was incorporated in February of 1977 and its new name was Fisher Stove Works Ltd.

With Jim Oslie welding and Wayne painting, grinding and selling, they were off to the races.

The first dealer they set up was Courtenay Lumber on Vancouver Island. The second was AC Building Supplies (which later became Rona in Madeira Park, BC).

During that first year, they built a dealer group of 15 or 16 dealers between Vancouver Island, the Sunshine Coast and lower mainland regions of British Columbia. In 1978, due in part to rising freight costs from a relatively remote location in Powell River, the decision was made to move the operation to North Vancouver. Wayne says that shipping a stove from Manitoba to Vancouver was cheaper than shipping one from Powell River to Vancouver at the time.

This strategic move allowed for better service to the company's market area. The 5000 square foot building was one of three addresses that Fisher Stove Works/Northwest Stoves would occupy on Charlotte Road over the next 18 years. The staff had grown to five employees when, in 1979, with manufacturing being done in three locations (North Vancouver, Powell River and Richmond), a young Dan Kosovic was hired to do shipping and receiving.

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"He was a damn good supplier, one with a good business sense"

- Ralph MacDonald on Wayne Rourke





Wayne Rourke Trivia—part 1

How much do you know about the Northwest Stoves' retiring founder?

1. What is Wayne's favourite pastime when he's not in the office?
2. What are the names of his two sons?
3. What Mexican resort location did he drive his truck and camper to on more than one occasion?
4. What product did Wayne mount on a utility trailer, hooked up to a Fisher Stove with copper coils, which he hauled from place to place doing demos?
5. What dealer did Wayne purchase his camper from?

- more trivia on page 3. Answers on back page.

"Wayne's vision is what sets him apart from all others in the hearth industry."

- Tom Pugh



Wayne wishes Greg Stalman well upon his retirement in 2010. Now it is Greg's turn to do the same.

"Wayne has always inspired manufacturers to address quality concerns with his lack of PO's for products that were not up to standard."

- Bret Watson

Tom Pugh—Lloyd Pugh & Associates

While I have many fond thoughts and humorous stories about working with Wayne over the past 20 years, I stand in awe of his ability to pick "the next big thing" in the hearth industry. I don't know if he acquired this gift as a Fisher licensee in the late 1970's, but he was a Lopi licensee when glass doors were the rage, he was the Kent Tile Fire importer when they were Consumer Reports Top Choice, he jumped on Pacific Energy stoves when they replaced Kent as the "must have" wood stove product,

and he picked up ICC when it was a small but promising venting line from Quebec in 1991.



Wayne tests a Fisher Honey Bear

While many would have treaded lightly with this chimney upstart, he had the daring to throw out a very successful Projet product line and go "all in for ICC". His unparalleled commitment and belief in our future set the foundation for ICC's success in BC and the rest of Canada. Wayne's vision is what sets him apart from all others in the hearth industry and has earned him the highest respect from all of his peers. Thank you for making ICC so successful.

- Tom Pugh

Ray Bonar—Vice President, Industrial Chimney Co.

"I first met Wayne sometime in the late 70's. The first business we did together was when he sold me some Fisher Stoves. Our relationship really picked up for good once Northwest Stoves became the first Canadian Excel distributor in 1991.

For many years we did not have voice mail until Wayne convinced me that we needed it. Before that I'd often arrive at the office around 8:30 and be handed a mes-

sage that Wayne had called. This wouldn't be unusual except it is three hours earlier on the west coast. Wayne would make his eastern calls at 5am so he could start working when almost most of us were still sleeping.

Wayne is a thoughtful, straightforward and honest communicator - a genuine no bullshit kind of guy. He's not shy to tell you when he thinks you need to change something or to tell you

when you're screwing up; but he always does it in a constructive way and he never wastes your time. When Wayne talks I listen. He understands what the manufacturer needs in their business relationship much better than most distributors. I've always thought he was the best distributor I've known at choosing good lines so naturally he chose ours. And we're very happy he did.

Bret Watson—President, Jotul North America

"When I was National Sales Manager for HearthStone, I met Wayne at Toronto's Wood/Gas Forum and quickly realized how iconic he was throughout Canada. At the time, we needed a distributor in Western Canada. It took some time to convince him to take on HearthStone. Fortunately for us, the decline of Waterford—the line he had at the time—paved the way.

Before Wayne takes on a line, he does a very careful review of the product. During my years at

HearthStone and at Jotul, he has made a conscious effort to burn our products in his home.

Along with Tex McLeod, Ray Bonar, Tom Pugh, John Gulland and others, Wayne formed a formidable governing body for Canada in our industry—sometimes formal and often times informal. I cannot stress enough the impact that this group has had in promoting our industry not just in Canada, but across all of North America.

I always had good conversations

with Wayne on his business, what we could do better in manufacturing and about the industry overall. Wayne was highly successful because he had the combined competency of finance and entrepreneurial spirit—a potent mix. Wayne has always inspired manufacturers to address quality concerns with his lack of PO's for products that were not up to standard.

When I look back, Wayne is one of the top 5 or 6 people who have been influential in my hearth career."



Northwest Stoves Early Years (from page 1)

Fisher Stove Works actually stopped manufacturing the stoves 6 months after the move to North Vancouver. The work was sub-contracted to Randy Gott of Gott Enterprises who was located, conveniently, right next door on Charlotte Road.

One of Dan's early jobs was to brick and stack each stove from the 3 different locations. Inventory was fairly easy to handle as there were only 5 skus. Truthfully, there were more when you include nickel and gold door options, but it was nothing like the 5000 plus items he handles today! No computers here either. Dan was able to tell you exactly what we had in the warehouse, at any given time.

With the oil crisis in full swing and demand for more self-

sufficient heating rising, the company's annual sales rose to the \$1 million mark in 1979.

In 1980, the company decided to take on Projet Chimney, represented at that time by long time industry professional, Shaun Mullan. Dan Kosovic likes to tell the story of the first Projet truck's arrival. Each and every piece had to be unloaded by hand. Even with the driver's help, it took several hours to unload. Shaun had great timing, as he arrived when the job was basically complete.

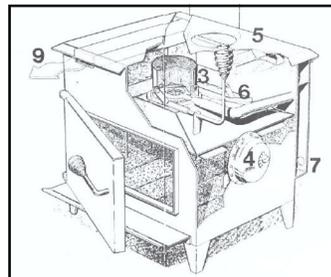
But that truck marked the beginning of the company's transition into wholesale distribution.

In 1982, during a sales call to Vaglio Fireplaces in Vancouver, Wayne met Mike Harstone, who asked Wayne if he was hiring. They had an "interview"

over dinner at the Keg Restaurant, and Mike was hired. His early role was shipping and receiving, as well as being the outside sales rep for the entire province of BC.

1982 was the year that Northwest Stoves developed and manufactured a catalytic woodstove—the Northwest Model #1 Catalytic Woodstove. It was pretty ugly, but it worked well.

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Line drawing of Model #1 Catalytic

Wayne Rourke Trivia—Part 2

Continued from page 2

How much do you know about the Northwest Stoves founder?

6. When is Wayne's birthday?
7. What is Wayne's middle name?
8. What nickname was given to the old, run down black pick up he drove around town?
9. What association did Wayne serve as President?
10. What was Wayne's first career set to be before his interest in wood stoves began in the early 70's?
11. What highly time consuming project has Wayne undertaken over the past 2 years?

- Answers on back page.

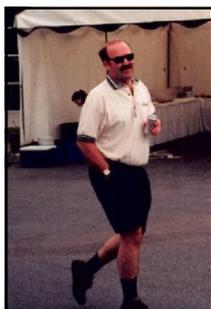


Wayne's Family

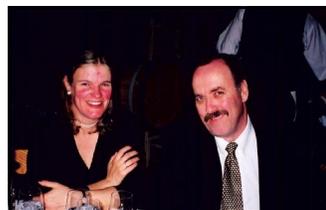
Ralph MacDonald—owner, R.E. MacDonald Stoves & Stone

"I first met Wayne in 1978 when I purchased different types of product from him. Despite his youth and inexperience, Wayne obviously knew the industry and ran a fair and honest company.

Wayne developed into a leader in the fireplace industry, promoting both the products and the retailers. He would always help out wherever and whenever he could.



Wayne helped make the fireplace industry in British Columbia what it is today.



Once, when my bookkeeper deserted me at year end, Wayne spent several hours of his own time helping me out, ensuring that things ran smoothly for me. All at no cost to me.

Wayne introduced me to trade shows and showed me the importance of attending them.

He was a damn good supplier and one with a good business sense. Wayne was last on the airplane, first on the making of money."

Greg Stalman—Retired NWS Employee & Co-owner Blaze Ind.

"I first met Wayne in 1977, or somewhere thereabouts, when he came into Blaze Industries to scout out some product we had. At the time, I was a part owner and the BC Sales Manager. I took him for a tour of our plant.

The thing that struck me right away about Wayne was his honesty, fairness and loyalty to both dealers and staff. It's not always easy to display those traits, yet Wayne had them as part of him all the time.

Many years later, I was lucky enough to be asked to work for Northwest Stoves. I witnessed first hand his crusade to help the industry's fight regarding wood burning. Wayne jumped in with both feet to help educate the government and the general public to eliminate any

misconceptions that were there. Of course, there was the time he took me to Blaine to help clean his sailboat. While I was doing that, he looked around for tools to complete the job.

Wayne is an industry legend. His legacy and dedication will continue even after his retirement."



Wayne's son James makes a tackle during a recent school rugby match



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A special thank you goes out to Tom Pugh, Ray Bonar, Bret Watson, Ralph MacDonald and Greg Stalman for their thoughtful contributions to this special edition of the Hot Times newsletter!

Visit us on the web at
[northweststoves.ca!](http://northweststoves.ca)



Northwest Stoves Later Years (from page 3)

Along with Fisher and the Northwest Model #1, Wayne also took on being a Lopi licensee and manufactured the stoves for Western Canada. On the distribution side of the business, many other products were brought in including Flame and Co. Gas Logs, Kel Kem, Dampney, Forrest Paint, RSF, Energy Vent, Iso-Kaern Chimney and Portland Willamette doors and screens. The company was well on its way to becoming a full-service distributor.

Because we were growing so quickly, the decision was made to move to spacious new digs in Langley in 1994. At the time several other brands were on board including ICC Chimney, Pacific Energy and Pacific Gas. The location was quite a bit larger than the Charlotte Road locale, leaving Wayne the option of renting space to other companies if the need arose. However, the company continued to grow making the new warehouse more and more full after taking on Convair Coolers, Jotul, HearthStone & Simpson Dura-vent among others, until the time came in recent years when we had to find space in other locations to store our ever increasing inventory levels.

In 1996, Wayne added Todd Ayley to the shipping department to replace John Oldfin, who left after a 10 year stint. In 2002, Wayne needed someone to help him with the books as Mabel Nielsen was going to move back to her native Denmark, so a man by the name of David Rosvold was recruited. We all know how that turned out.



Other former long-time employees who had a significant impact on the life of Northwest Stoves include Dan Cook (marketing), Vancouver Gas's Dawne Pierce (AR & order desk), Grant Biech (shipping & IT), Greg Stalman (shipping and receiving) and the legendary Reid Harvey.

In 2006, the company added Connee Ceresney, Chris Vecchies and Martin Mabbs. In 2008, Clinton Tod was brought in from Winnipeg to join the team. The following year saw Dawne Gleadhill added and in 2010, Gerry Moews, Kevin Faire and Scott Robar all became part of Wayne's legacy.

Contact Us

Northwest Stoves Staff

David Rosvold	President	ex. 31
Mike Harstone	Outside Sales	604-866-1966
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Scott Robar	Outside Sales	250-558-6860
Clinton Tod	In/Out Sales/Tech Supp	604-308-1202 or ex. 22
Todd Ayley	Sales & Warehouse Coordinator	ex. 26
Connee Ceresney	Cust. Service/Co-op/Warranty	ex. 23
Kevin Faire	Shipping	ex. 36
Dawne Gleadhill	Accounts Receivable	ex. 29
Dan Kosovic	Purchasing/Tech. Support/Warranty	ex. 27
Gerry Moews	Returns/Shipping/Receiving	ex. 30
Chris Vecchies	Shipping/Receiving	ex. 21

To leave a **Voice Mail** please phone **604-856-8750** or **1-888-663-8816**, then enter the extension of the person you are trying to reach and you will be automatically directed to that person's line. We will take your call promptly, or you can leave a voice mail for a quick call back.



Serving the Fireplace Industry For More Than Thirty Years

Wayne Rourke

Trivia Answers

From page 2 & 3

1. Sailing
2. James (Jamie) and Grayden (Grady)
3. Cabo San Lucas
4. A Hot Tub
5. Fireside Heating in Quesnel (former owner Roger St. Amand)
6. September 20th, 1952
7. Robert
8. Black Beauty
9. HPBAC
10. Accountant
11. Home Renovation

Look for more fun
trivia in the next
edition of "Hot Times"