

2009 Baking Hall of Fame



Dale Lecrone

With a career spanning longer than 50 years and an extensive line of patents of import to the baking industry to his credit, it's easy to see why Dale S. Lecrone made the cut as one of four inductees into this year's American Society of Baking Hall of Fame class. Mr. Lecrone's impact on the baking industry has been widespread, ranging from his company's role in the advent of bagel slicing to his influence as a past leader of numerous industry associations.

Mr. Lecrone got his start in the industry in the 1950s working in a machine shop used by Capital Bakers in York, Pa. While there, he worked on the development of the first hinge slicing machine for hamburger buns. He later worked for Alto Corp., developing several bakery equipment patents for the company.

In the early 1960s, Mr. Lecrone left Alto to work for Baker Perkins in Saginaw, Mich. He spent six years as a sales engineer for the mid-Atlantic states for Baker Perkins, which at the time was the largest manufacturer of bakery equipment in the United States.

By 1966, Mr. Lecrone had moved on to Jackson, Mich., where he took a job with the Dawn Equipment Co. as manager and developer of new equipment. It was during the next several years, though, that Mr. Lecrone would develop the breakthroughs that ultimately would cement his place in baking history.

"In the early 1970s, some of the patents were running out on his earlier designed slicers," according to a Hall of Fame nominating letter. "Dale had some ideas on how to build a better one. He left Dawn Foods and built his first LeMatic slicing head in his basement garage."

Founded in 1973, LeMatic, Inc. initially produced bakery slicing and bagging equipment and in short order was supplying slicing, handling and packaging equipment to customers around the world.

The company's customer list is impressive, including such names as McDonald's Corp. and Lenders bagels. In the case of the latter, the relationship dates back to the late 1970s, when Mr. Lecrone was approached by Marvin Lender at a bakery show with

a request to slice bagels.

"I told him we'd never sliced bagels before, and the next morning seven cases of unsliced bagels were delivered to us," Mr. Lecrone told *The Jackson Citizen Patriot* in an interview several years ago.

Mr. Lecrone said LeMatic was able to modify a bun slicer to handle bagels and from that day on has been the provider of bagel slicing equipment for Lenders.

Whereas previous bagel slicers had left a bump that left bagels to often stick in the toaster, LeMatic was able to develop a slicer that left

bagels joined in the center.

The company eventually became a family affair, with Mr. Lecrone joined in the business by his wife, Margaret, who passed away in August 2008, and a son, Dale J. (D.J.) Lecrone. D.J. Lecrone is currently president of LeMatic. A second son, Alan, works at Stanton & Associates, Inc., owner of more than 60 Wendy's restaurants in Michigan.

Today, LeMatic, Inc. continues to provide innovate slicing, packaging and automation solutions to the worldwide baking industry, including its new



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MARGO KUCHURS WISEMAN

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John Del Campo, left, A.S.B. Hall of Fame Committee member, presented Dale Lecrone with his plaque in recognition of his services to the industry.

MARGO KUCHARIS WISEMAN

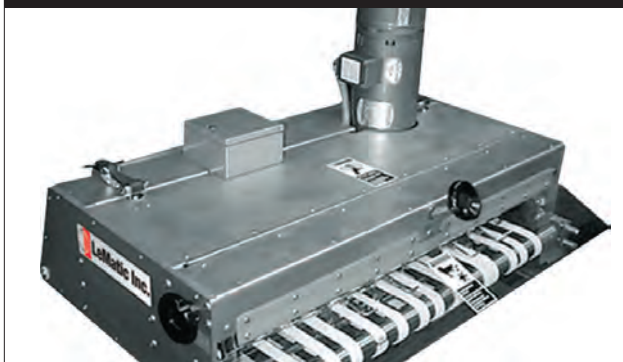
generation of products in robotics and vision systems. The company's AutoOp (Automatic Operator) cells, integrates robots and vision into new and existing bakery production lines to improve efficiency and product quality in the production process. The product is ideal for high-speed picking, packing and palletizing and is customizable based on the application.

Mr. Lecrone also is well known for his innovative side. He holds 14 patents for bakery machinery, including a knife mounting unit for a roll slicing machine,

separating rollers for a slicing mechanism of a roll slicing machine, an adjustable roll slicing system, and a band-type roll slicing machine.

He was president of BEMA, an international, non-profit trade association representing leading bakery and food equipment manufacturers and suppliers, whose combined efforts in research and development have led to the continual improvement of the baking and food industries, from 1991 to 1993. In 2003, he received that organization's Lifetime Achievement Award.

"Little did I know that some years back this would be such a great honor to be part of an industry that is so vital and important to all of us, and I certainly appreciate this honor," Mr. Lecrone said in accepting his award. MBN



LeMatic Inc., the company Dale Lecrone founded in the early 1970s, now supplies slicing, handling and packaging equipment to customers around the world.



Dale S. Lecrone, center, is joined by his sons, Dale J. (D.J.) Lecrone, left, and Alan Lecrone, right.