LAPP USA

By Russ Willcutt

Delivering innovation from its earliest days, this company has designed cables and accessories specifically for wind-energy applications.

WHEN CONSIDERING A GLOBAL GIANT on the scale of the Lapp Group, it's somewhat difficult to imagine the humble scenario presented by Rick Orsini of how it came to be founded. "Oskar Lapp was a German engineer working with rectangular industrial connectors in the mid-fifties," says the product marketing manager for Lapp USA. "He saw a need to design and manufacture more-flexible cable products to accommodate motion, so he and his wife started the company in 1957, operating out of their own home in Stuttgart."

With his background in the automotive industry, and with companies such as Porsche, BMW, and Mercedes nearby who were interested in cable innovations, Lapp was able to move into his first true manufacturing facility within five years. The company's success was bolstered by his development of ÖLFLEX®, the first industrially produced color-coded control cable, which eliminated the time-consuming manual insertion of single cores and switching strands into the outer sheaths. Satellite locations throughout Europe soon followed, with Lapp USA—formerly OLFLEX Wire & Cable—being established as its first overseas subsidiary in 1979. Now headquartered in Florham Park, New Jersey, the site also houses the company's systems group, which provides complex harnesses, integrated systems solutions, and custom cable assemblies. This is yet another of the company's strengths, according to Orsini, and one that sets it apart from those providing similar products and services.

"We are the only company in the United States, and one of only a few worldwide, that manufacture both wire and connectors and then actually put them together," he says. "Most companies are either one or the other, so having both of those capabilities under the same umbrella really makes us unique in this industry."

On the founder's death in 1987 management of the company shifted to his wife, Ursula Ida Lapp, and their sons Andreas and Siegbert. At this point his dream of global expansion escalated, with relationships formed with distributors and other representatives around the world, with the most successful of those resulting in acquisitions to form Lapp Italia, Lapp China, and Lapp London, just to name a few. Today the company has 40 subsidiaries in various countries, with some 100 partnerships augmenting its vast geographic footprint. In addition, the Lapp Group maintains 17 production facilities around the world, including the United States. In addition to the wind industry, the markets it serves include automotive, machine tool, plastics, food and beverage, pharmaceutical, material handling, printing, semiconductor, packaging, robotics, and industrial controls.

One of the benefits of the company's roots in Europe and elsewhere is that, although Lapp USA has been involved in the wind industry for the past 10 or so years, the Lapp Group's involvement ranges back more than two decades. In working closely with its longtime customers, which are major global wind turbine manufacturers, the company has developed a reputation for being responsive to their requirements, especially in terms of their needs related to where the wind turbines will be operating. "Some companies needed cables rated at -40°C for bending and impact, while others were more interested in halogen-free applications," Orsini says. "Whatever the requirement, our wind-energy experts are prepared to work toward meeting their goals."

He goes on to explain how the company has sales business unit (SBU) teams devoted to alternative energies located around the world who focus on collaborating with customers to determine their needs, whether that be developing new cables, connectors, and accessories, or to work toward having them rated for specific applications by agencies such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) in the United States. An example would be the ÖLFLEX FORTIS—meaning "strength" in Latin—line of flexible and oil-resistant tray cables, with primary applications in the wind industry. The specially formulated elastomeric jacket passes UL's -40°C cold impact test while offering outstanding oil resistance and meeting wind-turbine tray cable (UL-2277) requirements. Information on the full FORTIS line is available on the company's Web site. "This is a single cable that meets all the requirements necessary for wind applications," Orsini says, "so that in itself is a tremendous benefit for our customers in this industry."

From developing the first multi-conductor flexible control cable back in the 1950s, the Lapp Group has grown into a massive business entity with more than 45 companies worldwide, and one of the leading suppliers for wire and cable, cable accessories, industrial connectors, and communication technology.

ÖLFLEX FORTIS Advantage

Many configurations are available online, but basic attributes include:

- Arctic grade jacket passes UL's -40°C cold impact test
- Passes UL OIL RES I & II requirements
- Meets all Tray Cable (UL-1277) requirements
- Outstanding mechanical toughness: TC-ER Rated
- Meets all Wind Turbine Tray Cable (UL-2277) requirements
- Meets Torsion Requirements for Wind Turbine Applications
- Copper core is dual rated for North American and European standards 18 AWG (1.0mm2) to 6 AWG (16mm2)

To learn more go to www.lappusa.com.