

National Band & Tag Company: A Family Story of Loyalty and Longevity

Beginning at the 2017 convention in Gulfport, Mississippi, the North American Gamebird Association began to do a spotlight on longtime corporate partners of the organization.

NAGA has been blessed with several relationships with companies that service the gamebird business, and have supported the organization for decades. One of those companies is about two hours from where I live, just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Ohio, in Newport, Kentucky.

National Band & Tag is located in the heart of Newport, a town of a bit more than 15,000 people that was settled in 1791. The company was founded 115 years ago in 1902!

The Beginning

The company has been located on Orchard Street since founder Joseph Haas moved his growing operation there in 1930. The company occupies most of an entire block now between Orchard and York Street, and has expanded several times over the years into a 90,000-square foot facility.

National Band & Tag makes identification bands and tags for all manner of animals including dogs, cattle, sea turtles and even shrimp! But the whole thing started with chickens. Today, it has become a popular trend in America to own chickens as people concentrate more on healthy living. At the beginning of the 20th century, however, owning chickens was a necessity for many people, and Joseph Haas was one of them.

Because so many people in the area owned chickens, flocks became co-mingled, many times resulting in con-

fusion and sometimes tension with neighbors about who owned which chickens. Haas worked at a nearby screen door manufacturer, and asked if he could take home some scrap aluminum. He had an idea to make leg bands that would identify which chickens were the property of his family. And once he saw that they worked well, he had an idea that ID bands could be a profitable business.



SUNGLASSES to prevent poultry from pecking one another may no longer be in vogue, but National Band & Tag's plastic pinless peepers are an extremely popular alternative.

In 1902, Joseph Haas purchased one press to give his idea a go. At the urging of his wife, Clara, he had an agreement with the manufacturer that he could return the press if the business did not take off. It nearly didn't. One full year later, just after he had returned the machine, he received his first major order. He quickly reclaimed the press, and National Band & Tag, originally known as National Poultry Company, began to grow.

Sunglasses for Chickens

In 1939, second generation Haas, Fred Sr., along with his father, Joseph, crafted one of the most noteworthy products in the company's history. While blinders to prevent chickens from pecking each other were already common, they invented red-lensed glasses for birds that filtered out the color red, which would normally result in chicken losses from pecking each other at the sight of blood.

The lenses pivoted to allow the birds to see their feed and water when they bent over, but fell back into place once a chicken stood up straight. While sunglasses for chickens are no longer in service, National Band & Tag continues to sell its plastic pinless peepers.

Loyalty and Longevity

Fast-forward to 2017 and the Haas family is still running National Band & Tag. However, it's now the 4th and 5th generation of family members who work at the family owned corporation.

NAGA members have grown used to seeing Lan Haas, who serves as Vice President of Safety and Quality Assurance, at the annual convention. National Band & Tag has been supporting NAGA since 1995 when Eric Haas, (Lan's father) started attending the annual conventions, and the relationship, now in its third decade, continues as the company purchased advertising in NAGA News in 2017, and will once again be exhibiting at the convention in Seattle in January of 2018.

"The road to success is always under construction." — Lily Tomlin

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The company operates more than 100 punch presses and employs 80 people, eleven of whom are Haas family members. Blood relation alone, however, will not get you a job at National Band & Tag. Family members are not sitting in offices overseeing the labor force. Each one plays a key role in the operation.



ELEVEN HAAS family members currently work at the family owned corporation.

Lan himself operated a press for six months so he could understand what employees were experiencing. Watching 100 punch presses running at once gave me an appreciation for Lan's role as the head of safety.

I found a lot of shared values and work ethic between the Haas family business and the many family gamebird businesses that belong to NAGA. Much like the family farm, it's family members who repair machinery when things break down. There are presses in operation today dating back to 1912. Family members work alongside factory supervisors to set up presses for different orders. Throughout our visit, we saw Haas family members on the factory floor, hands dirty, directly involved in the action.

The business is part of the fabric of Newport, and the employees themselves are like family as well. There

are many employees who have been there for over 20 years and at one point three generations of the same family as well. Part of that company loyalty is a result of the work culture that has been handed down throughout the company history. There may be eleven Haas family members working there, but each one of them must serve an essential task for the company before the family board of directors will hire them.

ID Band and Tags Everywhere

As Lan conducted a tour for me and Daniel, we saw people producing many types of leg bands, wing bands, dog tags, ear tags and much more. Poultry represents about 25 percent of National Band & Tag's annual sales.

In addition to birds, the company services other livestock including ear tags for cattle and sheep. It makes tags for wild turkeys and elk. And, it makes dog license and rabies tags for communities all over America. Universities use small animal ear tags made by National Band & Tag for lab animals including mice. Aquatically

speaking, the company makes flipper tags for sea turtles and, as hard as this is to envision, it makes tiny eye-stalk bands for shrimp!

While the company has purchased manufacturing materials abroad in the past, National Band & Tag, like many other companies, found that American-made materials provide the dependable quality their customers rely upon. The customer is and has always been the key ingredient for the Haas family from the beginning. Customer feedback has literally driven changes in the product line over the years, and it continues to today, such as changes in the Pinless Peeper design made from feedback



NATIONAL BAND & TAG manufactures many types of leg bands, wing bands, dog tags, ear tags and more.

from NAGA members.

NAGA is grateful for the support it receives from corporate partners. Like National Band & Tag, the NAGA Board wants to hear from the members, and the staff wants to make changes to meet the needs of gamebird

businesses as the years go by. Our trip to the little town that is literally in the shadow of the Cincinnati skyline showed me just one more reason why the gamebird industry thrives yet today. ★

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