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Wednesday, January 31, 2007



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Louisville Prosthetics

Brothers continue tradition

Oldham family's business thrives

By **Melissa Gagliardi**

mgagliardi@courier-journal.com

The Courier-Journal

After suffering a shrapnel injury in World War II, James Cook got an infection that took part of his leg, leaving him badly depressed.

Then he met J.H. Lockett.

As a teen, Lockett had lost a leg in a train accident and was unhappy with the medical treatment he received. He later went into business making and fitting artificial limbs.

Lockett fashioned a wooden leg for Cook.

Cook said it helped being in the hands of someone who was also missing a limb. "You can identify better," said Cook, now 82.

Lockett died in 1992 and his business, Falls City Limb & Brace Co., which he founded in 1952, was passed on to his son, Robert Lockett, of Prospect. Now, three grandsons, Wayne, Bruce and Chris Lockett, who live in Oldham County, work at the company.

The Locketts recently changed the company's name to Louisville Prosthetics and moved it from West Broadway to 742 East Broadway to be closer to the hospitals. The company designs, fabricates and fits artificial limbs.

While a lot has changed over the years with technology, the company's family-oriented atmosphere remains.



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Robert Lockett, in tie, said he never pushed his sons into the prosthetics business. Surrounding him from left are his sons, Wayne, Bruce and Chris Lockett. By Pam Spaulding, The C-J

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Cook said he enjoys visiting the office. Having been a patient of three generations of Lucketts, Cook said he always feels he is in good hands.

Wayne, Bruce and Chris Lockett graduated from Oldham County schools. They not only work together but also spend leisure time together, fishing and hunting.

"Our parents fostered togetherness," said Wayne Lockett, who lives in La Grange. "Our parents always made an effort to do family activities -- church on Sunday, the Sunday meal." Wayne has kept some of the tools he had watched his grandfather use to carve limbs from wood when he was a boy.

Chris Lockett, who lives in Goshen, said part of the reason he got into the business five years ago was to be with family.

"Most people don't get the opportunity to grow up in a family business and work with relatives while at the same time making such a difference in someone's lives. It's very rare."

And in some ways, their patients become an extended family that they care for and talk to regularly. "You're definitely establishing relationships with these people that last a lifetime," Chris Lockett said.

Robert Lockett said he never pushed his sons into the business, just exposed them to it the way his father had. He had spent time around his father's office, cleaning and doing odd jobs, until two employees quit and his dad asked him to join the company.

"I let them make the choice. They've got to love and enjoy the profession they're in in order to achieve at it," Robert Lockett said.

So he was proud when, 22 years ago, his eldest son got into the business. Wayne Lockett said the choice was easy. Like his dad, he'd begun working with his father when he was in high school and recognized the difference he could make in people's lives.

"You see someone come in the front door and their head is hung down and they're in a wheelchair. ... We provide a service that gets people back on their feet," he said.

To become certified prosthetists, like their father, the three brothers first earned bachelor's degrees before attending the prosthetics program at Northwestern Medical School in Chicago, one of seven accredited schools in



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Photo courtesy of Lockett family Three generations of Lucketts have worked in their prosthetics business, including, from left, Wayne, Robert and Herb Lockett.

the country. Each then went on to complete a one-year medical residency and had to pass board exams.

Advancements in medicine mean fewer prostheses are needed to correct birth defects or childhood diseases. Instead, many of the patients at Louisville Prosthetics have suffered from vascular disease, motorcycle accidents or diabetes.

They also see Vietnam veterans and said they expect to help those from Iraq.

It looks like the business will remain in the Lockett family for years, with Wayne's son Tyler, who is a senior at Oldham County High School, expressing interest in it.

Bruce Lockett said he can't think of a more rewarding place to work. Growing up with two grandparents with disabilities -- their other grandfather suffered from a disease that required him to use a cane -- taught him compassion and gave him a will to help.

"It's really great seeing someone walk in thinking their life is over, then you can make a change and get them back to work and doing the activities they would have been doing," Bruce Lockett said.

Reporter Melissa Gagliardi can be reached at (502) 582-4117.