

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAUNDRY EQUIPMENT CORP.



ROMEO

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the New England area was experiencing a mini migration of workers from the Canadian Province of Quebec. At the time, the textile mills which formed the economic backbone of many cities and towns were running at full capacity and rapidly growing. To power this boom many Canadian workers were encouraged to head south and join the growing workforce. One of these was Romeo Brunette of St. Hyacinthe, PQ. Arriving with his new wife Eulalie, Romeo began working at various jobs in the mills of Manchester NH. As he started raising a family he supplemented his income by taking many other jobs. Time went on, and their children, Francis and Yvon, grew and developed their own work ethic and sense of pride in everything they did.

By the mid 1950's both sons had served their country in the armed services, and returned to Manchester to begin raising their own families. It was in the late '50s that Francis (an insurance agent) and Yvon (a policeman) decided to cast their lots together with their dad and go into business for themselves. After considering different ideas (including a drive-in movie theatre!), and seeing the beginning of a trend around the country of laundry equipment being fitted with coin operated controls for use by more than one family, the boys decided to open Manchester's first coin-operated laundry (20 cents a wash and 10 cents a dry! Those were the days!). Soon, Romeo, Francis, and Yvon, supported by their wives, had opened a string of 'Laundromats' around the state. By the late 1960's, the 'Brunette Boys' were operating over 20 stores and had begun to install equipment in college residence halls and apartment buildings. With business growing (and children multiplying!) Francis and Yvon decided to pare down the Laundromats, keeping their flagship store 'Sunshine Cleaners' in Manchester, and focus on the college residence halls and apartment building market. At the same time, the boys decided to divide the business, with Francis taking Sunshine Cleaners, and Yvon taking the route accounts.

Francis continued to own and operate Sunshine Cleaners until his death in 1997.



FRANCIS



YVON



MIKE



GARY

Around 1972, Yvon and June's son Mike changed from a 'tag-along-with-dad' worker to a fully committed partner in the business, now known by its current name Laundry Equipment Corporation (LECO). Once the children of Mike and his wife Terri were in school, Terri came in as secretary and bookkeeper. After growing the business, Yvon and Mike were able to entice another of Yvon's sons, Gary, to join after his hitch with the USMC. And now, Mike and Terri's youngest son, Steve, has joined the business, giving LECO the FOURTH generation of Brunettes! Gary has since left the business to pursue other interests. Yet in late 2012 Mike & Terri's oldest son, Chris threw his lot in with the family business, and is helping us to continue into the future..

To see the changes from that first Laundromat on Pine Street in Manchester, to the LECO of today, is to see the fruits of hard working, dedicated men, their supportive and loving wives, and the families that have remained strong and together through good times and rough times, through trials and triumphs, setbacks and successes. The LECO of today is a company with strong pride in our humble beginnings, tremendous community spirit, a dedication to our families rarely seen in today's business world, and exciting plans for the future. Dare we say it? Might there be a fifth generation? .....



STEVE



CHRIS