Introduction
By: Kenneth H. Nelson, P.E.

July 8th, 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of our founder’s birth. In the years just prior to his passing away in 2005, Waldemar wrote an autobiographical history of the company. We celebrate the centennial anniversary of his birth by publishing here the introduction to that history, and in subsequent issues we will publish other excerpts written by him. We hope you will enjoy this glimpse into the man who is responsible for the company that has made all our livelihoods possible. (Note: He wrote his autobiography in the third person.)

His Story / Our History:
Waldemar Stanley Nelson was born on July 8th, 1916 in his parents’ home on 7319 Panola Street in New Orleans, Louisiana. His father, Bernard Stanley Nelson, was an electrical engineer and worked for the company that made all our liveli-hoods possible. With this heritage, it is easy to understand how Waldemar Nelson developed such an early interest in engineering. Family discussions included engineering topics, and the two sisters were allowed to attend as courtesy students, and thus, were not awarded diplomas.

A picture of Mary and Sophie, in their cadet uniforms, hung on the wall of the alumni house, and years after they had completed their studies, the “Aggie” Alumni Association awarded them certificates in 2002 confirming their education.

Five of Waldemar’s uncles were engineers. Lawrence Kitchener Nelson, a graduate of The Tulane University of Louisiana, was a mechanical engineer who performed much pioneer work on air conditioning for office buildings, department stores, and plants such as textile mills. Henry Lockett Nelson, a graduate of Texas A. & M. University, was Chief Engineer for A. M. Lockett & Company, Limited. Miles Brewton Hutson was an electrical engineer and was employed by the local power company. Later he was the electrical genius for the Industrial Electric Company, a motor repair shop which rebuilt equipment for speeds, voltages and frequencies other than that for which they had been manufactured.

Arthur Cary Hutson, a civil engineer, was employed by the National Board of Fire Underwriters in New York, and on visits to New Orleans he would discuss problems and policies concerning the testing and rating of equipment, fire protection, and alarm systems. William Ferguson Hutson, a civil engineer, worked for the Texas

Centennial
Waldemar attended New Orleans public schools which offered an excellent, well-rounded education. He began his matriculation at R. M. Lusher Elementary School in the Carrollton area, a farming and service community with truck gardens and cattle pens on vacant lots. There was a nule yard several blocks away from the school, and Waldemar could hear the ring of the blacksmith’s hammer on anvil steel as he ate his lunch from a paper bag.

High schools at that time were overcrowded, and the Orleans Parish School Board was having difficulty in accommodating all of its students. As a result, although Waldemar lived in the Carrollton area of uptown New Orleans, he was sent to the Warren Easton Annex which was located downtown at Esplanade Avenue and Bayou Road. He attended this school for one semester, commuting there by streetcar and obtaining a transfer at Canal Street. For the next semester and the following year, Waldemar attended the Warren Easton Boys’ High School at its present location on Canal Street. For the remaining year and a half, forced to switch schools again by the Orleans School Board, he attended the newly completed Algiers Fortier High School located uptown on Freret Street. There he graduated, completing his high school education in three years.

The new Fortier High School had excellent physics and chemistry laboratories equipped with college-quality instruments, and Waldemar and his friends reveled in experimentation, building a meteorological observatory on the roof of the science hall to have a barometer and other weather instruments provided by the physics lab. While at Fortier, Waldemar received instruction in English, Latin, public speaking, which was then called expression, algebra, plane and solid geometry, geography, history, civics, mechanical drawing, physics and chemistry. It was a superb curriculum strongly anchored in scientific subjects, leaving him well-equipped for a career in engineering.

While attending R. M. Lusher Elementary School, Waldemar became friends with John Gilchrist Bedell. John’s father was Captain Victor J. Bedell, an officer in the United States Navy. He was also a graduate of Texas A. & M. University, and had served in the military during World War I. He became a construction engineer involved in many missions being catapulted from the decks of battleships, later to be recovered at sea by steam winches on the vessels.

Waldemar had a sixth uncle, John Bedell, who was a draftsman for the company and a bridge across the Mississippi River in Jefferson Parish, and Captain Bedell, as the senior engineering representative for the Public Belt, was overall responsible for the shipyard, and the bridge construction. In 1936, a year before his twentieth birthday, Waldemar went to work for A. M. Nelson, following in his father’s footsteps, attended Tulane University where he enrolled in mechanical engineering. He and his electric motor was connected to a pump or other mechanical device. If the engineer wasn’t familiar with both ends of the machine, Dean Anderson surmised, he was in trouble at the outset. Mechanical and electrical engineering, therefore, were taught at Guey, and the beam is required, perform, to take the combined curricula. Waldemar also took courses in business law, and the course was very helpful to him early in his career and ensuing professional practice.

Graduating in June of 1936, a month before his twentieth birthday, Waldemar went to work for A. M. Nelson.

Waldemar was about the same age as Waldemar. The two boys played together in the afternoon after school, and when they were twelve years old, they became friends with a young, skinny boy from Natchez, Mississippi named Richerson Devereux Rhodes. (Bud) Rhodes would late become the first draftsman employed by the company.

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Waldemar, nurtured by all of this family background, attended New Orleans public schools which offered an excellent, well-rounded education. He began his matriculation at R. M. Lusher Elementary School in the Carrollton area, a farming and service community with truck gardens and cattle pens on vacant lots. There was a nucleus of several blocks away from the school, and Waldemar could hear the ring of the blacksmith's hammer on anvil steel as he ate his lunch from a paper bag. High schools at that time were overcrowded, and the Orleans Parish School Board was having difficulty in accommodating all of its students. As a result, although Waldemar lived in the Carrollton area of uptown New Orleans, he was sent to the Warren Easton Annex which was located downtown at Esplanade Avenue and Bayou Road. He attended this school for one semester, commuting there by streetcar and obtaining a transfer at Canal Street. For the next semester and the following year, Waldemar attended the Warren Easton Boys' High School at its present location on Canal Street. For the remaining year and a half, forced to switch schools again by the Orleans School Board, he attended the newly completed Algiers Fortier High School located uptown on Freret Street. There he graduated, completing his high school education in three years. The new Fortier High School was equipped with college-quality laboratories equipped with college-quality instruments, and Waldemar and his friends reveled in experimentation, building a meteorological observatory on the roof of the institution to help him become a barometer and other weather instruments provided by the physics lab. While at Fortier, Waldemar received instruction in English, Latin, public speaking, which was then called expression, algebra, plane and solid geometry, geography, history, civics, mechanical drawing, physics and chemistry. It was a superb curriculum strongly anchored in scientific subjects, leaving him well-equipped for a career in engineering.

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Waldemar had a sixth uncle, Albert Hutson, who was an officer in the United States Navy. On visiting his uncle, John was also attending Lusher, Elementary School, Waldemar became friends with John Gilchrist Bedell. John's father was Captain Victor J. Bedell, an officer in the United States Navy. He was also a graduate of Texas A. & M. University, and had missions being catapulted from the decks of battleships, later to be recovered at sea by steam winches on the vessels.

In subsequent issues we will publish excerpts from the rest of Waldemar's autobiography. His career spanned decades and many record-setting projects.
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