

By: Tricia Hills

The Canadian market for hobby supplies is limited at best and Wendy Hamilton, Vice President of Model Builders Supply, knows this well. Like many Aurora based family businesses Model Builders Supply (MBS) is a friendly, helpful, and Canadian oriented company, but MBS finds that the Canadian market just isn't there for the local model supplier.

The Canadian hobby market is almost non-existent and MBS seems to be one of the only hobby manufacturers of its kind in Aurora; even the local hobby retailers are fading. Currently MBS mainly targets the market of miniaturists and model railroaders, but also spans out to industries like architects, engineers, inventors, and even movie productions that use MBS products for special effects or model making. Because of the small Canadian market for hobby supplies MBS ships the majority of their products to the United States and are beginning to ship more internationally as well.

Consumers just can't seem to grasp the fact that the good quality and unique products from Model Builders Supply are actually manufactured in Aurora Canada. It appears that many, including Canadian retailers, believe that they will receive a better deal if they order hobby supplies from the United States. Pud Hamilton, Production Manager at MBS and Wendy's husband, says even though MBS has some of the best and most realistic products in the market it's hard to convince Canadians that it's worth it to buy the products from Canada.

"We would actually be 10 times bigger than we are if we just moved across the border into the United States", says Wendy.

Shockingly, Wendy pointed out that many Canadian retailers order hobby supplies from a U.S. based company only to find that they are importing products that MBS exported to that U.S. distributor. Although business could be booming over the

border both Wendy and Pud agree that they are proud to be Canadian and to support our country as well as the town of Aurora, where they work and live.

Being a local Aurora business since their move from Thornhill in 1990, MBS tries to support and give back to the community. In 1990 Model Builders Supply took part in building the town of Aurora by creating the scale model of the Aurora town offices situated on Municipal Drive. Wendy also uses her own resources, creativity and skills from MBS to work on side projects in town. For instance, Model Builders Supply built and donated the scale model for the Highview Playground for disabled and injured children, located close to Highview Public School, and Wendy & Pud took an integral role in the playground's design.



Model Builders Supply has been in business in Canada since 1957 when Keith Day, Wendy's father who is president of the company, started building and selling scale models. Day worked on such recognizable models as the Toronto Eaton's Centre and the Skydome (now Rogers Centre). Although model making was the main part of the revenue in the beginning, in the early 1970's the company began selling model parts and in 1983 became Model Builders Supply. In 1977 Wendy started to work for her father's company as a summer job and eventually helped run the family built business.



The company began in the Don Mills area, moved to Scarborough then to Thornhill and finally moved to Aurora 15 years ago where MBS became mainly a scale model parts supplier. When Day partially retired in 1995 Wendy took over many responsibilities at MBS and made a big change by heading off to hobby trade shows in the United States. It was important for MBS to gain more American distributors and consumers because the Canadian market was so small.

Model Builders Supply is continually working on new products that will hopefully attract more customers, locally in Aurora as well as in Canada and all over the world, to the hobby industry. One of the company's newer products include accessory kits that take only a few hours or a few days to put together rather than something that consists of a year or so of renovation. A few of these kits consist of hot tubs, ponds, and jukeboxes, which people can enjoy putting together as a single display or can be used as an add-on to a long time hobby.

MBS is able to ship worldwide and manufacture unique products here in Aurora, which clearly shows its quality and credibility in the hobby industry. Both Wendy and Pud, along with many Aurorans, agree that it is important to support local businesses and buy Canadian products in order to keep our economy and country growing.

It is significant "to promote Canadian, to buy Canadian, and to be Canadian", says Pud Hamilton.

Model Builders Supply has adapted, grown, and changed immensely since its beginning 47 years ago, but the Canadian hobby industry still appears to have a hard time putting trust into the Canadian products.