

## people to know

# SCENE: A FABRICATION SHOP

Ted Hazledine was destined for the stage, traveling the world and the steel industry, thanks to a family history of culture, wanderlust and entrepreneurialism.

**"IT WAS PROBABLY PREORDAINED** that I would pursue a career in some form of metalworking," says Ted Hazledine, president of Benchmark Fabricated Steel.

"My namesake grandfather emigrated to the U.S. in 1880 after serving an apprenticeship as a blacksmith in the forges and furnaces of the Severn River Valley of Shropshire County in West Central England. This area is regarded as one of the birthplaces of the Industrial Revolution and Coalbrookdale, my grandfather's hometown, is the site of the first cast iron bridge in the world (now simply called the Iron Bridge), constructed in 1779. There is some evidence that my ancestors worked in the Darby Ironworks that built the bridge."

Edward T. Hazledine went on to found his own metal shop, the E.T. Hazledine Company in Terre Haute, Ind., in 1887. By the time Ted's father, Kenneth, was born in 1908, the company had acquired several pieces of machinery, as well as the forges and trip hammers of the blacksmith trade. After his grandfather died in 1941, his father assumed ownership of the business.

Despite the commitments dictated by running a machine shop, welding shop and blacksmith shop, Ted's father and mother raised Ted and his sisters in an active and creative environment, where passions like archery, theater, the arts, music, horses and travel were pursued with gusto.

"Travel was a big deal," says Ted. "We went somewhere every year. Before I went to college, I'd been all over the U.S. and Canada. I was fortunate enough to go to Europe with a friend for nine weeks in the summer of 1963, visiting 16 countries and putting nearly 7,000 miles on a car purchased by my friend's father!"

At 16, Ted started working at the company his grandfather started, painting beams, sweeping floors and driving trucks. The following summer he split time between the plant and the office to get a better idea of what the business was all about.

After high school, he attended Purdue University, studying industrial management with an emphasis in economics. In 1965 he secured a summer position at Inland Steel Co. in East Chicago, Ind., an experience he said "probably solidified my interest in fab-

ricated steel." He joined the family business in 1966 and went on to start his own company, Benchmark (an AISC Member/AISC Certified Fabricator, also in Terre Haute), in 1971.

"Initially I was a one-man show working out of an office on the second floor of a building owned by a contractor friend," Ted recalls. "I would make a take-off and estimate the project to sell it, detail it and find somebody to make it. Eventually I hired a recent Rose Hulman Institute of Technology graduate who had been out of school for a year working for a steel fabricator. Within a couple of years we moved into a building that had an overhead crane and adequate space, and began to fabricate some of our own product."

Over the years the company has evolved into a full-service fabricated and miscellaneous steel contractor. One of Hazledine's more memorable projects was an addition to the Community Theatre of Terre Haute (CTTH) in the late 1990s (for more on this project, see "Command Performance," 10/2002). The building holds special meaning for Ted. He inherited a passion for theater from his mother, and for several years he was involved in many productions there as an actor, assistant director and set builder. He has performed in productions of *Guys and Dolls*, *That Championship Season*, *Wait Until Dark*, *Man for all Seasons*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Curse You, Jack Dalton!*, *Case of Libel* and *A Shot in the Dark*, and even won a Talley Award (the community theater equivalent of a Tony Award) in 1968 for his supporting role in *Period of Adjustment*. That said, he hasn't had any serious involvement with CTTH, other than facility planning and construction, for about 30 years.

"The time commitment was not compatible with my business and family focus, so I have limited my theater work to caring for CTTH's physical plant, which may be the finest in Indiana for theater groups that own their own facility," he says.

Travel is one passion he is able to still take part in directly, and he and his wife have recently been on cruises around the United Kingdom and the Baltic region, including Russia. The two have a long "bucket list" of places to visit, including Italy, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, and are also hopeful of going on an African Safari and a walking tour of the Cotswolds in England "before we grow old and feeble." Mexico, Central America and South America are also on the radar screen, as is the southwestern U.S.

"My wife lived all over the world with her Army family but missed a lot of the U.S., so we've got some catching up to do."

MSC



◀ Ted and family. From left to right, son David, Ted, wife Lynn (front), daughter Lisa and son-in-law Kevin.