

Hercules Engine News

Including Economy, Arco, Jaeger & Thermoil

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Several years ago I had the opportunity to interview Ora Garrison. He was an 82 year old retiree from the Whirlpool Corporation. He started to work for the Hercules Corporation on November 24, 1924. He continued to work there through corporate and product changes until he retired in the early 70s. His first job was repairing magnetos sent in by Hercules built engine owners. He remembered repairing all of the various magnetos that had been used.

His brother, Bert Garrison who began working for the Hercules Gas Engine Company in 1917, was the final engine inspector. In 1927 Ora Garrison became the final inspector replacing his brother. Ora continued to be final inspector until production finally ceased in 1934. The inspector started each engine and checked the timing, bearing tightness and other mechanical adjustments. Felix Rohrer made the repairs that the final inspector found necessary. Engine testers at that time were Owen York and Gilbert Postletheweight.

It was all piecework for Ora Garrison. He received 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ cents for each engine inspected and passed. After the engines had been painted, he received 80 cents per hundred for attaching the serial number tag to the completed engine.

Serial number plates were made by an outside supplier and were consecutively numbered when received. The RPM, HP and model letter were stamped on a series of plates as needed for each size of engine at the Hercules factory.

Serial number tags were held on by two brads driven into two predrilled holes on top of the engine water hopper. To make the brads fit tight, Mr. Garrison used a special small tool and a hammer to flatten an area on the brad stem. That way it would wedge tight when driven into the hole. He performed the stem flattening task during his lunch period. Jaeger brand engines were fitted with a special Jaeger tag attached to the engine base. He received five cents for each of those tags he put on.

At the time, James Kelly was the general foreman and A. B. Cummings was the dispatcher. Both of these men had made the move to Evansville in the fall of 1913 when the factory was moved from Sparta, Michigan.

Once the engine had been inspected and passed, Mr. Garrison initialed and attached a paper tag. The engine was then ready to go through the wash and on to the painting room. He spoke of some 200 engines per day.

Mr. Garrison recalls that at one time they made a lot of the model N engines and also a lot of pumpjacks.

Over the years what had started out as the Hercules Gas Engine Company in 1914 became the Hercules Corporation in 1921, and then Servel Manufacturing in 1925. In 1927 a lockout occurred and Servel Manufacturing went into receivership and reopened seven

days later as Servel, Inc. Servel, Inc. eventually went bankrupt and was bought out by the Whirlpool Corporation in 1957.

Among the things the final engine inspector did was to start the engines to check out the various mechanical functions. Mr. Garrison was a small to average size man, but he had to also crank and start the 7 and 9 HP Thermoil engines, too. He described that this way, "First you got them spinning and then reached back with the left foot to kick down the compression relief lever. If you didn't spin them fast enough, they would start and try to run backwards."

Mr. Garrison related that after engine production ceased in 1933, everyone began working in refrigeration production. In 1934 there came an additional order for engines mainly for export. Several men went back into producing engines. As the inspector, Mr. Garrison complained to the superintendent that the engines did not function properly. The superintendent was eager to get the engine run out of the way and wanted to send the engines out anyway. A prony brake test indicated that the engines were not producing their rated horsepower. A small spring on the ignition device was found to be wrong. A board had to be removed from the already crated engines so Mr. Garrison could reach in and change the spring.

Mr. Garrison has passed away now. Fortunately some of his knowledge of Hercules engine production has been preserved for future generations.