


Husqvarna 325 Years Young and Still Innovating



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Husqvarna shares its birth year with . . . Johann Sebastian Bach. One of the world's  greatest composers remains a powerful force in classical music because of the quality of his work, which consists of over 1,000 elegant pieces of music, from concertos and cantatas to sonatas and orchestral suites.

Husqvarna too has endured for 325 years. But while Bach's compositions, of course, have not changed in that time, Husqvarna's output has evolved dramatically over more than three centuries.

Today, Husqvarna is the world's largest producer of outdoor power equipment. When our company started, on the banks of the Swedish river that gave us our name power equipment did not exist. The company was founded to manufacture musket barrels for the army of King Charles XI.

In the years, decades and centuries that followed, Husqvarna has evolved both subtly and dramatically, keenly in tune with consumer demands, competitive opportunities and economic realities.

Swords. Sewing machines. Wood-burning stoves. Motorcycles. Household products, from spittoons to cherry stone removers and herring fryers. At one time, the company had such a strong presence within the household that famed artist Ewert Karlsson said that "Husqvarna" was the first word he learned; it was stamped onto the iron stove in his mother's kitchen, on the frame of his first bicycle and on the housing of the family sewing machine.

A history of Husqvarna mirrors the history of Europe and, ultimately, the world. As technology has evolved, Husqvarna has been there, inventing and innovating.

Glancing through a book on Husqvarna produced in 1989 to commemorate our

300th anniversary yields fascinating facts and photos, like those of Husqvarna motorcycles shown racing to victory on the world's fastest courses.

Our mission statement as a 21st century company is quite specific: We provide innovative quality products and solutions to make garden, park and forest care as well as construction easier for professionals and consumers around the world.

But I feel certain that elements of that mission – especially the references to innovation, quality and a commitment to making life easier for customers – have been important to the hundreds of thousands of Husqvarna employees who came before us.

Today's Husqvarna zero-turn mowers, professional chainsaws, drill systems and dozens of other product lines may not bear a literal resemblance to the muskets and kitchen equipment of our past. But the precision of our products and the passion of our 14,000-plus employees in more than 40 countries have remained consistent all these years. Perhaps what has been passed down is the "Gnosjo spirit," which our early workers were said to have – a blending of industriousness, inventiveness and resolve.

Often, as the head of Husqvarna's North American operations, I am asked what has made our company so successful in the competitive outdoor power equipment marketplace. That is a simple question, and – despite the complexities of the modern marketplace – demands a simple answer.

Perhaps I should borrow a line from one of my Husqvarna forbearers, who wrote the following 25 years ago: "Thanks to our very capable, well-trained personnel, our good products and our excellent reputation, we are well equipped to meet new challenges."

So true, 325 years into our history.

About the author: Alan Shaw is Head of Americas for Husqvarna, based in Charlotte, N.C.