



News Media Release

August 22, 2011

---

### ***Masport's Place in NZ History Recorded***

A new book celebrating the rich history of iconic Kiwi company Masport has been launched, cataloguing the first 100 years of the proud New Zealand brand.

From Masport's humble beginnings in 1910 as a small engineering firm based in Auckland to the creation of its first mower in 1929 and later the manufacture of World War II grenades and military equipment - each historical achievement has been recorded and illustrated with original photographs.

The book includes anecdotes from past and present day staff including insights from David Porter, grandson of Masport's founder Rueben Porter.

The historical Masport story is peppered with first-hand accounts of company life and the friendships and camaraderie that grew alongside the company's technological innovations.

Anecdotes include detailed recollections of the regular Saturday night dances held for workers in the lunchroom during the 1940s.

So popular were these functions that one employee recalls a couple popping in on their wedding day to take a turn on the makeshift dance floor.

It was current General Manager Steve Hughes' idea to document the Masport story in *Masport – 100 Years in the Making*.

“I had been reading about an American company with a proud pioneering history in the field of technology. I began to realise that Masport had a story equally worthy of being told,” says Hughes.

Hughes says even he was surprised by the richness of the material and the unique and inspiring stories that unfolded including the background to creating Masport’s first mower.

The prototype for this mower was produced in great secrecy and had a disastrous launch, says Hughes.

“It was assembled in a blackened shed offsite at a secret location. When the mower was finished the team packed it up to take it across the road to put into production. But while on the way there, it turns out that some of the bolts weren’t secured, it fell apart on the street and was run over by a truck!”

Despite this setback Masport went onto to produce the first commercial push mower and motor mower in New Zealand during the 1930s. It now sells more than 200 types of lawnmower – 90,000 per year alone are exported to 40 countries around the world.

Not only an innovator in terms of technology, Masport also showed its competency as a forward thinking company proudly leading the way in equal opportunities, says Hughes.

Masport was one of the first commercial businesses in New Zealand to employ women on the factory floor prior to World War II.

The book also outlines that while the Masport name has become synonymous with the manufacture of lawn-mowers the company was also responsible for the commercial production of New Zealand’s first domestic refrigerator and washing machine.

*Masport – 100 Years in the Making* (Allnatt, Masport Ltd) is available from [www.Masport.co.nz](http://www.Masport.co.nz) and Whitcoulls stores nationwide.

-Ends-