



From Factory to Field

by Rachel Givens

Sullivan Industries Tips Both Hunting & Fishing Arrows

At *ArrowTrade* Magazine, when possible, we like to shine the spotlight on companies that are based completely in the U.S. and make their products here. Sullivan Industries, which will be seeing its 30 year anniversary in 2017, takes this a step further by not only keeping all of its manufacturing within the U.S. but also becoming involved with every step of production from design to packaging. Sullivan has put time and care into the production of its Innerloc product line, which has served both the hunting and bowfishing markets well.

Sullivan Industries is a

family owned, two generation company. Dennis and Connie Sullivan, their son Kevin and his wife Norma work together to head different aspects. Dennis and Kevin handle the engineering and design applications. Connie manages day-to-day operations and Kevin's wife Norma handles public relations and marketing when attending trade shows and events.

Archery was in the Sullivan family for generations and Kevin began shooting his first bow at the age of eight. The family moved to the town of Clayton in northern Georgia, where they opened up a retail shop they called "Sportsman

Supply" in 1981. Sportsman Supply, which shared its facility with its sister company, Mountain Trophies, handled most aspects of the sporting goods industry, from hunting and fishing to archery. Although Dennis and Connie ran the shop in the early years, Kevin was soon involved in all aspects of the business. Dennis and Connie grew to have a great passion for archery, competing both throughout the southeast and nationally. They were also instrumental in the creation of multiple archery clubs.

Everything changed for the Sullivans when a particular customer by the name of Richard Frye entered



Norma Sullivan looks at the day's appointments before the start of a busy day at the ATA Show. The company's brands include Innerloc Broadheads and Innerloc H2O Bowfishing gear.



Dennis Sullivan is in front of the retail shop with one of his tournament trophies in this photo from the 1980s.

Mountain Trophies to have some cribbage boards monogrammed to give as Christmas gifts. Frye was already involved in the archery manufacturing business, as he was helping another archery company take flight. While Connie was working on the cribbage boards, Dennis and Frye began a conversation focusing on archery, the other company and Dennis' machining knowledge. This accidental meeting began a joint venture that started it all.

Frye owned a manufacturing facility that featured a multitude of highly automated machinery. With his input, the Sullivans quickly learned about various types of automated machinery, gaining expertise that would carry them far in the archery business world. Frye,



The Innerloc team wishes new friend and marketing partner Joey Gase luck before his Xfinity race in Kentucky. Gase is in black.



Shown above and below are examples of the early custom automation machines Sullivan Industries built from scratch.



The management team for Sullivan Industries includes (left to right) Kevin Sullivan, his wife Norma and his parents Connie and Dennis.



Dennis Sullivan makes adjustments on one of the modern CNC machines. A 12 foot automatic bar-loader, which allows this machine to run for hours unattended, is visible in the background.

Dennis and Kevin soon came up with designs and built the first automated machines that would achieve the production needs of the other company. In 1987, with one machine operating out of a basement, Sullivan Industries was established as a firm that manufactured parts for other companies.

Soon, Sullivan moved into a larger facility in nearby Lakemont. The company grew and built more custom machines for different operations. State-of-the-art CNC machines were added to aid in production.

Lakemont is a small rural town in Rabun County. It is located in the southern part of the Appalachians and

the northeastern corner of Georgia. Its terrain is largely mountainous and much public land is used for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation. This contributes to a very outdoors-oriented community that is separated from urban life.

Kevin described the current Lakemont facility as "bursting at the seams" when it comes to space. About 20 percent of the floor space is devoted to an office area and the remaining 80 percent is split between a manufacturing area and a warehouse/assembly area. All three segments of the facility are kept separate from each other. The facility totals around 15,000 square



Innerloc fixed-blade broadheads use a center locking system in which the long shaft behind the tip holds the L-shaped base of the blades against the inside of the ferrule. The blades don't come loose because once the tip is tightened, the broadhead becomes a single unit. The Carbon Tuner model, shown below, has a tuning stud at the base that adjusts with an allen wrench; turning it allows you to control how far the base threads into the arrow insert so you can align each broadhead in your quiver with the blades in the same orientation.



The Innerloc Slice, above, uses a newer form of blade alignment technology in which you simply align the blade assembly in the orientation you want on your arrow shaft before tightening the tip down. It comes in conventional and Deep Six insert sizing.

Innerloc offers many more styles of fixed blade heads, all the way from 75 to 145 grains in weight and from two to five blades in configuration.

feet. The manufacturing area includes a complete machine shop used for constructing the other machines used in the factory as well as several CNC machines built to produce parts from 12 foot bars of aluminum and stainless steel. The various automated machinery reduces the need for a large staff.

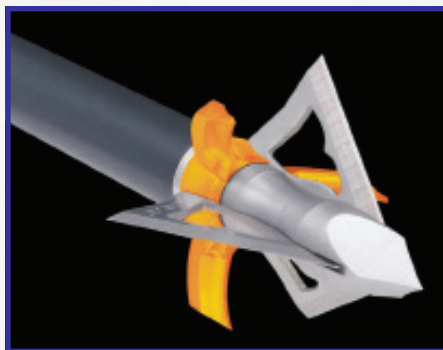
During their time working on production for other companies, the Sullivans were inspired with the idea for the Innerloc broadhead and sought to patent it. The Innerloc broadhead was originally conceived as a better broadhead for large game hunting. Using the strong technology ideas they had combined with the manufacturing knowledge they gained from working with Frye, the Sullivans launched Innerloc as its own brand in 1997. Gradually, from there on out, Sullivan began to focus on its own manufacturing, even though it still does production for other companies.

Kevin stated that the goal of Sullivan is to “always try to have a better mousetrap.” He emphasized that the company puts a focus on “coming up with viable innovation” that implements real-world improvements and maximizes material and design. “That’s a challenge,” Kevin said, “but it’s also the fun part.” It results in products, such as the Innerloc broadheads, that the Sullivans can be proud of. The Sullivans are always trying to make useful upgrades to these products and make their designs function better.

The Innerloc product line is currently based on 11 patented or patent pending technologies. The first of these was the Center Locking System, which was the basis for the first Innerloc. This involves curved blades and a long shaft on the tip that makes assembly of the broadhead simple and strong. The technologies that go into Innerloc broadheads also contribute to durability and precision. As aforementioned, big game broadheads were the first model of Innerloc that was manufactured. After that came the EXP (“expandable”) Innerloc, featuring the spring clip known as the “Cliploc” that eliminated the need for rubber O-rings. The Cliploc holds the blades of the broadhead in with a spring tension similar to that of the blade of a pocket knife. After this came bowfishing and spearfishing Innerloc heads. The bowfishing heads feature two and three barbed designs that open up with a large holding capacity. At the time, the bowfishing market was much smaller and only beginning to grow; Innerloc got in on the ground floor and



Sullivan Industries designed the Shape Shifter to deliver true field point accuracy at the highest arrow speeds by enclosing the mechanical head in an Exo-Cover designed to break away on impact as it helps to ramp the blades open. The head is all-stainless-steel, weighs 100 grains and cuts a 1-1/4 inch circle. The blades are a sturdy .040 of an inch thick.



The wicked-looking Falcon Claw broadhead from Innerloc is designed for turkey and small game. Like some of the big game models, it offers Blade Alignment Technology.

expanded with this market. Currently, Sullivan has four different point technologies for bowfishing and is working on new arrow technology for this side of its business.

An Innerloc broadhead begins its life as 12 foot bars of aluminum or stainless steel. These bars are loaded into automatic screw machines designed for making small parts from the feed-stock of long bars. Some of the machines make the parts completely while others require a secondary operation in order to complete the process. Once parts are completed, they are cleaned and then heat treated or anodized. Blades are the only part not made within Sullivan's walls, instead produced by another U.S. company that has grown alongside Sullivan. Finally, the assembly process is done by hand. Technicians lay the products out before packaging. As Kevin put it, this process "repeats and changes from model to model." Once the broadheads are packaged, they are ready to ship. Aside from the blades,

all aspects of manufacturing are contained within Sullivan, from prototype to testing to design. Kevin believes this is what makes Sullivan's products recognized as having unsurpassed quality.

Sullivan is marketed in several ways. Sales representatives visit individual archery shops while pro staff members, television ads and print ads pull

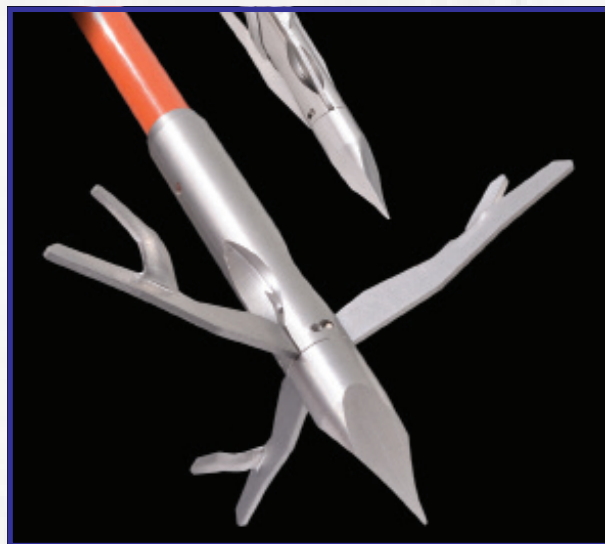
their own weight. Perhaps the most striking way Sullivan has put its name on the map is with the television show "Innerloc's Out There," which began airing in 2007 and will see its 10 year anniversary in 2017. "Innerloc's Out



Norma Sullivan showing excellent shot placement on her 12 foot, 8 inch gator, which she took in Georgia with a crossbow.



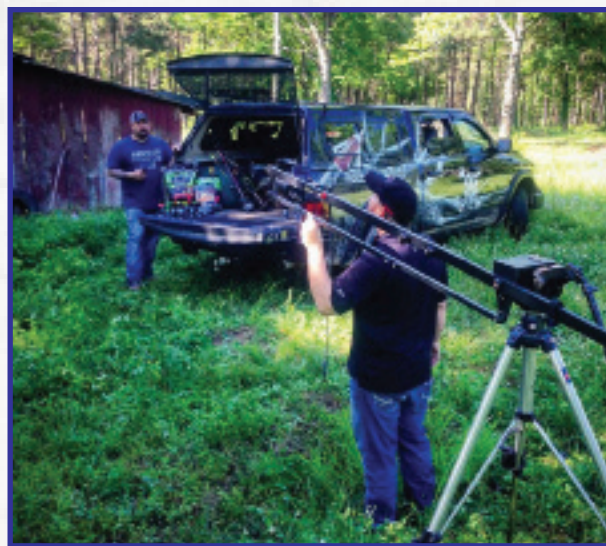
Orders are being pulled from the company's warehouse. Sandra Berry is shown here in the foreground.



Above, the Gripper Point, shown open and closed, is an example of the sophisticated design that Sullivan Industries has brought to bowfishing gear. It is one of half a dozen bowfishing points from the firm. Below, this Stiletto is one of four tips for spearfishermen. A thoroughly modern approach to the "slip tip" that slides off the spear to stay with the quarry, it retails for \$119.99.



There” currently airs on the Sportsman Channel and Wild TV. The idea for the show was conceived as a new marketing opportunity, as television was a growing venue for promoting archery products at the time. The Sullivans believed pro staff member Corey Brossman would appeal to many people as a television personality. Kevin described him as passionate, fun to be around, genuine and likable. Brossman is the current host of “Innerloc’s Out There.” The content of the show ranges from hunting to bowfishing with special emphasis on family and fun. Because of the show, Sullivan has a new relationship with multiple NASCAR tracks. This allows the company to exhibit in person and show its products to the vast NASCAR fan base. Another benefit of the show is the quality feedback from the TV pro



Above, Corey Brossman is filming a spotlight segment for “Innerloc’s Out There.” At left is Brossman with a recent buck taken while hunting with a group from the Kentucky Speedway.

staff, which provides video of Sullivan products in use being filmed by professional field producers. Kevin stated that working on the show for 10 years has been a great learning experience.

The Sullivan family has banded together to provide a well-thought-out

series of products that they monitor from start to finish. They are able to provide employment for themselves and others in an area that abounds in hunting and fishing opportunities: not a bad example of the American dream.

