Mercury Marine event marks 75th anniversary

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Mercury Marine will celebrate its 75th anniversary on Wednesday, marking its growth into a leading provider of marine engines.

Mercury was founded by E. Carl Kiekhaefer in 1939, when he purchased a bankrupt engine-manufacturing plant in Cedarburg, Wis., not far from the Kiekhaefer family farm. The plant’s assets included 300 outboard engines that a large mail-order retailer had rejected because of defects and operating problems.

Hoping to transform the engines into working capital to fund the future business he envisioned—magnetic separators for the dairy-farm industry—Kiekhaefer redesigned, rebuilt and sold the engines to the retailer that initially rejected them. The engines sold immediately, and Kiekhaefer suddenly found himself in the marine engine business.

Today Mercury directs the activities of more 5,400 employees in dozens of countries from its global headquarters in Fond du Lac, Wis., and works with more than 4,200 dealers and distributors around the world.

Mercury’s yearlong 2014 celebration plans include events in locations throughout the world.

“Mercury will celebrate its 75th anniversary throughout 2014 in ways that will reflect our strong heritage of innovation and leadership in the marine industry,” Mercury president Mark Schwabero said in a statement. “We will conduct events in locations around the world that will engage our customers, suppliers, employees and communities and will recognize the roles those people and entities have played in establishing the foundation of our business and our future.”

A division of Brunswick Corp., Mercury designs, manufactures and sells marine propulsion products for applications ranging from inflatable tenders and fishing boats to cruisers and yachts.