

James Richard McNutt, Sr.

(November 23, 1923 – June 6, 2006)

Standard Change-Makers, Inc. regrets to announce the passing of our founder and friend, James R. McNutt, Sr., a pioneer in the coin-operated vending and laundry industries. Mr. McNutt passed away peacefully at his home following a battle with cancer. Known affectionately as “Big Jim,” Mr. McNutt introduced one of the first mechanically operated coin changers in the 1950’s that helped make the early vending and coin laundry industries more profitable.

James Richard McNutt was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, the only son of James Roy and Inez McNutt. He was a 1942 graduate of Park High School (now Park Tudor High School); attended Purdue University and was a member of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity. His college career was cut short when he enlisted in the United States Army Air Forces in 1943, and served until the end of World War II, being honorably discharged in 1946 with the rank of Lieutenant.

In 1949, Mr. McNutt married “the prize of his life,” Patricia (Pat) Varner of Danville, Illinois. They raised eight children together, and she shared his passion for flying. He learned to fly during his time at Purdue, and they both owned and piloted several planes over the years. Jim and Pat loved to take long trips together and with the family. He was rated for instrument flight and multi-engine airplanes. Jim was a long-standing member of the Indiana Hangar of the Quiet Birdmen, having served as past governor for the organization.

Following his discharge from the Army Air Forces, Jim returned to Indianapolis and joined the family business. Established in 1910 by his grandfather, The Nik-O-Lok Company is still a leader in coin-operated access control locks for restrooms. In 1950, Mr. McNutt was appointed president of Pacific Nik-O-Lok, a subsidiary of The Nik-O-Lok Company at the time.

It was shortly after this that Mr. McNutt saw a need in the vending industry for a machine that would change a quarter for nickels and dimes. In 1955, he introduced a simple mechanical device that would do just that. The first Standard Change machine sold for \$89.50. Shortly thereafter, Standard Change-Makers, Inc. was established as a subsidiary of The Nik-O-Lok Company in downtown Indianapolis. Using Nik-O-Lok’s production facilities and assembly personnel, the first machines used a popular coin mechanism and a sliding plate, assembled in a cabinet the company ordered from Chicago.

The following year (1956), the next generation change machine was produced. The 500 Series was a “technological breakthrough” for the vending industry. At that time no vending machines could handle anything larger than a quarter. The 500 Series Changers converted the half-dollar coins into combinations of quarters, dimes and nickels – in any configuration the operator chose.

Around the same time, a Nik-O-Lok salesman tipped Mr. McNutt that there was a need for his change machine in the emerging coin laundry industry. Jim made a trip to Chicago to visit the exclusive distributor for Westinghouse commercial laundry equipment. The distributor informed him that they had built about 150 coin laundries in the greater Chicago area, but these new laundries were missing something that would make them truly profitable operations: the necessary change to operate the washers and dryers - without an attendant. The rest is history.



James R. McNutt, Sr. (1923-2006)

Jim Sr. remained active in both businesses, continuing to serve as Chairman of the Board since 1993. Three of his sons continue to work for Standard and Nik-O-Lok today. During his service, Standard has been on the forefront of several change machine innovations, such as: introducing dollar bill acceptance (1964), \$5 bill acceptance (1978), \$10 and \$20 bills (1987), electro-mechanical coin hoppers, and separating bill stackers, to name a few. The company continues his commitment to innovation in its current product lines.

Jim was an avid reader and an accomplished horseman. In his later years, he enjoyed building remote-controlled model airplanes and historic sailing ship models. He is respected by all that worked with him for these last 60 years, and his contributions to the industry are well known. He will be remembered by his many friends and associates for being a gentle soul with a keen sense of humor and quick smile.

Jim was preceded by his wife Pat, who passed away in 1981; and his second wife Marcia (Spence), who passed away in 2002. He is survived by his eight children: James Jr., Robert, Jonathan, Richard, Laura (Dwyer), Thomas, Michael, and Sandy, as well as nine grandchildren.

In the words of his flying buddies, Big Jim has “gone west” and will be missed by all that knew and loved him.