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April 16, 2019 • Louisville, KY – Winston Industries Announces the Passing of Founder, Winston Shelton

Foodservice equipment innovator and inventor changed the trajectory of KFC

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It is with a heavy heart that the Winston Industries family announces the passing of our founder, Winston Shelton on April 15, 2019. Winston was 96, just 18 days shy of his 97th birthday.



Winston was a brilliant innovator whose inventions included revolutionary restaurant equipment such as the Collectramatic, a pressure-fryer he designed at the request of Col. Harland Sanders for Kentucky Fried Chicken, and CVap, a precision vapor-heated ovening cabinet used by some of the world's finest chefs and largest chains. Both inventions are still produced in large numbers at the factory he created in the Jeffersontown

Industrial Park in the early 1970s. Winston also co-authored dozens of patents for mechanisms created for clothes washers and dryers when in service as an engineer for nearly two decades at General Electric.

Born in 1922 to parents Naaman and Opal Dell Shelton, Winston Laverne Shelton grew up in mountainous, rural West Virginia. There, his entrepreneurial parents opened a restaurant and automobile service station at a busy highway crossroads. The thriving business taught Winston the values of hard work and being one's own boss, character traits he never relinquished. But it was the free time spent with his brother, Naaman Shelton, Jr., working with discarded car parts and motors that sparked his love for machines of all types. He dubbed his tinkering with junk as "sawmill engineering," meaning the learned ability to correct and fix his father's sawmill with patient thinking and few resources.

While in college studying to be an attorney, Winston was drafted by the U.S. Army for service in World War II. However, his 1943 appointment never saw him go to the front. To his surprise, he and dozens of other privates were ordered off a military-camp-bound train, where they would become electrical engineers at Princeton University. In a grueling 18-month stretch, Shelton and 1,200 other men worked on four-year degrees while making calculations used for the development of radio-relay systems. Only 25 of the original group endured the course load to the end. Failing ensured a deployment to the European front.

Outside of his studies, Winston became a skilled boxer, posting an admirable 18-3 record. Eager to resume civilian life, Winston accepted a test engineer's position in General Electric's Home Laundry Department in Bridgeport, Conn. There, he applied both science and sawmill engineering to solve numerous problems for the firm's first automatic washer, an appliance he called "mechanically over-engineered" and priced well beyond the reach of most consumers. By simplifying the machine, Shelton vastly improved it, slashed its consumer cost and helped GE become a leader in the category. His successes there earned him a promotion and a move to Louisville, where he continued in Laundry at Appliance Park in 1952. Fifteen years would pass before meeting Col. Sanders, who sought improvements on a batch pressure-fryer that would reduce cooking times in KFC stores. Shelton's subsequent development of the Collectramatic fryer would help the chain achieve then-unprecedented unit growth in American restaurants, while earning him the friendship of the venerable Sanders. It would also result in the founding of Winston Industries.

It was for Sanders' obsession with moist fried chicken that retained its crisp exterior that Shelton created the CVap in 1980. Short for "controlled vapor" technology, CVap was designed to hold fried chicken for extended periods while maintaining its just-cooked qualities. Over the decades, however, talented chefs discovered CVap's ability to cook foods at previously before-unimagined low temperatures that safely pasteurized the food while leaving it incredibly moist.

Not satisfied to let chefs and restaurant chains to alone enjoy CVap, Shelton worked daily at the factory developing models for home use until shortly before his death. He believed that such revolutionary technology could even serve mankind as a means of reducing food waste.

He was a loving grandfather who read Dr. Seuss books, a kind great-grandfather, a loyal husband who argued over whose privilege it was to wash the dinner dishes, an environmentalist who protected his land and the land around him from suburban sprawl, an entrepreneur whose hard work provided a living for hundreds of families. His impact was large and great and he will be greatly missed.

Today, Winston Industries serves countless foodservice clients around the globe in more than 120 countries. Its Win2uit electronic controls subsidiary even has devices working miles above Earth in the International Space Station.

Winston is survived by daughters Valerie Shelton and Laura Shelton, and son David Shelton; wife Joyce Fullerton Shelton; grandchildren Laura Saleem, Nicholas Reisser, Sarah Reisser, Carrie Hall, Dennis Hall, Jonathan Hall, David Shelton II, Christopher Shelton, Jacob Shelton and Carah Shelton. He was preceded in death by wife Hazel "Dolly" Shelton.

Announcements of a memorial arrangements are forthcoming.



