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# BREWERS DIGEST

*in the land of  
Lake Winnebago*

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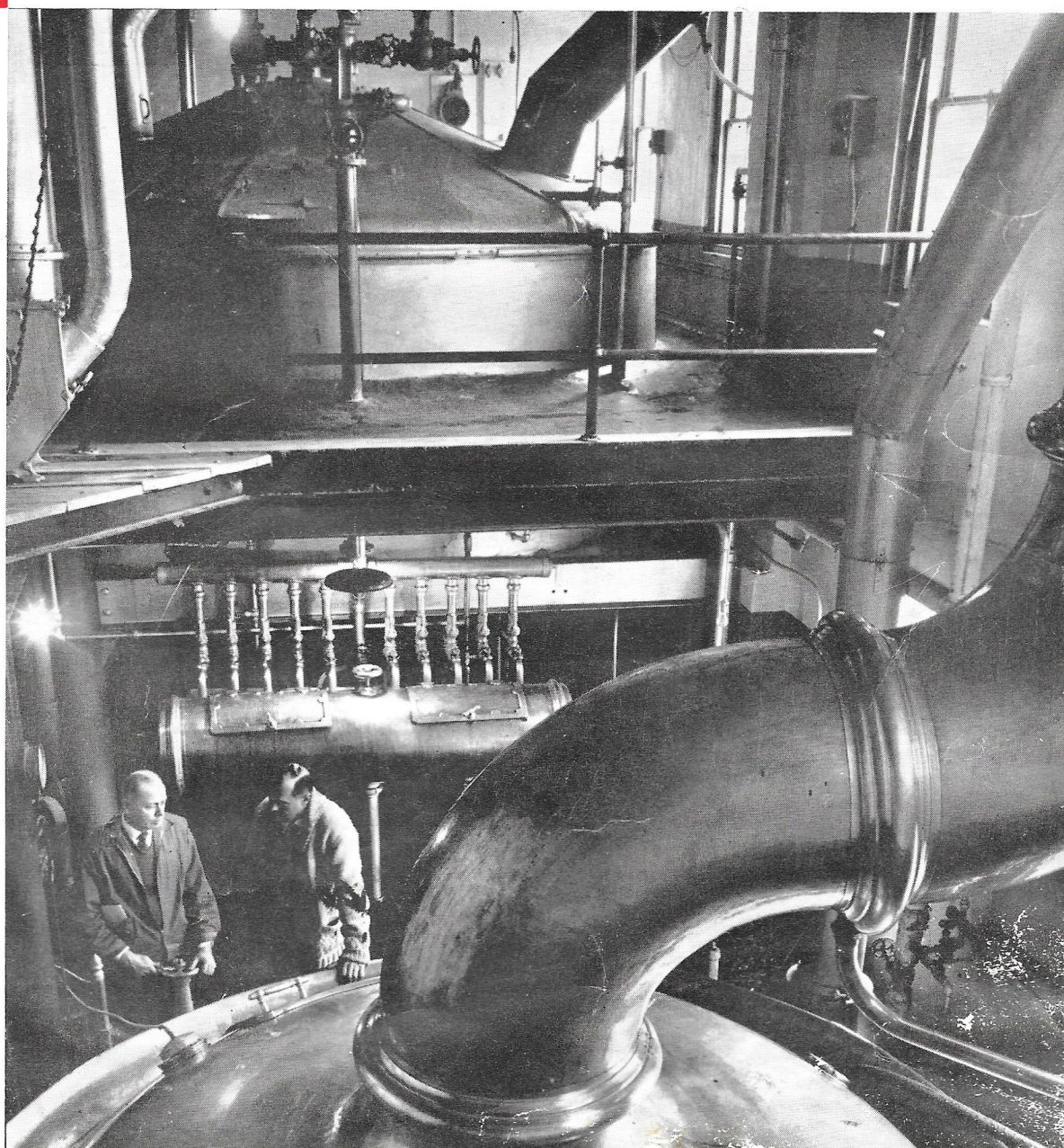
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*In the land of Lake Winnebago,  
a growing success story in the . . .*

# Oshkosh Brewing Co.

By Nancy Moore Gettelman



**"T**HIS IS the fulfillment of a dream that has been mine since I was a boy — to own and operate my own brewery," said David Uihlein, who purchased the controlling interest in the Oshkosh Brewing Co., Oshkosh, Wis., in August, 1961.

To help insure the successful fulfillment of his dream, Mr. Uihlein has channeled his life's convictions, knowledge, and interests — the free enterprise system, mechanical ability, antique cars, and love of the outdoors — into the operation of the brewery. For him, the brewery is a symbol of independence — independent free enterprise.

## **Independence**

"Independence has its advantages," he said. "For instance, it is possible for a small brewery to make a better beer than a beer factory. A whole series of things contribute to success in the beer business, of course — not just one thing. But quality is number



one." He added, "The sales upswing would seem to bear out our company's belief that small business can exist and prosper, given a quality product, despite competition from big concerns."

### Small Business

Mr. Uihlein has always believed in small business as well as the free enterprise system. Operating the Oshkosh Brewing Co. gives him further opportunity to promote his intense conviction that the United States will return to its traditional business principles. For instance, he believes that eight hours of pay should be earned by eight hours of honest, enthusiastic work. He likes to quote Vincent Lombardi, of the Green Bay Packers, who said, "Play for this team, or move over and make room for somebody who will."

Because he does not believe in absentee management, and thinks America is too full of it, Mr. Uihlein has bought a house in Oshkosh, contemporary in architecture, on his beloved Lake Winnebago. This close proximity enables him to give strict personal attention to customer service and to concentrate on market efforts within his home state. These are other traditional principles David Uihlein considers very important.

### Story to Consumer

"Taking the story directly to the customer is more effective than Madison Avenue advertising," he feels. "If this were not so, the beer business, which spends so much on advertising, wouldn't stand still at 89 million barrels, while most other businesses in the United States are growing."

Mr. Uihlein feels that most presidents of small breweries don't make enough calls on their retailers. He has visited 50 per cent of the retail outlets in his market area in the first year of his interest in the Oshkosh Brewing Co., and plans to visit the other 50 per cent by the end of the second year.

Although from an old and respected Milwaukee, Wis., brewing family, Mr. Uihlein does not bask in reflected glory. He is a master brewer, who graduated from the United States Brewers Academy, Mt. Vernon, N.Y., in 1941, after having worked in many departments of the Jos. Schlitz Brewing Co., Milwaukee, from 1939 to 1941. He bought and headed Banner Welder, Inc., Milwaukee, in 1948, a company which manufactures automatic spot welding and automatic arc welding equipment and several lines of special machinery. His belief in the possibility of the success of small businesses was substan-

*Brewed on the Shores of Beautiful Lake Winnebago*

*The Pride of Winnebago Land*

LEISURELY AGED

FINEST INGREDIENTS

**CHIEF OSHKOSH BEER**

SPARKLING DEEP WELLS

OSHKOSH BREWING COMPANY  
OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN

FAMOUS SINCE 1864

## CHIEF Oshkosh has a new label

Our beer is brewed in a unique old-world brewery on the shores of beautiful Lake Winnebago. Tremendous personal attention is given to each individual facet of brewing. Our water flows from deep, sparkling, artesian wells, and Chief Oshkosh is made with only the finest ingredients. We proudly say this on our label. We think it is "the best beer in the world, bar none!" Try some soon. We know you'll agree.



NOW AVAILABLE  
AT ALL OUTLETS

OSHKOSH BREWING CO.

*David V. Uihlein*  
PRESIDENT

*One of the newspaper ads announcing the new label for the Oshkosh Brewing Co. Brightly colored, the label depicts the history of the company.*

tiated at Banner as the company has grown from 20 to 30 times its size in 1948. "Because of the great team at Banner, I can devote my energies here. The beer business is my first love," he said.

### Renovations

Mr. Uihlein's knowledge of machinery has made him fully appreciative of the lay-out of the plant by his predecessors. The original brewery, called the Brooklyn Brewery, was

established in 1864, and destroyed by fire in 1879. That same year a brick building was erected to replace it on the original site and this brick building served as a brewery until 1911. That year, following considerable expansion and modernization, the brick building was converted into a bottling department and office, and serves the same purpose today.

The former owners, Messrs. Horn, Schwalm and Kuenzel, their parents, and forefathers, had the policy of putting profits back into equipment. To-



day that policy is being continued and furthered. A \$100,000 cellar with nine new, glass-lined fermenters is being installed to increase capacity. The cellar is insulated, air-conditioned, has balanced refrigeration, and has new floors. Still there—for the sake of historical interest—is a steam engine, about 70 years old, which once drove an ammonia compressor. The new units are electrically-driven, high-speed ammonia compressors of one-fifth the size that do twice the work. In addition, there is a new stainless steel cooler, which was installed two years ago. A plate-type exchanger cools with water which flows from one of two 575-foot artesian wells. This is untreated water from Lake Superior veins which maintains a 50-degree year-round temperature. The lay-out of the plant shows careful thought with good gravity flow planned, and with descending placement of the grinding mill, malt scale, mash tub, and kettle.

Excellent geographic location, along with the good condition and lay-out of the plant, was another reason for David Uihlein's choosing to buy an interest in the Oshkosh Brewing Co.

"We think we are located in the path of recreational and industrial progress," said Robert L. Feind, vice-president of the brewery, and an old friend of Mr. Uihlein's. Mr. Feind is also well experienced in food, beverage and heavy machinery business.

"The location is associated with the history of the development of America—with the early explorers, traders, and trappers who came through here," added Mr. Uihlein. "The name 'Chief Oshkosh' intrigued me. Because he was the Winnebago's chief, it implied the outdoors and a tie-up with the recreational facilities of Wisconsin."

### Outdoor Appeal

Mr. Uihlein uses this tie-up with the outdoors to sell beer in this area. One advertising theme takes the form of fishing and hunting contests for sports enthusiasts, with awards such as powered ice augers, fishing shanty oil heaters, and, of course, Chief Oshkosh beer. To this promotion he brings his own experience and great love of the outdoors, and his firm conviction that this is "a healthier and more appealing attitude than that of Madison Avenue."

As far as the effectiveness of this advertising media is concerned, Mr. Uihlein does not do research. He feels it is not accurate enough, and is, therefore, misleading. "However," he said, "our program must be working because the Oshkosh brewery is one of the few breweries in Wisconsin



*"Old Hank" trundles forth from the Oshkosh brewery to deliver a load of cool, refreshing Chief Oshkosh beer.*

with realistic increases in sales in 1962. The increase is based on one label, nonacquisition of other brands, and one specific effort.

### "Old Hank"

Another hobby utilized in the customer-contact approach to selling his beer is Mr. Uihlein's 25-year-old antique car collection. He finds this hobby fascinating because it, too, served in the shaping of our great American history. In addition, he also has the satisfaction of using his mechanical knowledge in restoring these valued old cars to their original state. In the fall of 1961, Mr. Uihlein

discovered a ton and a half Model A Ford truck in a junk yard in Granville, Wis. This perfectly restored truck, now referred to as "Old Hank", has a special place in their fleet of delivery trucks because it is typical of the trucks used when beer came back after Prohibition. It has become a familiar sight as it delivers beer to picnics, corn roasts, and other local outdoor events. The Model A's engine, chassis, and cab are all original. However, it proudly displays a modern insulated and refrigerated body which can hold the temperature of beer at 40 degrees. As a final touch to the complete restoration of the old truck, the new Oshkosh brewery



label was painted on the sides of the body of the truck.

### Label Change

A change in the label in June, 1962 was part of the plan to take the story of the brewery directly to the consumer. Dominated by an appropriate Indian arrowhead in red, the label bears the words "Chief Oshkosh Beer" in white and yellow letters. The arrowhead itself is superimposed upon the exact Lake Winnebago shoreline scene, depicting the Oshkosh Brewing Co.'s familiar main building. The Indian motif is carried further by a canoe paddled along near the shoreline by an Indian in full feathered headdress, while farther out on the lake is the old steamer that once transported Chief Oshkosh beer to points as far away as New London, Wis. (about 40 miles).

"'Chief Oshkosh' is probably the first Oshkosh product to draw specific attention to the natural advantages of our Lake Winnebago as the ideal vacationland. It is part of our quality advertising, such as the contests of skill, and it urges the consumer to relax and enjoy life on the shores of the Lake," said Mr. Uihlein.

Aside from the regular Chief Oshkosh beer there are two others. One is the bock beer which comes out approximately eight weeks before Easter. The other is their holiday brew, which comes out between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

### Experienced Brewmaster

Assisting in the forward thrust of this determined brewery organization is its brewmaster, Wilbur Strottmann, a graduate of the Siebel Institute of Technology, Chicago, Ill. He ran the Blackhawk Brewing Co. in Davenport, Iowa, for nine years, and taught brewing at the Siebel Institute for a number of years before coming to Oshkosh, where he has been for the last eight years. In addition, Mr. Strottmann has a rich mechanical background, having worked every summer in his father's farm implement business. Happily, he, too, loves the outdoors. A sales and public-conscious type of brewmaster, he believes as firmly in the successful future of the brewery as does Mr. Uihlein.

"All of the organization feel that small business can be as strong as big business," Mr. Strottmann said.

Another indispensable member of



*The new glass-lined fermenting tanks that have been installed as part of the Oshkosh Brewing Co.'s continuing modernization program.*

the team is Miss Bernice Howlett, who has been with the brewery for 28 years.

"Because of her interest and knowledge, she has been a leaning post for me," said Mr. Uihlein. "She knows everything about the brewery."

Smiling, and with as much enthusiasm as Mr. Strottmann, she said, "Mr. Uihlein's nostalgic approach in merchandising makes it seem like old

times. All that's missing is the old brewery horses. Sometimes I think we'll get those back, too."

If a combination of organizational cooperation, hard work and ingenuity is any criterion for the success of a small, regional brewery, David Uihlein's efforts should certainly be rewarded with success.



*The up-to-date Oshkosh brewery presents an interesting contrast with the 70-year-old generating unit which is being preserved for sentimental reasons.*

