

# Globe North

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## Company timeline

- 1926** Former World War I Navy aviator Paul K. Guillow founds Nu Craft Toys in Wakefield, manufacturing small balsa-wood model airplane construction kits.
- 1927** Charles A. Lindbergh's solo transatlantic flight jump-starts an aviation craze in the nation, and firm capitalizes on this with The New Lindy Flying Game.
- 1933** Guillow's moves its operation from a barn to its current New Salem Street factory location.
- 1940s** Paul Guillow authors four books on model airplanes.
- 1951** Paul Guillow dies and his widow, Gertrude H. Guillow, incorporates the company, becoming president and treasurer.
- 1950s** The postwar craze for plastic models wanes and "stick and tissue" models stage a comeback, increasing demand.
- 1980** Gertrude Guillow retires. Management is passed to four successors over three decades.
- 1980s** Guillow's diversifies and enters the promotional products industry.
- 1990s** Guillow's acquires competitors Tiger Inc. and Comet Industries.
- 2001** Guillow's celebrates its 75th anniversary.
- 2010** Guillow's introduces promotional helicopters and design-it-yourself models studio.

# Flying high

## Guillow's in Wakefield is still producing a simple toy — the balsa-wood glider

By Robert G. Pushkar  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Without a doubt, they are low-tech. No batteries. Nothing to plug in, no moving parts. No computer chips. They're lightweight, inexpensive (about \$1.50), and they fly. They're Guillow's gliders, the balsa-wood airplanes that have entertained generations of kids and adults with simple, old-fashioned fun, and they're made in Wakefield.

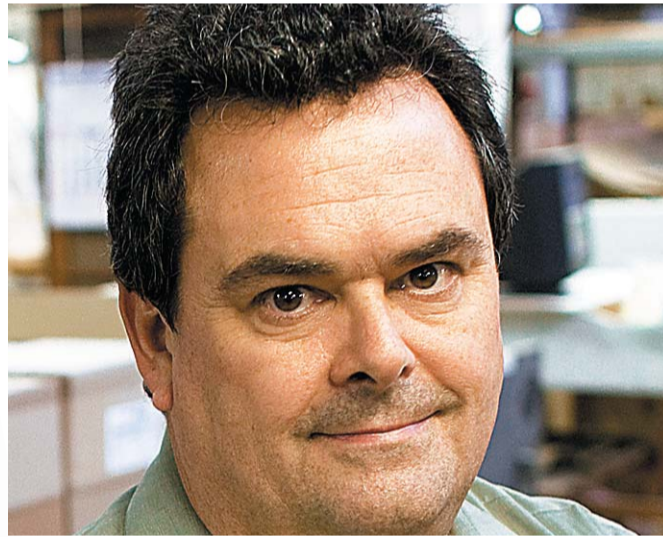
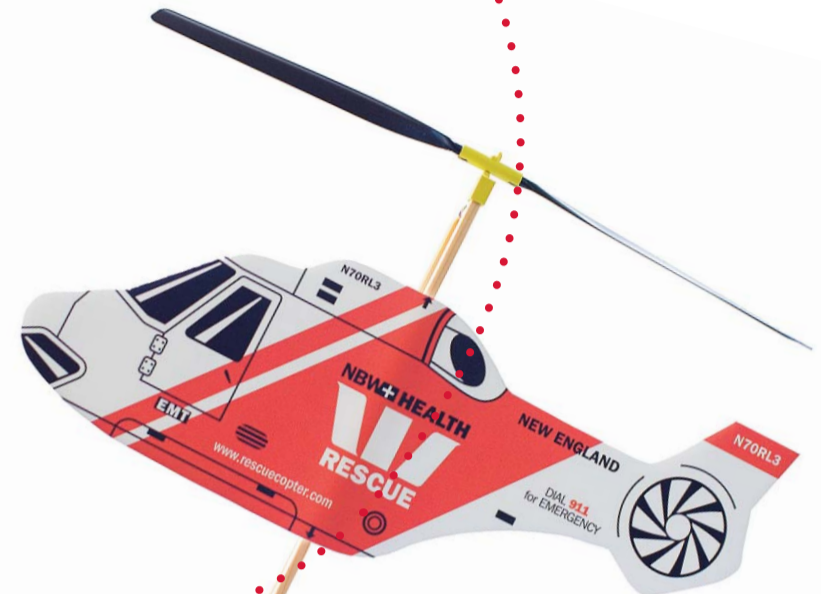
In a high-tech age, Paul K. Guillow Inc. is a throwback phenomenon, both in its products and their manufacture. While the gliders are a company staple and enduring best-seller, Guillow's (rhymes with willows) offers an array of authentic scale-model balsa kits for hobbyists to assemble as well as lightweight foam models.

The enduring attraction of these simple toys appears to be rooted in nostalgia. Longtime employee and recently appointed Guillow's president Thomas G. Barker says: "I think it's more of an attraction to the adult who buys it for the kids. They remember it from their childhood.

"Kids today don't know how to play with something unless it has electricity of some kind to it," Barker says. "With gliders, they can just take it out of the bag, put it together, and throw it. It's just fun for kids."

Doug Hart, manager of Hart's Hardware in Wakefield and a steady customer of Guillow's for more than 20 years, concurs. "Everybody looks at them and remembers them as a little kid. They're really nice and inexpensive, and they can have a good time flying them."

GLIDERS, Page 8



YOON S. BYUN/GLOBE STAFF

Guillow's president Thomas Barker believes the glider's appeal is as much for adults as children.



## DANVERS

# Texting ban for drivers considered

## Proposal would bring \$100 fines

By John Laidler  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

While legislation to prohibit texting while driving remains stalled on Beacon Hill, Danvers is considering banning the practice on its streets.

The Jan. 25 Special Town Meeting will take up a proposed bylaw that would make it illegal to type, text, or read from a wireless communication device on Danvers streets. Violators would be subject to a \$100 fine.

The Board of Selectmen last Tuesday voted 4-1 to place an article providing for adoption of the bylaw on the Town Meeting warrant, and to support its passage.

"I want to draw attention to the fact that it's dangerous for anybody to drive while distracted," said Selectman Dan Bennett, who proposed the bylaw. "The preferred method of communicating today for many young people is text messaging, and they do it while they're driving. I just think it needs to be recognized that this is a danger."

Danvers is among several communities to take up a ban on text messaging while driving.

The Marblehead Board of Selectmen  
DANVERS, Page 5

# 14 area mayors sworn into office

## Speeches touch on fiscal difficulties and hope for future

By John Laidler  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Area mayors greeted the start of new terms last week with inaugural speeches that blended sobering words about the fiscal climate with pride in their cities' accomplishments and hope for better days.

Across the region, 14 mayors elected or reelected last November were sworn in to office. Three other mayors are in the middle of four-year terms.

Among the more notable ceremonies were those ushering in new regimes.

Mayors William Lantigua of Lawrence, Judith Flanagan Kennedy of Lynn, Donna D. Holaday of Newburyport, and Scott D. Galvin of Woburn began their first terms.

The inaugurations in Lawrence

and Lynn were also milestone events, since Lantigua is the first Latino to be elected mayor in Massachusetts and Kennedy the first woman to win the mayor's seat in Lynn.

As with past inaugural addresses, this year's speeches highlighted initiatives completed, underway, and planned.

But the mayors also used the occasion to remind their constituents of the financial difficulties that continue to beset their com-

INAUGURATIONS, Page 5

## For those on way out, satisfaction, and few regrets

By John Laidler  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

As their cities prepare to tackle the challenges facing them in the new year, four former area mayors face a different task: Getting used to being regular citizens.

John Moak of Newburyport, Michael J. Sullivan of Lawrence, Thomas L. McLaughlin of Woburn, and Edward J. Clancy Jr. of Lynn all ended their tenures last week when new mayors were inaugurated. Clancy and McLaughlin were unseated in their cities' November elections, while Moak chose not to run again and Sullivan was barred from running because of Lawrence's term-limit rule.

In interviews, Moak, Sullivan, and McLaughlin all were upbeat in reflecting on their transitions and their time in office. Clancy, who served two four-year terms as mayor, 12 years as a city councilor, and also was previously a state senator and state representative, declined comment.

McLaughlin, who lost to Scott Galvin in his bid for a third two-year term, said the disappointment has long since faded and he feels "very comfortable" about moving on.

DEPARTING MAYORS, Page 5



MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

Governor Deval Patrick (right) applauded at the inauguration of Mayor William Lantigua.



JOHN MOAK



EDWARD J. CLANCY JR.



MICHAEL SULLIVAN



THOMAS McLAUGHLIN



PHOTOS BY YOON S. BYUN/GLOBE STAFF

Debbie Greco works on a piece of packaging equipment at Paul K. Guillow Inc. (above). Below, some of the planes, which are now also marketed as promotional products.

## Old-fashioned company still flying high

► **GLIDERS**  
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Barker, 52, a Wakefield native, learned the specialized toy business from the ground up. During his 34 years with the company, he studied every step of production at the New Salem Street facility.

That's been the Guillow's site since founder Paul K. Guillow moved his mom-and-pop business out of his barn on Pleasant Street in the 1930s. Over the years, a series of low-slung additions were built on the site, which now houses offices, a manufacturing plant, and warehouses.

Guillow, a Navy pilot in World War I, returned home to Wakefield harboring a deep passion for aviation. In 1926 he formed Nu Craft Toys, a model airplane company that made a line of small balsa-wood shelf-model construction kits of combat aircraft flown in the war. Then, airplanes and their daring pilots fed the public imagination, but few recognized their emerging importance.

Enter Charles A. Lindbergh and his spellbinding 1927 trans-Atlantic flight in the Spirit of St. Louis, which not only brought aviation to the news forefront but also jump-started a flurry of interest in Guillow's aircraft models.

"Everybody really got interested in aviation at that point," Barker said. "It really helped our business grow because all these kids were fascinated by his flight."

Soon after, Guillow's kits were in demand. And to capitalize on the mania, the savvy entrepreneur also created a successful card game, The New Lindy Flying Game.

Over the years Guillow became an authority on aviation history and wrote four books on



the subject, including "Tom's Book of Flying Models" and "Flying Models: How to Build Them." For six decades, Guillow's was a family-owned business, until the death of Paul Guillow's widow, Gertrude, who had controlled the company for 35 years.

Afterward, the company changed into a successful ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Plan) with current annual revenues between \$3 and \$5 million.

Guillow's cornered the domestic flying toys market by acquiring Tiger Inc. of Los Angeles in 1994 and Comet Industries of Chicago in 1998. Tiger was a leader in promotional toys — imprints with company names on the wings and fuselage of planes — and Comet was a direct competitor in kits and gliders. Now Guillow's gliders sport names like FedEx, FireStar Spark Plugs, and the National Museum of the US Air Force.

Bucking the practices of

many businesses today, Guillow's makes simple products using simple methods. Most of the manufacturing is done on 1940s-era machines. An on-site "wonderful mechanic," Barker said, maintains the equipment. "We don't have to upgrade our machinery." A packaging machine that seals gliders in plastic bags is a former candy-bar wrapping machine that was adapted for Guillow's needs.

One exception is the laser cutting machine that replaced the old-style die-cutter. It uses a process that draws the parts on a balsa sheet and uses a laser for a clean cut.

The company imports balsa wood from tree farms in Ecuador. The wood is kiln-dried to lose moisture, and air fills in the spaces, thus making it light and strong for use in model planes.

But as every model-builder knows, balsa is fragile and many a youngster has been disappointed by its failure to withstand

stress. To young Robert Higgins, it was the ultimate downer. He vented to the company in 1959 in a hand-screwed letter that hangs framed in Guillow's lobby.

Higgins wrote: "I have bought one of your fifty cent planes, and it broke as soon as it left the ground. If you don't make your rotten fifty cent plane better, my friends & I won't buy your planes anymore. I think you have the louisiest planes from the louisiest wood (please take this as an insult): drop dead."

Guillow's tried to address the durability factor by shellacking the wings. The airplanes became more sturdy but they didn't fly because of the extra weight. Still, the planes endure in the mind if not always in performance.

But in a limping economy, Guillow's shows endurance in another way. "We seem to do well in lousy economies," Barker said. "We have an inexpensive product and a fun toy."

With the more sophisticated \$30 model kits, Barker sees a "great ratio of dollars-to-play value. It will take you about 40 hours to build. That's less than a dollar an hour for the entertainment value."

And payback, Barker believes, comes in another less tangible but perhaps more gratifying way. Building models "ignites the imagination."

Designer Mark Tennant, 45, has been designing and implementing the production of models for 20 years. He oversaw development of two product lines due out in 2010, the Airplane Design Studio, where kids can design their own models choosing from more than 35 parts, and the promotional helicopter, a four-piece foam-and-balsa model powered by a stretched rubber band that can soar 50 feet or more.

"The whole reason to put out the Design Studio was to spark some creativity in kids," Tennant said. "We're giving kids the opportunity to put any tail on or any wing, using their creativity. Some planes might not fly, but we can't tell them what to do. They have to get it right."

"I've always been a big kid at heart and love toys myself," he continued. "I like the fact that we're still putting something out that will make them think a little bit, too, and make them do something with their hands. I think that's important."

## Sports Notebook

Continued from preceding page

ney is maybe more aggressive and the better rebounder at this stage."

Through nine games, Brianna was averaging 11.7 points and 8.1 rebounds while Whitney was at 5.4 points and 3.8 rebounds.

"It's playing time more than anything else," he said. "Look closely, and you'll see Brianna is playing 28 minutes a game and Whitney 16. We have the reigning all-conference post player in Danielle Jenkins. Now we have the Wilson sisters and just like that, we have three very good post players. Whitney is fighting for her minutes, but she's getting there."

"Early on, they would shoot only if open, a lot of touch and pass. Now they're starting to take the open shot when they have it. They have to take advantage of their height, which is pretty good at the Division 3 level."

Salem State (5-4) opens MAS-CAC play Tuesday, hosting Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. The Lady Vikings, young as they are, should be in the hunt. Shea and Salem State have dominated MAS-CAC over the years, winning a combined 38 championships (22 regular season and 16 postseason).

### Campus corner

The Merrimack men's hockey team started 2010 off on the wrong foot with losses to Wisconsin and Ferris State in the Badger Hockey Showdown in Madison, Wis. The Warriors fell, 5-4, to the Badgers in the semifinals and 5-1 to Ferris State in the consolation. Merrimack goalie Joe Cannata of Wakefield had 61 saves in the two games. . . . Kory Falite of Billerica scored the only goal for UMass-Lowell in a 2-1 loss to Northeastern in the title

game of the Ledyard Bank Classic in Hanover, N.H. . . . Wentworth beat City Tech, 82-62, in the NYU New Year's Basketball Classic consolation game, behind the 20-point effort of senior guard Jack Barrett of Reading. . . . Merrimack's men's and women's soccer teams posted grade-point averages of 3.0 to win the 2009 Division 2 NSCAA Team Academic Award. Junior Kerri Domohowski of Saugus topped both teams with a 3.89 GPA.

### Around and about

Beverly's Tim Johnson won his third USA Cycling Cyclo-Cross National Championships last month in Bend, Ore. He enjoyed an eight-second margin over hometown favorite Ryan Trebon. Johnson, who grew up in Middleton, previously won national titles in 2000 and 2007, both in Kansas City. Johnson, 32, had a most successful 2009 with eight victories to claim the overall North American Cyclo-Cross Trophy series. Johnson now turns his sights on the World Championships, Jan. 30-31 in Tabor, Czech Republic. . . . Mass-Wrestling.com has posted its first team rankings, and Central Catholic is fourth behind Bridgewater-Raynham, Shawshen, and Franklin. Winchester is sixth, North Andover ninth, and Lowell 10th. . . . Valerio Silva (55 meters) of Woburn, Andre Rolim (600) of Somerville, Zachary Grube (high jump) of Peabody, and Nicole Genard (55 hurdles) of Somerville were winners in last week's large schools boys and girls Auerbach Invitational at the Reggie Lewis Center.

Ideas or information may be sent to JohnPVel@aol.com.



SALEM STATE

Brianna Wilson had 19 points and 16 rebounds in the Salem State Holiday Classic title game win and was named MVP.



SALEM STATE

Whitney Wilson (left) and her sister combined to score all seven Salem State points in overtime of the 71-70 title victory.

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