

Donnie Wilson, Chairman and CEO Elastec/American Marine, Carmi, IL

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The co-founder, chairman and CEO of Elastec/American Marine, Donnie Wilson, was born an entrepreneur. He likes to build things, whether it's gadgets or companies. Donnie started his first company at the age of 17 while in high school, fabricating equipment for gas and oil companies in the Illinois Basin in the United States. He went on to develop several successful enterprises in the oilfield service industry.

In 1989 Donnie's tank truck company was hired to clean up oil spilled in a swampy area near Carmi, Illinois. He purchased a European oil skimmer for the job and was frustrated because it recovered more water than oil. The annoying experience inspired Donnie and a colleague, Jeff Cantrell, to invent a better skimmer: an aluminum frame housing two oleophilic (oil-loving) plastic drums to recover oil. Not only did the drum skimmer work, it outperformed other skimmers on the market at that time. The invention captured the attention of oil spill responders at industry trade shows, and orders for the drum skimmers began to flow in at a rapid pace. In 1990 Wilson and Cantrell incorporated under the name Elastec.

As global awareness of the need for environmental protection increased, especially involving the cleanup of oil spills, Elastec recognized the need to distribute oil spill equipment internationally and opened an office in Russia in 1993. The company expanded into a full line of oil spill equipment and formed a partnership with American Marine, an oil and containment boom manufacturer with success in recovering oil in the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill. The Cocoa, Florida based company was founded in 1967 by Jim Pearce, a highly decorated WWII U.S. fighter Ace turned test pilot. Pearce was the first person to break the sound barrier flying an F-86. American Marine, in conjunction with Elastec, developed a water-cooled fire boom system for the controlled burning of oil spills. In 1997, Elastec purchased American Marine, forming Elastec/American Marine.

Elastec/American Marine has earned a reputation as an innovative manufacturer of quality pollution control equipment with a core competency in oil spill response systems. However, even though Elastec/American Marine's products were distributed in over 145 countries, the oil spill response industry was not well known.

Until April 20, 2010 when Transocean's Deepwater Horizon rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico.

Elastec/American Marine's Hydro-Fire® Boom and American Fireboom systems were summoned to corral the oil for controlled burning. Not only did its fire boom systems outperform the competition's in the Gulf, Wilson was contracted to supervise the controlled burn operation for BP America.

During the Gulf spill there was an obvious void in mechanical equipment, such as oil skimmers, to recover high volumes of spilled oil. As a result, the X PRIZE Foundation, known for launching the private spaceflight industry through the \$10 million Ansari X PRIZE and other high-profile grand challenges, announced an incentive competition, the Wendy Schmidt Oil Cleanup X CHALLENGE. The goal of the competition was to inspire entrepreneurs, engineers and scientists worldwide to develop innovative, rapidly deployable and highly efficient methods of capturing crude oil from the ocean surface. Elastec/American Marine blew the competition out of the water with its patented grooved disc skimmer, winning the \$1 million first place prize out of 350 global entries. The company's skimmer (featuring 64 grooved discs) had an oil recovery rate (ORR) of 4,670 gallons of oil per minute with 89.5% oil recovery efficiency (ORE).

Since then, the patented grooved disc oil skimming technology has received awards from around the world, including the *Popular Mechanics* 2012 Breakthrough Award, Offshore Arabia's prestigious Excellence in Environmental Applications Award and the Nafta Gaz Grand Prix Award at Oil & Gas Warsaw in Poland. Elastec/American Marine is also consistently listed among *Inc.* magazine's 500/5000's fastest-growing private companies in America.

Additionally, Elastec/American Marine's Hydro-Fire® Boom became "Officially Amazing" by receiving a GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS® title for the "Longest Continuous Controlled Burn of Oil Spill at Sea".

Oil spills are one of the most serious threats to the environment. Prevention is of the utmost importance, and preparedness is equally paramount. Improving and developing rapid response methods and equipment to aid oil spill response efforts led Elastec/American Marine in 2012 to acquire the marketing and manufacturing rights for *BoomVane*™. Developed and patented by ORC of Sweden, *BoomVane*™ simplifies the challenges of deploying containment boom in rivers and tidal waters without the need for boats or anchors. The technology combines the science of sailing with the art of flying a kite, in the water. The result is faster response time and less recovery expense.

In addition to manufacturing oil spill recovery equipment, Elastec/American Marine also manufactures pollution control systems such as portable incinerators for the disposal of medical waste and confiscated drugs, turbidity curtains for the control of silt and sediment in water, containment booms to control aquatic weeds, debris and invasive marine life, rapid response workboats, and a variety of other innovative environmental protection products.

The world headquarters of Elastec/American Marine is located in Carmi. The company's facilities encompass over 200,000 square feet in four manufacturing and warehousing facilities in southern Illinois and Cocoa, Florida. Satellite sales offices are located in Virginia, Washington State, India, Turkey and China. With over 140 employees, the company's products are distributed through a global network of dealers and an internal sales force.

Through the manufacture of innovative pollution control equipment, strategic acquisitions, leadership acumen and an instinct for business opportunities, Donnie Wilson, career entrepreneur, has guided Elastec/American Marine into position as a global leader in pollution response and control systems to keep our world clean.

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