

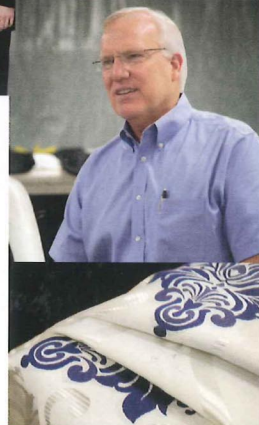
# BedTimes

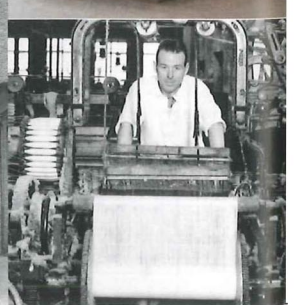
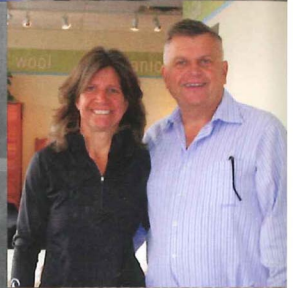
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## BORN into bedding

10 family businesses share  
history, expectations, dreams







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### Born into bedding

*BedTimes* talks with 10 multigenerational bedding families whose histories parallel that of the industry itself.

# BORN into bedding

Drawing lessons from the past, family businesses look boldly to the future

By Dorothy Whitcomb

**F**amily businesses fuel the economy of the United States. They produce 60% of its gross domestic product and account for fully 40% of all Fortune 500 companies.

Historically, these businesses also have been the engine that drove the bedding industry. Although consolidation and contraction have altered the industry's landscape over the last decade, family businesses—and those executives who are born into them—remain forces with which to be reckoned.

As the International Sleep Products Association prepares to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2015, *BedTimes* launches a series of articles that examine what it means to be “Born into bedding.”

We start with 10 multigenerational bedding industry families whose histories parallel that of the industry itself. Some are small and owned entirely by family members; others grew to become large, publicly traded entities. Some manufacture mattresses and related

products, others are factory directs, and still others are suppliers to the industry as a whole.

For all of their differences, *BedTimes* found that people who are born into bedding have a great deal in common. They tend to have strong ties to the industry as a whole, and often volunteer their time and talents to industry organizations.

Those who are born into bedding tend to be frank about the lessons they've learned from their family's history. And although they draw lessons from the past, they look to the future, unafraid of change.

Although they come from different segments of the industry and from different kinds of families, the business leaders spotlighted in this inaugural “Born into bedding” feature are unanimous about two things: The pace of technology-driven change and the continuing effects of consolidation are their two biggest challenges.

## Gold Bond Mattress: A company defined by passion, hard work, loyalty—and reinvention



**Top:**  
**The start** Isadore Naboicheck began building mattresses in this factory in Hartford, Connecticut.

**Top right:**  
**Quality first** Bob Naboicheck's father, Aaron "Butch" Naboicheck (left), and John Corrigan, assistant to the president, continued Gold Bond's commitment to quality.

**Bottom:**  
**At work** A Gold Bond employee assembling a mattress circa 1950.

**S**kip Naboicheck, vice president of Gold Bond Mattress, is the fourth generation of his family to produce bedding in Hartford, Connecticut. It is a mantle that he's donned the Naboicheck way—passionately, and at full tilt.

Like many children in family-owned companies, he "grew up" in the business and remembers the day he that knew Gold Bond was in his blood.

"It all hit home for me at 16 when I started working at the company loading trucks," he says. "It was exhausting, but when I saw all the tradition, passion and hard work, it drew me in."

His father, Bob Naboicheck, has been president of the company since 1997. His path was less direct, however. "Back then there were a lot of relatives in the business and my dad wanted me to do something else first," he says.

It was a savvy move. The "something else" included four trips to Cleveland, Ohio, to work with Leon Danco at the Center for Family Business. What Bob learned from Danco helped save Gold Bond when family friction threatened to tear it apart.

"There was a lot of jealousy among the family members," he says. "When I came in, I was able to help my dad stay focused while reaching out to the family."

Bob Naboicheck is convinced that buying out other family members saved the business and set it on a course for growth. It was the first of many Gold Bond reinventions that he has presided over.

"There's never a time when we're not thinking about change," he says.



The explosion of franchising, consolidations at all levels of the bedding and furniture industries, and innovations in mattress construction have all tested his mettle. He's met each challenge with the passion, flexibility, commitment to quality and loyalty that have always shaped Gold Bond's core values.

Loyalty has been a particularly strong force in the company's history. "Our longevity and history definitely helps and gives us entry anywhere," Bob Naboicheck says. "We have tremendous relationships with our suppliers, employees and retailers."

Skip Naboicheck sees it as his mission to build upon those relationships, while reinventing the company once again. A strong interest in design has put him at the center of "reinventing the construction and look of our conventional and specialty products," he says. He also has taken a central role in expanding the company's sales territory, which currently stretches from the Northeast down to Florida, as well as into Ohio and Illinois. He refuses to let the lack of a national advertising budget stand in his way and has gone back to his beginnings with the company—loading and unloading trucks—to get the job done.

"We bring our product directly to store owners," he says. "We can show them everything we have to offer, and they can touch and feel the new beds before placing an order."

But that's just the Naboicheck way. "When I was growing up, there was no divide between work and family," Bob Naboicheck says. "It was a very hands-on family and that hasn't changed."

Neither has the energy that both generations bring to the business. "My father and I are always passionately discussing things," Skip Naboicheck says. "We're passionate people with strong opinions who want what's best for the company."

