



International Festivals & Events Association

Jim Thomson 2004 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee Dynamic Displays



Jim Thomson founded his company, Dynamic Displays, in 1961. He and his staff, which included some of his eight children, decorated malls and city streets for the holidays and special events, using lights, garland, and animated figurines. In 1963 Thomson was introduced to the world of parade inflatables, and his life and business took a radical turn. Jean Gros, a former Macy's employee, had started a company making giant rubber balloons for parades. Gros wanted to retire, and Thomson bought his inventory on the strength of photographs shown to him. Dynamic Displays was now in the inflatable business.

The new direction taken by Dynamic opened new worlds for Thomson's creativity and pioneer spirit, but the new products were not without problems. Many of the balloons were in poor condition and had a major problem with leaking. He met the problems head-on and began to experiment. It wasn't long before he found a solution. A permanent fan installed in a leaky balloon kept the inflatable looking proud and simultaneously created a brand new medium – the cold air inflatable.

Today, it's hard to imagine an event without the technology Thomson invented and the industries made possible by it: giant soda can brand promotions, fly guys dancing over the festival grounds, inflatable costumes greeting guests. According to the Inlatable Advertising Dealers Association (IADA), Thomson was using permanent fans on balloons thirteen years before his nearest competitor, which earned him a designation by the IADA as "Grandfather to the Industry." Thomson was also inducted into the IADA Hall of Fame in 2001 and into the Ontario Festivals Association Hall of Fame in 2002. The "Grandfather to the Industry" is also the grandfather of a marvelous family, which he considers to be his greatest achievement. Many of Thomson's children and 48 grandchildren are regularly employed by Dynamic on parade routes and at events, and Thomson's youngest son, Stephen, now heads up the company. After 41 years in the business, Thomson is retired and no longer makes the daily trek into the office, but his face is still a familiar sight at Dynamic, where he continues to put his creativity and ingenuity to work on special projects.