

# 100 YEARS OSKAR LAPP

PIONEER, ENTREPRENEUR, FAMILY MAN



**“If something needs  
inventing, that could help  
make people’s lives easier,  
I’ll invent it.”**

## HIS LIFE IN FIGURES

Oskar and Ursula Ida Lapp  
took the step in

# 1959

to found U.I. Lapp KG  
in Stuttgart-Vaihingen.

The company starts up  
with a bank loan of

# 50,000

GERMAN MARKS

## 6 YEARS

later, the company employs

## 30 PEOPLE.

By

# 1987

## 4

more companies are founded and

## 3

subsidiaries are established  
in USA, UK and Italy.

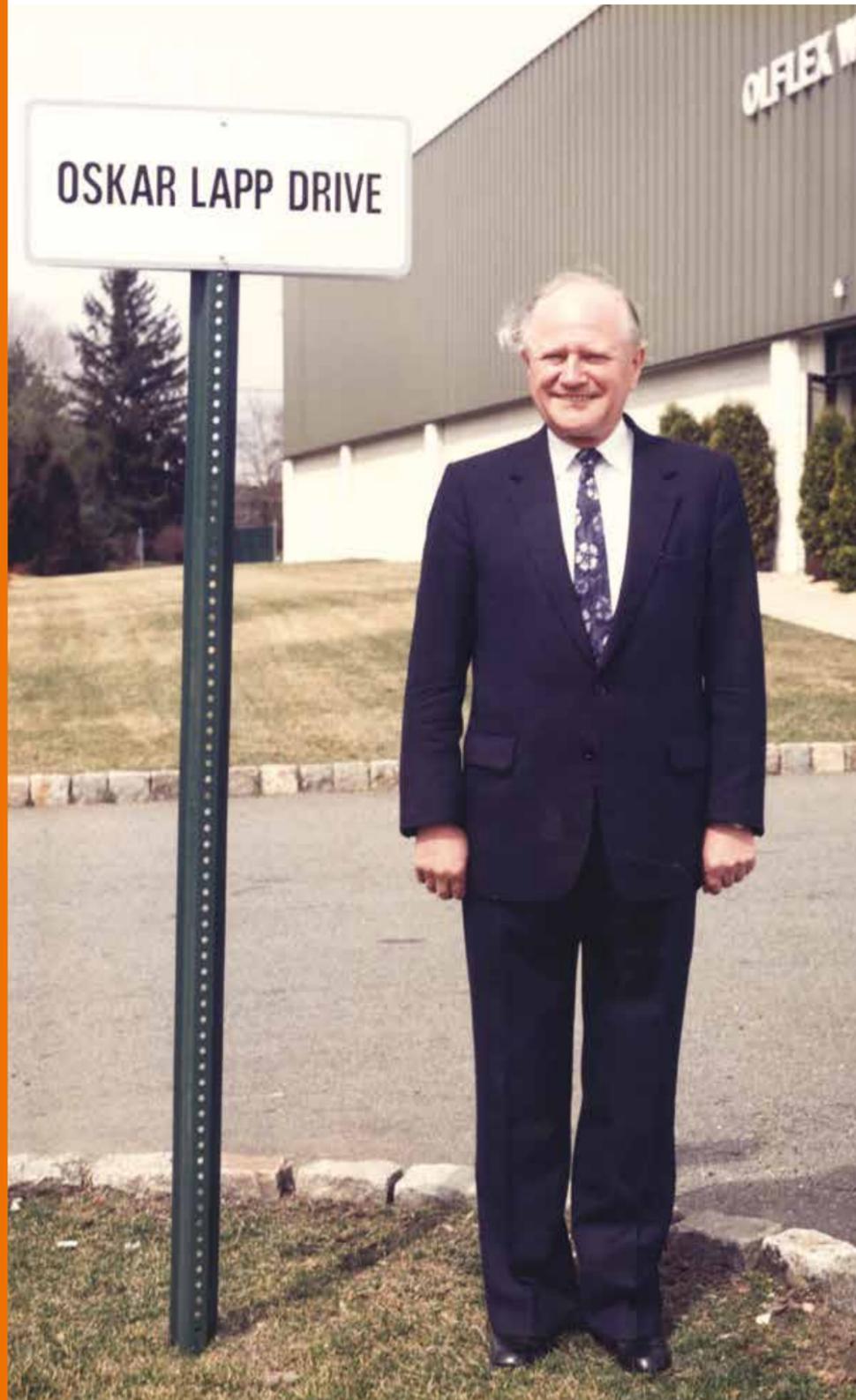
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**Project management**  
Joanna Amor  
Ann-Kathrin Hoffmann

**Conception, editing**  
Storymaker GmbH  
Derendinger Straße 50  
72072 Tübingen

**Design and layout**  
campra GmbH  
Hauptmannsreute 23  
70192 Stuttgart

**Printing**  
W. Kohlhammer Druckerei  
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# OSKAR LAPP

## 1921 – 1987

On 20th March 2021, we are celebrating a special family anniversary – our husband, father and grandfather Oskar Lapp, the founder of our company, would have been 100 years old. We use this as an opportunity to remember him – as a person, inventor and entrepreneur. We would like to take you, dear friends, customers and partners, on a journey through our memories and his life. With this anniversary brochure, we are honouring his lifetime work and thanking you for your many years of loyalty to us and our company.

His inventions have revolutionised entire industries. Oskar Lapp was a visionary and a passionate entrepreneur. With his clarity on what is essential and a vision for what is possible, he made our company a global market leader. His customers were always at the centre of his actions: finding solutions to their problems, designing the optimal solutions and in doing so making them successful. He encountered many people on the stages of his life's journey, inspiring them with his verve and cordiality. For him, business meant relationships that often turned into friendships – both at home and abroad.

He is one of the well-known entrepreneurs who have made Germany, particularly our home region of Baden-Württemberg, a strong business location. Without him, the LAPP Group would not exist. Today, 4,575 employees around the world develop, manufacture and sell more than 40,000 products. With 20

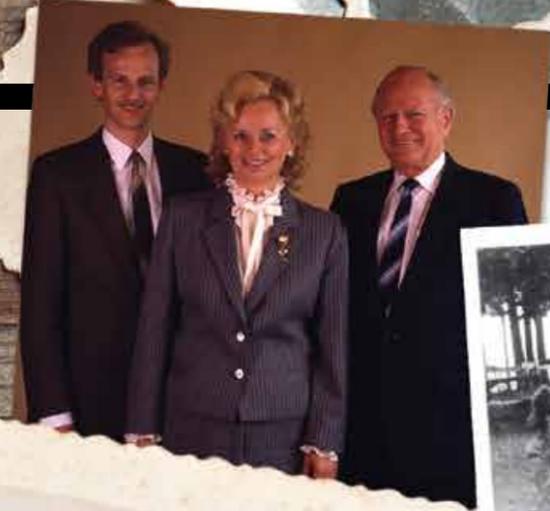
**“He was a tinkerer, had inventive talent and an incredible number of ideas, and always made something out of them.”**

production sites, 43 sales companies and more than 100 international representatives. Despite this size, the LAPP Group has remained a family company. Four fundamental values – being customer-oriented, innovative, success-oriented and family-oriented – that our husband, father and grandfather established from the very beginning are still the reliable compass for our corporate culture to this day.

Our husband, father and grandfather is still a great role model to this day. For us in the family, as well as for so many of our employees and partners. He lives in our values, thoughts and hearts. When he passed away in 1987, he left us far more than just a great company. His legacy also includes a special corporate culture, underpinned by humanity and sound principles. We are continuing his life's work with deep gratitude and we know that he would be pleased and proud that the third generation of LAPP has already assumed responsibility with a visionary outlook.

To know where you need to go, you have to know where you come from. Our husband, father and grandfather, the man, inventor and entrepreneur Oskar Lapp, has left us a wonderful legacy. It will always accompany us on our journey to the future.

With best regards,  
**your Lapp family**



## FAMILY IS LAPP AND LAPP IS FAMILY

The entrepreneurial family vision covers all generations: LAPP was, is and remains a family company which acts according to the maxim: Think global, act local.

Oskar Lapp wasn't just a brilliant inventor and entrepreneur. Oskar Lapp was a family man, cosmopolitan and visionary, with a great love for people – for friends, employees and customers. Early on, he anchored and exemplified reliable

values and principles: “customer-oriented”, “innovative”, “success-oriented” and “family-oriented” are indispensable components of the company culture to this day. It's characterised by respect, flat hierarchies, high transparency and openness in communication. The “human component” is the highest value of LAPP's corporate culture.

His sons and grandchildren continue to run the company just like Oskar

Lapp would have wanted them to: “Closeness and warmth can be felt by everyone in our company. If employees stop experiencing this, then one of the key pillars of our corporate activities will be broken,” says Andreas Lapp. Matthias Lapp, the first representative of the grandchildren's generation, also sticks to his grandfather's legacy: “The company belongs to the family and the family to the company.”

Background: shutterstock

# A MAN OF ACTION – A MAN WITH HEART

Visionary, determined and innovative – these are the qualities that made Oskar Lapp a successful inventor and entrepreneur. His life’s work is the global LAPP Group. The man Oskar Lapp was optimistic, lively and heartfelt. This is how he shaped the special corporate culture whose core values still live on today.

## Vita Oskar Lapp

**20<sup>th</sup> March 1921**  
Oskar Lapp was born in Benshausen/Thuringia as the youngest of four children of Ida and Eduard Lapp.

**1936**  
Oskar completed tool lathe training at the Röhm company in Zella-Mehlis with excellent results.

**1939**  
The Weimar Chamber of Crafts awarded a prize to his journeyman’s project. The prize was a cruise by ship to Norway.

“Opportunities need to be seen and perceived. We need to tackle them with all we’ve got. This is the only way they can be used.” That was the motto of Oskar Lapp. And he tackled them, took the opportunities: throughout his life and his work.

He was born on 20th March 1921, in a world that was recovering from the turbulences of the First World War and offered unimaginable opportunities with the beginning of the roaring twenties. Oskar Lapp spent a lot of time in his father’s small tool factory. He grew more and more eager to work on his own terms. Like his father, Oskar had organisational talent and technical intelligence, as well as huge energy and determination. Not to mention the urge to solve problems. He enjoyed improving and perfecting things. He completed his training as a tool lathe operator with distinction.

Oskar joined his parents’ business and quickly realised that the business had to change with the times.

Without further ado he converted the production of household appliances to tools and mechanical pencils. The requirements were to change again as the Second World War began: turned parts for the aircraft industry and valve cones for locomotives were needed. How do you produce these? Oskar Lapp gathered this knowledge in no time at all.

During this time, he deepened his passion for technology. He dreamt of studying. But initially everything proceeded quite differently. In 1944, shortly before the end of the war, Oskar Lapp, who had refused to join the Nazi party, was drafted for military service. He was taken Soviet prisoner of war, where he had to do forced labour. His mental strength helped him to endure it. He exercised his mind by playing chess – it kept his mind off the things that made him homesick. In 1949, he returned home. He endured the incarceration relatively well and never talked about his time in the Siberian camp. Only when his mother fed the pigs did he say that the pig feed was a real treat for him.

**1940**  
Oskar joined his parents’ company, Lapp & Roth, and switched production from household appliances to tools and mechanical pencils.



**1944 – 1949**  
Shortly before the end of the Second World War, Oskar was drafted into military service and became a Soviet prisoner of war.  
**1949** he returned home safe and sound.

**1949 – 1952**  
Oskar studied mechanical engineering at the Schmalkalden School of Engineering.

**Christmas 1950**  
Oskar Lapp met Ursula Ida Emmelmann at an operetta evening in Benshausen, where she was performing the leading role in “Das Walzermädel von Wien”.



**11<sup>th</sup> May 1951**  
Ursula Ida and Oskar celebrated their wedding.

**1952**  
Oskar got his first job in the research and development department of VEB Fahrzeug- und Gerätewerke Simson in Suhl.

**30<sup>th</sup> June 1952**  
Oskar became a proud father – his first son Siegbert was born.

**The Lapp family’s sons Siegbert, Andreas and Volker grew up with the company**

**1955**  
Oskar Lapp left the GDR and became the representative for Southern Germany of a manufacturing company. Ursula Ida followed with their son Siegbert.



**“My husband was talented. And he was gifted by God.”**

Ursula Ida Lapp

Oskar Lapp lost no time with his new start and fulfilled his dream of becoming an engineer. The young German Democratic Republic urgently needed technicians, and he passed his studies at the engineering college in Schmalkalden in 1952 with distinction.

Oskar didn't wait to make a new start in his private life either. At Christmas 1950, the Benshausen singing club performed the operetta "Walzermädel von Wien". The female lead was Ursula Ida Emmelmann. Her singing captivated Oskar Lapp. In turn, he scored points with Ursula Ida as a capable dancer.

Shortly after his wedding in May 1951, Oskar Lapp started as an engineer in the research and development department at VEB Fahrzeug- und Gerätewerk Simson in Suhle. However, the political and economic developments in the GDR caused him a great deal of concern. Oskar Lapp wanted to think and live freely and decided to leave East Germany permanently. The

opportunity came faster than he thought: during a family holiday in the West, he ended up in hospital, so he took the opportunity and stayed for good. He would never travel to Benshausen again and also refused to establish subsidiaries in East Germany for the rest of his life. Around half a year later, Ursula Ida also succeeded in fleeing through West Berlin with their son Siegbert at her side and pregnant with Andreas.

In the meantime, Oskar had begun to energetically build up their new existence. For a few years he represented a manufacturing company in North Rhine-Westphalia for the whole of southern Germany. His approach to customers, his strong communication skills and warm personality made him a born salesman. As a good observer, he recognised the customers' problems. His first invention was the rectangular connector for industrial use. Additionally, he saw how time-consuming and laborious it was to manually insert the cores and switching strands into conduits. Oskar Lapp once again asked himself, "How can this be optimised?" He worked fervently on a solution that would make history. In 1957, he developed ÖLFLEX®, the first industrially manufactured, flexible and oil-resistant control cable with colour coding. "Now we are trying to bring this to the people," was Oskar's slogan. He and his wife founded their own company and created the market for control cables.

The company was up and running. It ran so well that they had to find reinforcements. Oskar Lapp was convinced: "Whether we achieve our goals or not will depend on whether we manage to attract the right employees." And they succeeded. In 1965, 30 employees worked at LAPP already. "His extensive human knowledge contributed significantly to managing this rapid growth," says Ursula Ida in a review.

**Inauguration of LAPP Kabelwerke GmbH in with Stuttgart's Head Mayor Manfred Rommel (centre)**



**"You don't talk about work. You get on with the work."**

Oskar Lapp

**Award of the Federal Cross of Merit on Ribbon by Stuttgart's Head Mayor Manfred Rommel in 1981**

For Oskar Lapp, growth also meant internationalisation. In 1976 he founded the first international subsidiary in the USA. When selecting future partners, he always relied on friendly relationships. He and Ursula Ida kept an "open house". The first sales partners from Switzerland, Israel and Austria were frequent guests at their home. Oskar and Ursula Ida Lapp soon discovered the Asian market on a trip to India in 1981. Siegbert Lapp remembers the first phases of internationalisation with a "very familiar atmosphere."

His family was the most important thing in Oskar's life. "He was a father who always took time for us, with dinners, weekends, picnics and trips - despite all the work," recalls Andreas Lapp. Oskar told his sons thrilling stories about pirates and adventures. And Oskar Lapp loved traditions, like the introduc-

tion of the family brunch: with its crowning glory the delicious homemade cake baked by Ursula Ida.

Oskar Lapp also worked extensively for the common good, e.g. in the German-South African Society, the Stuttgart Monument Foundation and the Stuttgart Old Opera House Patrons' Association. In 1981 he was honoured with the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

He connected devices and systems with his inventions, and people with his cordiality. When Oskar Lapp suddenly died of a heart attack in 1987, he left behind a group of world-renowned companies with freedom for courage, energy and innovation. And a corporate culture characterised by cordiality and openness. He also left the message: take advantage of the opportunities, understand the customer and improve things! ■

**25. April 1987**  
Oskar Lapp died as a result of a heart attack at the age of just 66.

**1981**  
Oskar was honoured with the Cross of the Order of Merit.

**1981**  
The expansion in Asia began with a trip to India.

**6<sup>th</sup> March 1956**  
The family was happy about another son - Andreas was born.

**1957**  
Oskar Lapp made a name for himself with the invention of the world's first rectangular connector.

**1957**  
Oskar Lapp invented ÖLFLEX®, the first industrially manufactured connection and control cable - the basis of the company's success.

**1958**  
The first advertising brochure was printed. In the same year, the family bought a house in Stuttgart-Vaihingen.

**1959**  
Ursula Ida and Oskar Lapp founded U.I. Lapp KG in Stuttgart-Vaihingen. The ground floor of the new home was to become the company headquarters.

**5<sup>th</sup> March 1962**  
Ursula Ida and Oskar celebrated the birth of their third son Volker.

**1963**  
LAPP Kabelwerke GmbH was founded. Protected by a timely patent application, the company began to manufacture ÖLFLEX® in Stuttgart-Vaihingen.

**1965**  
New construction of the company headquarters and relocation to Schultze-Delitzsch-Straße in Stuttgart-Vaihingen with 30 employees.

**1976**  
Oskar Lapp opened the company's first foreign subsidiary in the United States of America.



# IT DOESN'T EXIST? THEN HE WILL INVENT IT!

The name Oskar Lapp is inextricably linked with the invention of the ingenious ÖLFLEX® control cable with colour-coded cores. But this is just one of many examples of his inventiveness.

“Ring through.” Nowadays this means just as much as “Call if you’re in the vicinity”. Until 60 years ago, electricians understood something different. As the cores all had the same colour, i.e. grey or black, the installer must apply voltage to each wire in turn and listen for a bell ringing at the other end. It’s not known how often defects occurred due to mix-ups. We can only surmise that many electricians despaired because they had to pull each core individually through a narrow tube or rigid pipe. That was how it was until 1957. Back then, Oskar Lapp still worked for a connector manufacturer and witnessed every day how installers had to struggle



**“One must be flexible like our cables. Life demands it.”**

Ursula Ida Lapp

with pulling the cores into hoses and correctly assigning the cores to connector pins and soldering lugs. How much easier would it be for installers if all the cores had already been incorporated and could be easily identified by a colour code. It would also be easier if the material was thin and flexible and could be cut from the roller to the desired length. But that wasn’t the case. That’s why Oskar Lapp made the effort to invent it.

The principle of the coloured cores, which was patented immediately by Oskar Lapp, was brilliantly simple. Every layperson could successfully connect a lamp with it: the yellow/green core went to the pro-

## THE MACHINE OF IDEAS

Oskar Lapp’s inventiveness is legendary – and is still a commitment today. His first invention was the rectangular connector, followed shortly afterwards by ÖLFLEX®. Without this first industrially manufactured power and control cable, automation would be unthinkable in industry. “With the invention of the ÖLFLEX®, my father Oskar Lapp laid the foundation for our globally successful company more than 60 years ago,” says Andreas Lapp. His brother Siegbert adds: “Who would have thought that our branded products would keep the whole world moving today.”



The first advertising brochure in 1958 focuses on customer benefits



With its own cable plant, the logistics concept is also in place

tective contact, the blue and black core into the other two connections. The company offered ready-made cable harnesses with up to 130 coloured cores at an early stage.

What’s taken for granted now was a revolution at the time – as well as the decision to name its control cables under the brand name ÖLFLEX®, creating the first branded product in the industry. Oskar Lapp’s plan to find a solution to his customers’ challenges

with his invention, paid off. At the time of the German economic miracle, numerous industries were investing in electrification and starting to automate their systems. They literally tore the practical cables from the young entrepreneur’s hands.

With the ÖLFLEX®, Oskar Lapp made a name as an inventor with a strong intuition for the customers’ needs. This focus on customer benefits was to shape LAPP’s success story. In 1963 he developed a rectangular connector that was later marketed as EPIC® – building on the world’s first rectangular connector that he had developed back in 1957 for his then employer. There were no limits to his inventiveness – more developments followed.

In 1978, the 57-year old registered the SKINTOP® cable glands, which was also a bestseller. Oskar Lapp patented numerous inventions. For example, the plug-in multi-pole adapter for control cabinets, a device for earthing wires and pipes or a mechanism that blocks cable rolls from being unwound by chance. He lived up to his motto: “If something needs inventing, that could help make people’s lives easier, I’ll invent it.”

# REVOLUTION IN ORANGE

An industrial product as a branded item? That was unusual – until Oskar Lapp came along. In 1959 the visionary businessman and his wife Ursula Ida founded their own company and created with ÖLFLEX® a brand that is known worldwide today.

■ A Kleenex for the nose, Scotch tape for paper: only a few brands manage to become synonymous with an entire product category. This is also true in the world of cables: anyone who wants an ÖLFLEX® always gets a robust control cable. The name is ingenious as it combines the two most important properties of all cables in the ÖLFLEX® brand: they're resistant to chemicals and oil, and are flexible and thus versatile. Anyone who says ÖLFLEX® automatically refers to the LAPP product – many brand manufacturers, whose product has become synonymous but is no longer identified with the manufacturer, can only dream of this.

Did Oskar and Ursula Ida Lapp predict this success when they were working on the brand name for the first industrially manufactured control cable in their house on Vaihinger Rosentalstraße in 1959? It was clear to both of them that the introduction of brands in industry was a revolution. Because that had never existed before.

But a branded product doesn't just need a catchy name, it also has to meet customer needs and should be recognisable. But how? The technology set limits at that time and Oskar Lapp wasn't able to print a different colour on the cable sheath. He therefore decided to equip the inside of the ÖLFLEX® cables with an orange marking thread on the protective conductor. When the installer cut the cable, he saw the yarn even under poor lighting conditions and knew that it was a real ÖLFLEX® from LAPP. As plastics would



soon be available in all colours, the ÖLFLEX® cables would now also shine in orange from the outside on cable drums in factories and on building sites.

Oskar Lapp pioneered the idea of offering an industrial product as a branded article. It was a model for success and a blueprint for other brands. Eight such brands exist today: ÖLFLEX® was followed by the EPIC® industrial connector, first made of metal, later of plastic. This is how Oskar Lapp paved the way for assemblies and system solutions, for example ÖLFLEX® CONNECT. In 1977, the SKINTOP® cable gland followed as the next brand. It wasn't just the ÖLFLEX® brand that was born at the kitchen table in Rosentalstraße in 1959. That's also where Oskar and Ursula Ida Lapp decided that their joint company should be called U.I. Lapp KG. The name met three

■ **Countless innovations create an immense variety of products in the sector of cables and connections**

The company's headquarters from 1965 in Schultze-Delitzsch-Straße, Stuttgart-Vaihingen



preconditions: they wanted to present themselves as a family company and the name should also sound good. And since Oskar Lapp was still working for another company, the company had to be owned by Ursula Ida Lapp, and her husband was officially an employed engineer in the company. For Ursula Ida Lapp, this was just a formality, as the couple viewed the company as their shared project. With a bank loan of 50,000 marks as start-up capital, in November 1959 she registered the company U.I. Lapp KG with the Stuttgart District Court. There she didn't let herself be shaken even by critical enquiries. "I don't properly speak the Swabian language, but I can certainly work like the Swabians." ■

## The eight LAPP brands

							
<b>ÖLFLEX®</b> Power and control cables	<b>UNITRONIC®</b> Data communication systems	<b>ETHERLINE®</b> Data communication systems for Ethernet technology	<b>HITRONIC®</b> Optical transmission systems	<b>EPIC®</b> Industrial connectors	<b>SKINTOP®</b> Cable glands	<b>SILVYN®</b> Protective cable conduit systems and cable carrier systems	<b>FLEXIMARK®</b> Marking systems



Oskar Lapp (2nd from left) with the Governor of New Jersey

# EVERYTHING FROM A SINGLE SOURCE

Full-blooded entrepreneur Oskar Lapp would be delighted: his company is developing in great strides from a manufacturer to a solution provider. At LAPP, customers get everything related to connection solutions – from cable ties to a global logistics concept.



One of LAPP's first price lists

What does the customer want? Every entrepreneur asks this question, some sooner and some later, some even too late. What made Oskar Lapp particularly special in addition to his technical understanding is his sense for what really helps his customers. The best example is ÖLFLEX®: at the end of the 1950s, nobody asked for a control cable with colour-coded cores in the PVC sheath that could be cut to the desired length. But Oskar Lapp realised the need for a product that didn't exist yet. This entailed a certain risk, but the young entrepreneur was spot

on. This remained the case until he died far too soon: the customer was his focus.

The Lapps went to considerable efforts to achieve this. Ursula Ida Lapp tells how, at the beginning, she cut the cables that had just been delivered by the manufacturer to the ordered lengths at the railway station in an unheated waiting room. Packed in bags, the cables were sent off to the customers immediately on the next train. As a thank you, she brought coffee and cake to the station employees. The two young entrepreneurs

also saw the disadvantages: to be able to provide a comprehensive service to customers, they needed to set up their own production and logistics site. In 1963 they opened their first factory. In doing so, the two laid the foundation for the strategy that still applies at LAPP today: 360° customer focus and everything from a single source with manufacturer expertise.

The product range was growing rapidly. No year went by without small and large innovations and variants of existing products. It wasn't just about the quantity, but always about what was in it for the customer. They got everything from LAPP from a single source, saving them time and space in the warehouse and reducing the complexity of ordering and managing. And for the customers, it is guaranteed that all components would fit together and meet the highest quality criteria.

And that they can get them anywhere. The young company expanded abroad long before other entrepreneurs. Oskar Lapp found his first distribution partners in Switzerland and Israel in 1960. He founded the company's first international subsidiary in the USA in 1976 when most German entrepreneurs didn't dare to take the leap across the Atlantic. In 1981, Oskar and Ursula Ida Lapp discovered their love for India on a combined business and vacation trip. On the subcontinent, LAPP is nowadays a well-known brand, with the orange logo on the rear of rickshaws in New Delhi. The company has also been selling its products through a distribution partner in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand

and Indonesia since 1980. Wherever Oskar Lapp went, he built partnerships and found friends for life.

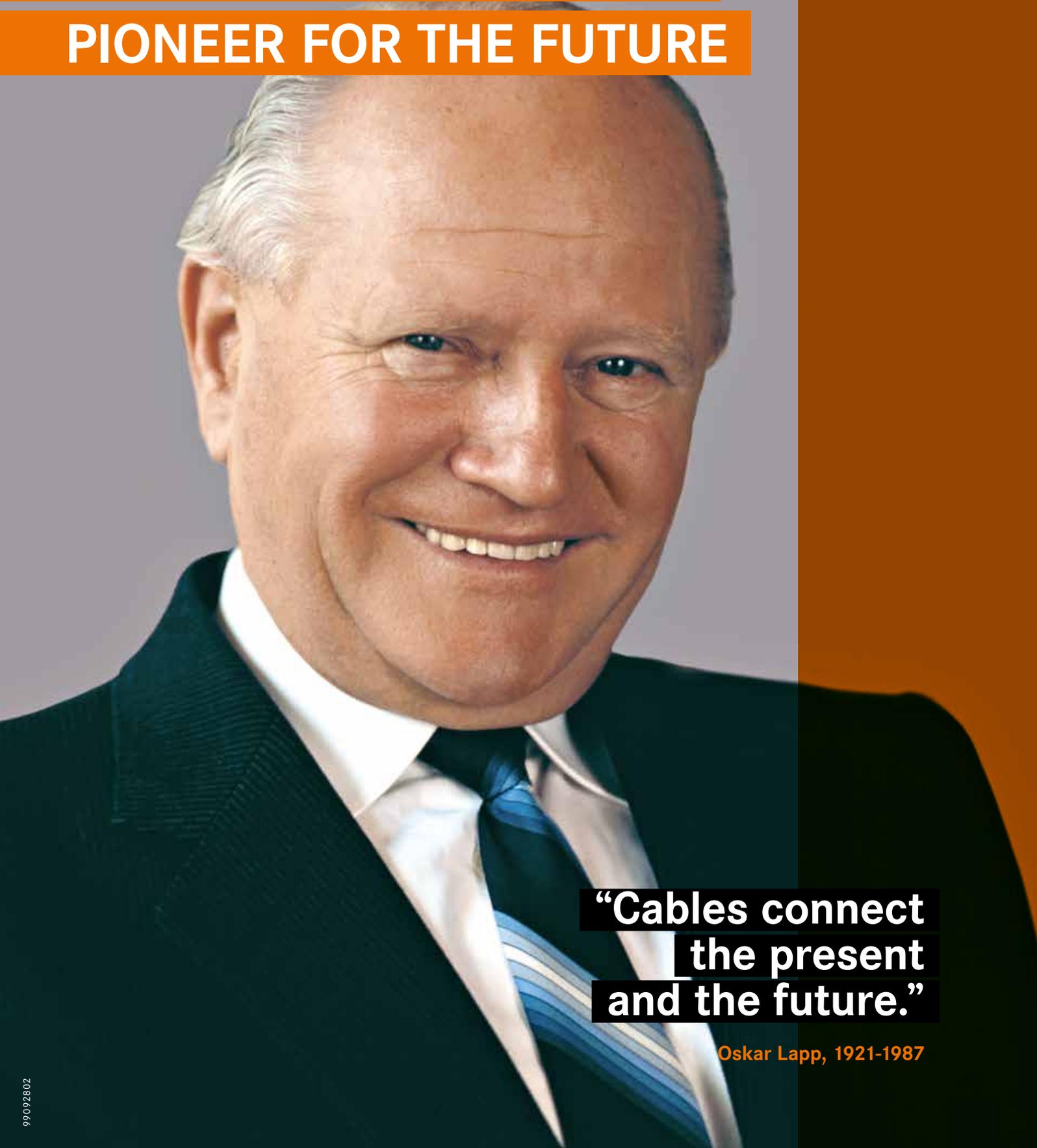
To keep pace with the expansion and be able to offer the same services on all continents, the company opened more sales sites and production facilities. Today, the network comprises more than 100 foreign representatives, 43 of its own sales companies and 20 production sites with state-of-the-art warehouses. It ensures that customers in Africa or Australia can order all LAPP products and get them delivered to a building site in no time – in some cases, even within 24 hours or just-in-time.

Oskar Lapp would be delighted. "Our father led our company to success with hard work, ambition and a clear vision of what's essential. He demonstrated perseverance, pioneering spirit and innovative strength – and this is still the LAPP DNA," says Siegbert Lapp, Chairman of the Supervisory Board at Lapp Holding AG.

With subsidiaries around the globe and a "cable shop on wheels" that travels directly to the customer, the LAPP Group becomes the global market leader



**100 YEARS OSKAR LAPP –  
PIONEER FOR THE FUTURE**



**“Cables connect  
the present  
and the future.”**

Oskar Lapp, 1921-1987

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