

MADE IN THE UNITED STATES
Gerry Biram

For years that label could be found on almost every item that was for sale here in America. It was a symbol of a nation with a strong manufacturing base creating the best quality of products in the world. It symbolized a strong, well paid middle class of blue collar workers who were proud of the products they produced in the assembly lines, and who were paid a good living wage that allowed those workers to own their own homes, send their children to college and retire with enough money to see them through their retired years comfortably. It was a symbol of the best educated young people in the world as well as being the most innovative.

It was a symbol of a society where every college graduate could find a job after four grueling years spent learning a profession or in which blue collar workers could attend trade schools that would prepare them to make a good living when they became a master plumber, electrician or worked at another kind of service job.

It was a symbol of a place where teen aged youth could find a summer job and earn money to help finance the cost of college.

It was a symbol of a country that had strong leadership in the Congress of the land and leaders in the two houses that reached across the aisle in order to make good decisions, to compromise if need be, and who kept the welfare of the nation as the final goal of their governmental efforts.

And then into this society came corporate greed, the desire to make more money and the whole system of out sourcing began. Our complacent society did not protest as they should have because we were still comfortable. Many manufacturing jobs were moved to Mexico and other poor countries where workers could be paid a much lower wage and the parent company could make millions. Into this society came China, with no child labor restrictions, intolerable working conditions, and use of materials such as lead that were outlawed in our country. And with these cheaper goods came companies in our land that imported and sold those products at a cheap price. They were called discount stores.

I can remember when Wall Mart stores came into existence. I made up my mind not to shop there because of their imported cheap goods. Finally, when on a drive in our motor home to attend an Elder Hostel I discovered I had forgotten to pack curlers, I did go into a Wall Mart and observed that nearly everything in the store had the label "Made in China." That was my first and last visit to Wall Mart.

It boggles my mind that even today many well paid middle class workers shop at this store. If every shopper in our land would have boycotted Wall Mart when it began building in every hamlet driving out the "mom and pop" stores they would never have become the powerful retailer that they are today.

I get excited when I go into a store and find an item that was "Made in America." I sincerely hope that I shall see many more such labels before my time ends here on earth.