

A True Cookie Cutter Family

The young girl loved to crawl under her family's wood-burning stove, which sat on blocks just high enough to accommodate her small frame. She'd let her senses revel as her mother baked Moravian cookies. The delicacies were so deliciously thin, "they only had one side." Or so the joke circulated among the Arcadia community just outside of Clemmons, a close-knit German settlement of the Moravian Church. Rolled and cut by hand and baked until the tantalizing aroma announced their readiness, the wafer-thin morsels supplemented the family's dairy farm income.

Today, Evva Hanes, 65, a seventh generation Moravian, still relishes both the childhood memory and the smell of freshly baked cookies—all 100,000 pounds of the tasty treats that are made annually at Mrs. Hanes' Moravian Cookie Co. Built on the site of her family's original farmland, the business—just down the road from Winston-Salem—



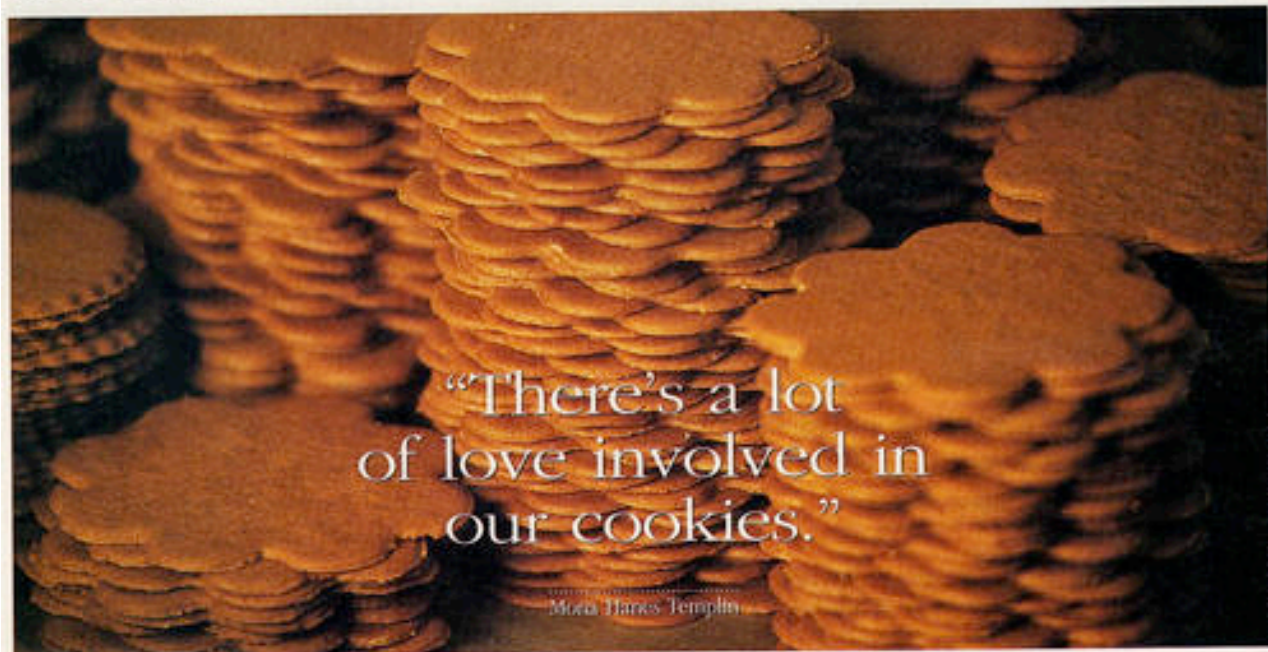
The family who bakes together, stays together. Standing from left, Scott Templin, Evva Hanes, Travis Hanes, Mike Hanes, Sheila Hanes with infant daughter Isabella, Madison Templin, Mona Hanes Templin, and Jedidiah Templin.

remains a solid family enterprise.

Evva serves as president, while husband Travis, a retired salesman, holds the title of vice president. Recently, the Haneses turned over the day-to-day operation to their daughter Mona Hanes Templin, vice president, and their son Mike Hanes, treasurer. Daughter Caroline and son Jonathon and his wife, Sheila, help out during the bakery's busy season, as do a host of aunts, uncles, and cousins. Mona's children, Jedidiah, 12, and Madison, 8, retain their respective titles as chief and assistant cookie tasters. Oh yes, and family dog, Mocha, guards the premises as head of security.

The family all live within shouting distance of each other, with Evva and Travis's home next to the bakery. A sign invites after-hours shopping: "If the bakery is closed and you need cookies, come to our house. Turn right as you leave the bakery. First house on the right."

Most of the business stems from



"There's a lot of love involved in our cookies."

Mona Hanes Templin

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What makes this a unique cookie factory?

"The care and goodness we roll into each cookie with the handmade method," Evva says. Workers stamp each pan of cookies with a personal marker, such as a star or crown, as a form of quality control.

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mail-orders, however. Seven out of 10 people who see the brochure can't resist ordering. Call-in customers, as many as 500 on a busy day, always reach a person day or night. The Haneses don't believe in answering machines, let alone voice mail.

This down-home touch remains a keystone of the business' success. "What you're going to be tasting today is history and tradition," Mona tells a group touring the 40,000-square-foot, 50-employee bakery. "There's a lot of love involved in our cookies."

Indeed, there is—every cookie is still rolled and cut the old-fashioned way. "As far as we know, we're the only ones who still make them by hand," says Mona. Each year, more than 50,000 customers—among them Gregory Peck, Barbara Walters, Doris Day, Larry Hagman, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Martha Stewart—savor Mrs. Hanes' Moravian Sugar Crisp cookies. (The "crisp" trademark distinguishes theirs



only sweet air. Then the flavor—be it ginger, sugar, lemon, black walnut, butterscotch, or chocolate—settles on your taste buds and you realize manna from heaven exists outside of the Bible. The family is convinced their tasty tidbits can't be duplicated by machine. (One taste and the indulged are inclined to agree.) They've checked out the latest in cookie-making equipment—and found it lacking.

LEFT: Employees such as Rosa Hanes bake pan after pan of perfect cookies for customers all over the world.

among machine-made imitators.) "Because we pack them very specially, we get maybe 15 complaints a year about broken cookies," says Mona. Far more frequent are testimonies from ecstatic customers.

"Your sugar crisp cookies arrived at 3 p.m.," writes one. "It is now 4 p.m. And we have devoured them all." One woman asked the Hanes to

join in a conspiracy: "Please send your cookie brochure to Mrs. [X] in Charlotte. Perhaps she'll send cookies this Christmas instead of the awful houseplants we always get." Still another writes, "I don't like walnut or cookies, but I'll try anything once. My gosh, they were the most delicious cookies I've ever tasted."

At first bite, your mouth registers

"Because you have to add so much flour to keep it from sticking [in the machines], you alter your recipe," Travis says. "You end up with an entirely different cookie."

"I've said all along if these cookies could be made by machine, some of these big companies would

RIGHT: Dru Hopkins packs a cellophane bag of cookies that will sell at the bakery.

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Careful packing keeps the fragile cookies from breaking during shipping. Complaints are rare.

Mike Hanes supervises shipping and orders supplies. He also makes mammoth batches of dough every two weeks.

have been making them a long time ago," Evva says. Alas, the cookie matriarch herself has developed an extreme allergy to flour and can no longer enter the baking area.

Every two weeks or so, Mike arrives at the bakery at 4 a.m. and begins the arduous task of mixing about 6,000 to 10,000 pounds of dough, using colossally proportioned ingredients, such as 50-pound boxes of margarine and 620-pound barrels of molasses.

"That dough does not come popping out of that mixer into pans," Mona adds. "My brother physically dips it by hand into those pans. So if it's 8,000 pounds of dough, that's four tons of dough he will physically dip out at 25 pounds per pan."

The refrigerated dough is then thinly rolled and cut by hand. Holiday cookies sold at the bakery are shaped as Christmas trees and bells

or Easter bunnies and chicks. The mail-order designs are more simple—hearts, rounds, or scallops—to avoid breakage in shipping. Each pound of dough yields about 100 cookies. Roll-and-cut employees own personal markers—a crown or a star, for instance—with which they "sign" each pan as a form of quality control.



"We make all the cookies we can, and we sell all we make each year."

Travis Hanes

Bakers roll racks of cookies into three walk-in ovens for 10 minutes at 325 degrees. About 600 pounds of dough are baked each day, about 100,000 pounds a year. The cookies are cooled, then carefully packed in tins and canisters for mail-orders, or in cellophane bags if they are to be sold on the premises.

"We make all the cookies we can, and we sell all we make each year," says Travis about the labor-intensive business. Each year, Mrs. Hanes' Moravian cookies ship to 25 foreign countries and all 50 states.

"We make about \$1.5 million per year," Travis says. The company grows about 2% to 4% each year after salaries and expenses. "Our profit margin is very low because it's very labor intensive. We try to pay a good working wage and give benefits, including hospitalization."

Still, it's the family who ensures the cookie business doesn't crumble. "We all have certain talents and we all use them," says Mona. Even the youngest members do their part. Twelve-year-old Jedidiah, quiet and industrious like his uncle Mike, has helped pack tins and given tours. Eight-year-old Madison, ebullient and vivacious like her mother Mona, has also given tours—unauthorized, off-limit tours. Once, the precocious child sold a customer her autograph for \$5.

That's the type of memory-making this close-knit family delights in

as they work together. "We're best friends," says a proud Evva. Still, that doesn't keep the family from teasing unmercifully when mistakes happen. Youngest daughter Caroline accidentally combined butterscotch and black walnut while pinch-hitting for dough-maker Mike. "It was a

good cookie," Travis laughs. "We just made up a little scratch-up label and said, 'This is experimental. It's butternut.' It sold. We still have people calling wanting some of those 'butternut' cookies."

And after the Christmas rush? "There's not a cookie in the house come January 3," says Evva. "We sell out every year."

The family rejoices in making a food so dearly loved. "It's like a memory," says Mona. "It's not something they can get anywhere else." *Nancy Dorman-Hickson*

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