

## An Interview with Tom Eakin



Tom Eakin founded TG Eakin Ltd in 1974. Now in 2010, the company is celebrating 30 years of the Cohesive®

Seal. In a landmark year for the company, we thought that this was the perfect time to catch up with the founder to find out a little more on how the company came about and the early days of Eakin Cohesive®.

### 1. What is your background?

My father was a building and engineering contractor and so having a very exciting childhood playing amongst large machinery, it gave me a good understanding of the mechanics of manufacturing.

I had a great interest in creating products. Even as a boy I remember making a more aggressive soap which would clean better; it did but with unkind results so never achieved fame. I made an electric hedge cutter which was very effective but so lethal that my father confiscated it. I designed a sling for lifting large stones, and another for tipping barrels. I was so fortunate to be given freedom to get on with it.

I intended to carry on in my father's business as a contractor but my brother beat me to it and I felt I wanted to be independent and instead decided to opt for Pharmacy.

I attended the School of Pharmacy at the College of Technology Belfast and registered as a Pharmacist in 1957. In 1960 I opened my own

Pharmacy in Dundonald, just outside Belfast.

### 2. What inspired you to set up your own company?

As a Pharmacist in the 1960s we dealt with the supply of almost everything for patients including Ostomy appliances. I was unhappy with the products we were supplying, which were often ineffective and caused a lot of distress to the patients due to the skin problems associated with this kind of surgery. We were using such materials as Aluminium paste & Friar's Balsam to attach the bags to patients with very poor results.

I decided to try to improve the ostomy bag for patients and also because I had a close family member with a urostomy. I wanted to create a urostomy bag with an odour resistant film that was quiet to wear and had a skin-friendly adhesive to attach to the skin.

I set up the company in 1974 with this aim. The small factory, 12 metres square, was built at the rear of my Pharmacy.

### 3. How did the business develop?

Although I started the development work in 1971 it took 7 years to create the odour free polymer film and the adhesive. Back then I was using a small Hobart mixer, normally used in bakeries which I modified with a heating system to make the adhesive.

The advanced urostomy pouch proved a lot more difficult. Although this was potentially an excellent

product, it was so intricate that it proved too expensive to manufacture and as a result I decided to pursue another strategy - by cutting the adhesive into separate stoma "Seals" that could be used with other manufacturers' appliances, rather than as the main hydrocolloid already attached to the bag, hence the Cohesive® Seal was born! This turned out to be a very effective decision and sales grew rapidly through our UK distributor Salt & Son Ltd.



The adhesive was being cut manually using a small hand cutter (shown left), so it was a time consuming process. With UK sales growing rapidly I was now employing 25 people and we needed more space and more automated production methods. There were no "off the peg" machines to do such a job so I built an automatic cutting machine in my back yard and the increased production at reduced cost was just the beginning of our success.

### 4. Did you ever envisage that your product would be a worldwide success, 30 years on from its birth?

I was always confident that Eakin Cohesive® would be a success and it's wonderful to hear from patients worldwide who have benefited so much from using the product. When I set up the company I wanted to improve the quality of life for people with a stoma and 30 years on Cohesive® is still doing exactly that!

# everyday eakin®

Because skin care matters.

Special edition, August 2010

## Dear Readers,

Welcome to a special edition of everyday eakin! As featured in our last issue, we have been honoured to receive the Queen's Award for Enterprise in the International Trade category. In July we formally accepted the award from Her Majesty the Queen at a special reception held at Buckingham Palace. So instead of waiting until

October for the next edition of everyday eakin we wanted to share the news with you now.

We are also delighted to be celebrating 30 years of the Cohesive® Seal this year. To mark the occasion, a birthday party was held at our booth at the 2010 WOCN/ WCET Joint Conference in Phoenix and you will find pictures of

the event overleaf.

I hope you enjoy this special edition of everyday eakin and the regular format will resume in October!

Best Wishes,

Elaine



## A Royal Occasion for TG Eakin Ltd

On 19th July Mr Tom Eakin and Mrs Esther McIlveen, TG Eakin Ltd's longest serving member of staff, travelled to London to attend the Queen's Awards

ceremony. At the prestigious event, held in Buckingham Palace, they were honoured to meet Her Majesty the Queen and had the opportunity to

chat with her briefly. Speaking after the event, Mr Tom Eakin commented, "I was honoured to receive the Queen's Award for Enterprise on behalf of

everyone at TG Eakin Ltd. The fact that we are also celebrating 30 years of the Cohesive® Seal this year made the award even more special".

You will find a more in-depth interview with Mr Eakin on the back page.



Pictured left: Mr Tom Eakin & Mrs Esther McIlveen meet Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace.



THE QUEEN'S AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE: INTERNATIONAL TRADE 2010

# Celebrating 30 Years of the Cohesive® Seal



At the recent 2010 WOCN/ WCET Joint Conference, the focus for the Eakin booth was on Cohesive SLIMS®, to mark their launch into the USA & Canada this summer. The nurses admired the new slim profile seal which leaves less residue on the skin yet provides the same great skin protection as the tried and tested Eakin seals.

We are also delighted to be celebrating the 30th birthday of the Eakin Cohesive® Seal this year and to mark the occasion we held a birthday party at our booth, where the special guest was Mr Tom Eakin, the inventor of Cohesive®.

Mr Eakin chatted to the nurses, describing how the Cohesive® Seal had been born and gave them a brief history on how it has evolved to the much loved product that it is today.

For those of you who didn't pick up a sample of the

Eakin Cohesive SLIMS® at the Conference, they are available from ConvaTec in the USA from 1st July 2010 and in Canada later in the summer.

We were pleased to welcome Rone Sills from Manta Medical to our booth who assisted us throughout the Conference. Claudine Jardine, an Eakin competition winner and nursing professional from South Africa, also joined us to demonstrate her winning case study on Eakin Wound Pouches.

To view the case study 'Appendicitis to Fistula' along with the other entrants please refer to the *Research & Publications* section of our website.

This is just a snapshot of the photos taken at the birthday celebrations in Phoenix. For more photos of the event you will find a link within the '30th birthday' article on the *News* section of our website.

