

# DELONG'S GIZZA EQUIPMENT



The family members who work at DeLong's pose for a photo outside of the business they help to run.

## Unique family business gives back to community

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STORY BY ALAINA CLARKE

**DeLong's Gizzard Equipment**, a family owned business in Jones County that manufactures processing replacement rollers and equipment for poultry, has been a part of Jones County for almost 50 years, serving people all over the country.



CONTRIBUTED

Horace DeLong, the founder of DeLong's Gizzard Equipment, moved to Jones County in the 1970s.

The company can be found at 152 Garrison Road in Macon, and is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Robb Murray, co-owner of DeLong's, said they are one of the very few gizzard equipment manufacturers left in the country that make the specific parts poultry companies need. He said other companies like DeLong's have been bought out through the years.

"DeLong's is a fourth generation, family-owned supplier and manufacturer of poultry processing equipment and spare parts," he said. "It's for the turkey and chicken industry. We make these parts for the U.S. as well as overseas."

Mary Murray, co-owner of DeLong's and Robb's wife, said her mother's side of the family was originally from Gainesville, the poultry capital of Georgia. She said that's

how the family got into the poultry industry. She said her grandfather, Horace DeLong, was working with the maintenance crews for a poultry industry.

"He would do the maintenance all over the U.S., so that's kind of how he got started with it. In the '70s, my grandparents moved here to Jones County. They continued to travel doing what they did with maintenance," Murray said.

She said, in the 1980s, her grandfather took one of the old chicken farms on the property and made it into a shop so he wouldn't have to travel as much to do his work. She said he was able to go to the plants and sell them parts.

"My mom started with him in the 80s when he had the brick and mortar shop, so at that point she was doing the office stuff and sales," Murray said. "She was able to work



Patricia and Russ Theriault pose for a photo with the gizzard peelers they helped to make.

with him doing that, then my grandfather passed away in 1992.”

She said her mother, Patricia Theriault, kept working at the family business even after that, coming up with a machine to automate gizzard peeling. She said, before then, someone would have to take the gizzard and put it on the product.

“It’s good to have the equipment more automated because it can be dangerous to do it yourself. Having more automation keeps the workers safe, so we like that. It’s not replacing workers, either,” she said.

Murray said she started working at DeLong’s in 1997, and her

husband Robb started working for the company in 1998. She said her mother retired in 2008. That was when she, her husband and her cousin Josh Harris bought the company.

“For us, this business has been a blessing to have. You make your sacrifices like with everything, but for us, just about all of my first cousins have worked here at some point,” Mary Murray said. “We’ve had and still have a lot of family working here.”

Harris said his grandfather started off from nothing to build the business, and they’ve carried on the family tradition of running the business ever since.

“DeLong’s is important to Jones County as an employer. We can bring more jobs to keep people in Jones County,” he said. “We work with the high school to teach some kids a trade, too.”

Murray said they all have had to work hard within the company, and nothing has ever been given to them. She said, because a lot of the employees are family, she expects a lot more from them and she thinks it inspires them to do better.



Josh Harris shows off some of the machinery at DeLong's Gizzard Equipment and explains how it works.

"I grew up literally right down the hill from the business, so I remember walking from the house to my grandma's house. I feel like having the company here has made us more connected to our community because I've always been here," she said.

Murray said Jones County means so much more to her family because, not only do they live in the county, but they also work in the county. She said growing up in Jones County on the Highway 49 side had some stigma, but she loves living where she does.

Robb Murray said, when he was growing up, it was always like there were two different sides of

the county. He said he lived in the heart of Gray, and he enjoyed the small town feel.

"I loved growing up in Gray. My family roots go way back," he said. "I can still remember when they put in the first red light at the train track and when there was nowhere to eat here but Tasty Freeze. I've been all over the country, and I still say the best place to be is right here where I'm at."

Mary Murray said keeping production up is important, so they all have to function as a team to make the parts and get them to customers. She said her husband is on the road a lot with sales and keeping track of orders, which is

crucial.

"I do accounting here in the office and the day-to-day operations, and Josh oversees the production in the shops. A lot of it is dealing with the employees and making sure we're all on the same path together," she said.

Murray said she enjoys being involved in the community and is the vice chair of the board of directors of the Gray-Jones County Chamber of Commerce. She said, through that role, DeLong's is able to work with students at the College and Career Academy.

"We're able to help students who want to take this path or to show



Particia and Russ Theriault, Mary Murray's mother and father, show off equipment while traveling.

them what is really needed to go right into the workforce," she said. "That's the big picture of it. We've had students for the past four or five years come in."

Murray said the people they prefer to hire at DeLong's don't typically have a certificate in what they do. She said they learn on the job. She said it's better for them because they don't have any bad habits.

"We do like people from Jones County to work here because it just makes things easier. They also don't have a long drive. Most of our employees working here now are from the area, plus we like to give back to our county," she said.

Murray said her favorite thing about working at DeLong's is having the family history and being a part of a great community. She said, as

stressful as it is to work with family, she's happy to spend time with them at the family business.

"You get to see the family all the time, which is a blessing in disguise," she said. "We also have our dogs here, and my oldest has been here since 2008. I like having them here with me. Being able to create our own atmosphere has been important to me."



Mary Murray shows off the rollers and peelers that are in stock at DeLong's Gizzard Equipment.

Robb Murray said traveling has been one of his favorite things about working at DeLong's. He said he has been all across the country.

"One of my biggest joys was when the kids were younger, and during the summer they'd go on these trips with me. Taking them with me has been a real blessing. It was always fun traveling with them," he said.

Mary Murray said she doesn't

think her grandparents imagined the business going as far as it has gone, but she's happy it did. She said the business growing even through tough times has been a real blessing.

"I don't know if my grandfather had this idea of what the business could have been. There were moments in the past where it was right on the cusp of not being all

this," she said. "It does make me proud to say I'm sure he and my grandma are super proud of what DeLong's has become, and what was accomplished."

For more information about how DeLong's Gizzard Equipment operates, visit the website <https://delongs.com>, <https://www.facebook.com/DeLongsGizzard/> or call 478-743-9134. ♦

