

Taylor's Candy Company proves dreaming is essential to business success

By Meredith C. McGee
Jackson Advocate Contributing Writer

The summer American Express launched its first credit card in 1958, Walter Lee Taylor, a native of Canton, Mississippi, began his career as a charming salesman.

During Jim Crow, Walter worked for his older cousin Henry Taylor, who had a distribution business on Bailey Avenue in Jackson, Mississippi. Henry was a master of his trade, and Walter was quick on his feet. He worked hard, and went beyond the call of duty.

State University) while pursuing teaching degrees, and married in 1962. After college, Walter taught math at McLaurin High School in Rankin County, and was a part-time salesman. Ozie taught English at Powell Junior High School on Livingston Road in Jackson.

"When Walter told me he wanted to give up teaching to start his own business, I supported him 100 percent," Ozie noted. "Mama's [Mary Gross] philosophy was, 'Believe in yourself. If you don't,

together like salt and pepper in Ozie's delicious southern meals. Their marriage has lasted over 52 years, and this July will mark their 48th year in business.

The company name was displayed on a Coca Cola sign for decades. When the red background behind the white Coca Cola letters faded, they bought a new sign.

Ozie is genuine and humble, and Walter is straight forward and driven. "I met salesmen from all across the country," Ozie recalled.

drink and some snacks.

African American Business Pioneer Roy Dixon often delivers their lunch which is prepared at Maxine's Country Kitchen, a business he operates with his wife. Dixon noted, "I started selling Dixon Skins in April of 1974." The Dixons and Taylors know the significance of networking.

Taylor's Candy has downsized considerably over the years. "At one time we were purchasing products from 32 companies. We

democratic and Student Affairs, Taylor's Candy may realize that again. JSU leads IHL institutions with regards to minority business participation. Taylor's Candy credits Hemphill Food Service, M & B Concessions, Beauty Within, fund raising groups, and micro businesses for helping them continue in business.

"We have enough business now to stay as long as we want to stay," Walter said confidently. Well, one thing is for sure, Taylor's Candy Company is well stocked. Nothing is out of place. Products are stacked neatly in each cubby. The entire building is spotless. Ozie referred to cleaning and maintaining the store in good order as "Exercise."

Walter offers a few words of advice to anyone desiring to go into business today, "You better know what you're doing." Ozie contended new business owners need to be patient, willing to persevere through highs and lows, able to hold onto money, and to keep a positive attitude."

Sure enough, every business has a bad day, or a bad season. That's the nature of business. Business owners are risk takers. "There were days when I looked at Walter and said, 'I'm ready to go home,'" Ozie admitted. But, Walter, who sold bags of grits during the Great Depression when he was a little boy knows too well tomorrow will be better. "Ain't nothing at home she once told him when she felt discouraged," indicating they would stay the course, and close the doors as usual at 5:30 pm.

Drive up Valley Street Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:30 pm, turn on Cox Street, to your right you're see a large sign: TAYLOR'S CANDY CO. Park in the gated parking area. Make no mistake about it, you'll find something tasty to buy, and you'll be mighty glad to have been served by Walter and Ozie Taylor.

The Taylors have served two generations of customers, and they are ready to supply products to your business, school, club, or group.



Walter Lee & Ozie Taylor, Taylor's Candy

In those days, money was turning over in the black community hand to hand like it wasn't nobody's business, and the Taylors were key business suppliers.

"Back then I dreamed of becoming the biggest candy distributor in our state," Walter Lee Taylor said smiling. His big thinking paid off for him. "At our business peak we had nine trucks delivering products to schools, groups, organizations, mom and pop businesses, and stores as far as 100 miles away," Ozie Taylor noted.

Walter and Ozie met at Jackson State College (now Jackson

who will?" They saved money, and as hard as it was they managed to get a SBA loan in 1967 to finance their first business site on Cox Street. Ozie kept her teaching job until 1972. Then, she went behind the counter with her husband, where she has been since.

By then Taylor's Candy Company had full-time employees working inside their warehouse, and drivers transporting candy, confectionary, industrial supplies, and meats to stores in Jackson, Yazoo City (Ozie's hometown), and to other enterprises.

This amazing duo has blended

"I love people," she added.

Angela Sampson, a regular customer who buys wholesale products, said, "The Taylors offer the best prices in town. I've been driving across town to shop with them since 2010. The atmosphere here is warm. Their customer service is great." Willie Evans, who owns Quick Stop Grocery a few blocks over on Hill Street, buys products from the Taylors, too.

Some of their customer base buys individual snacks. Kentarrious Roash, a 10th grader at Jim Hill High School, walked in during our interview and purchased a Faygo

buy from 10 companies today," Ozie said. "We don't have as much overhead as we once had," Walter noted. "We let all of the employees go," he added. Walter and Ozie run their business these days in an authentic *mom and pop* fashion. She operates the register, he stocks products, and helps customers take their wares to their car. But, male customers grab the dolly near the wall and load their own boxes. "Jackson State was one of our biggest buyers for years," Walter noted. And with the assistance of Dr. James C. Renick, JSU's Provost/Senior Vice President for Aca-

Ciné product line is all about body healing

By Meredith C. McGee
Jackson Advocate Contributing Writer

Francis Flowers & Herbs Farm, LLC owners follow the "Heal the land, heal the body" philosophy.

It's simple, Mark and Earcine Evans practice biodynamic and organic farming methods to produce their handmade line of oils, soaps, creams, and skin care products.

Amy Marie Sol, a creative consultant, has been with the company for 12 years. She manages the company's social media and marketing activities.

The company is named for Earcine's maternal grandmother Francis, and is located in Pickens, Mississippi, on the land where Earcine was born and raised. "I was raised by my grandparents, Lee Henry and Francis Williams," Earcine shared with a sense of pride. "I was the last of three children delivered by Rose Lee Gibson, a midwife, on our land in 1950," she added.

"My grandparents grew short crops, and my grandmother maintained a garden of flowers and herbs. I spent each summer with my mother, Eva Williams, in Chicago," she noted. Earcine is a country girl who had a taste of city life. Her grandmother was an herbalist who administered herbal medicine to her family.

Like many U.S. consumers, Earcine became removed from the land and its traditions. She moved on the West coast in the 1980s to Sunnyvale, California, in Silicon Valley, home of tech companies

like Apple, eBay, Facebook, Google, Intel... Mark met Earcine in Sunnyvale. "At that time I was an Aviation and Aromatics Researcher for NASA in Mountainview, California. One night I sat in on a set where my brother, Carey Evans, a saxophonist, was playing a gig, and Earcine waited my table," he said enthusiastically.

Mark and Earcine became acquainted. He discovered she had a beauty salon in town, was a single mother raising four children, and he revealed he was a single father raising two of his own. "The moment, February 8, 1987, 9:45 pm Pacific Time Zone, I saw her, I knew she was 'the one,' and we've been together since," he said. He added, "Here we are 28 years later."

Earcine asserted, "I was a cosmetologist for 12 years. After years of breathing in chemicals, I became very sick." While recovering from her illness a friend gave Earcine a copy of *Beauty to Die For*; after reading the book, Earcine realized her profession which made people beautiful was dangerous.

According to the book, which is well researched, many skin care products are harmful. For example, formaldehyde, a preservative in many shampoos, is generally used as a disinfectant, germicide, and fungicide. The author revealed numerous facts.

"Daughters of civilization are reuniting in maternal love. Women are life givers; we birth civilization into the world; we will have to teach our people how to heal the

land, and heal our bodies," she declared smiling with a radiant energy.

"Our product line is healthy for the entire family. We are teaching our people truths," she professed. "Our skin is our largest organ. It must breathe! Natural hair and skin products is tied to our wellness," she reiterated. Earcine learned from experience, chemicals expose individuals to infections.

The Evans introduced their Ciné product line to the

market through the Sweet Auburn Curb Market on Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia, in the 1990s. Back then, the Evans purchased rosemary, wild roses, lavender, and other herbs from biodynamic farmers to make their products. Today, they grow herbs on their farm.

"We produce potent products. Many are concentrated. I make sure products are blended well, and I also test them before we send them to the market," Mark

said. Moving back to the land was a win win for the business owners. He proposed growing herbs as opposed to buying them from farmers to ensure the highest quality standards are met, and working the land is healthy.

Some company wellness tips include drinking eight glasses of water per day, exercising three times per week, consuming sea salt rather than ionized salt, and refraining from any products containing DEA, MEA, or food dye.

The company has a special African connection. They purchase organic shea butter and black soap from Creative Projects International Co-op which membership consists of women who live in 800 villages in Central and West African. "Our relationship with members is a very vigorous exchange of knowledge, but it is mainly based on our respect for the income of African soap producers," Earcine declared.

The farm is a training and research center where soil remineralization trainings are conducted, and a watershed project demonstrates the use of chemical free cleaning aids. Student interns and local school age children help maintain plots of culinary, medical herbs, and flowers.

Two Thomas Christian Academy students commented on their visit to the farm. Ten-year-old Edward Patterson said, "I learned some plants are planted in the winter and some are planted in the spring." His brother Damon Patterson, age 11, admitted he

hasn't been on many farms; he said two things stood out to him, "One, they watered the plants with water from the hole in the ground - made from rain water instead of the water in the house, and two, it was the first time I ever saw a house with plants in it.

"We don't use any chemicals or pesticides of any kind. Nothing we produce is contaminated," Mark affirmed. Ciné products are distributed and utilized by Rainbow Natural Grocery Co-op in Jackson, Mississippi, and healthy conscious consumers from different U.S. regions. "We have an established customer base who buy via mail order, but we are looking to expand," he added.

Their biodynamic product line relieves eczema, skin rashes, and other ailments, yet many consumers love their fresh herbs, and flowers. A few of Ciné products include:

- Rosemary & Sage Conditioning Hair Cream
- Palmarosa & Chamomile Moisturizing Cream
- Native Hair Restoration Oils

• Pain Formula Oil
The farm offers tours to the public; many local residents buy herbs to cook with which are picked fresh from the gardens. Each year more consumers learn the true meaning of "Heal the land, heal the body."

For more information visit Francis Flowers & Herbs, LLC visit <https://www.facebook.com/PureCineProducts> and <https://twitter.com/PureCineProduct>. Email purecine2001@hotmail.com or call 662.834.2238.



Earcine Evans