

**NW ILLINOIS**

Economic Development

*Celebrating 17 Years in Business!***SPOTLIGHTING BUSINESSES IN
CARROLL AND JO DAVIESS COUNTIES****CHARLES ELECTRONICS, LLC****To The MOON and Back**

The sky's the limit for Charles Electronics, LLC. Tucked away in a sleepy little neighborhood in Mount Carroll, Illinois, population 1,479, the business doesn't even have a sign on the building to mark this big, little antenna manufacturing operation. Don't let the size of their main building fool you though, or their six scattered warehouses around town for all the special and often unique products they make and the huge amount of raw materials they store.

Under the umbrella of Charles Electronics, LLC, are the antenna divisions of Maco, Gizmotchy and SkipShooter antennas - all well-known names in the mobile and accessory antenna business.

Despite all the AI technology, radio antennas have never gone out of fashion and are still very big business. These high performance aluminum base radio antennas are used to connect wireless devices like two way radios primarily used by amateur (ham) radio operators and CB enthusiasts. They are especially popular for long-distance communication, acting as the physical interface converting electrical signals into electromagnetic waves to transmit and receive voice communications over large geographical areas.

Charles Electronics, LLC products are sold extensively across the globe, with thousands of products being

manufactured and shipped for special radio antennas for home and business use, says Tom Charles, President of Charles Electronics, LLC. He also proudly touts some other high-profile customers on his resume such technical and aerospace companies and all branches of the military. He has designed and built special antennas for the US Army Pony Valley tank range in California, special antennas for the Prince of Dubai and special parts for NASA.

"I've made stuff that even went to the moon and back," Tom relates proudly.

Big or small, they do it all, even one offs like manufacturing a part of a roller that is used in hot dog machines in convenience stores and special golf cart components.

But the business has humble beginnings starting with Tom's dad, R.L. "Bud" Charles, who was a radio distributor in the 1960s. At that time the Utica Radio Corporation was selling a unique high performance horizontal and vertical beam antenna called "The Gizmotchy" that traces its

roots back to the early dawn of CB history. Bud and his wife Jane assumed ownership of that particular antenna and began distributing CB radios, antennas, accessories and man-

ufacturing the special antenna.

In the late 1960s son, Tom, completed a tool and die apprenticeship and assumed the production of the Gizmotchy® antenna for his father.



Thomas Charles,
President of Charles Electronics, LLC and Research
and Development



The Charles Electronics, LLC Team from left to right: Chet Peugh, Kay Handel, Nola Charles, Tom Charles, Guy Bazilewich, Patrick Kleckner and Clarence Buehl.

Tom produced the Gizmotchy® antenna under the company name Charles Electronics and produced all of the Gizmotchy® products that his father sold.

"We started in 1968 in a small garage. My dad bought the Gizmotchy company and I started making the parts," Tom said. "Then people didn't even know I was part of the business."

In 1973 Tom bought the business and moved his family from Freeport, Illinois, to Mount Carroll. By day he was a tool and dye maker at Honeywell in Freeport (38 years) to help kick start his business and take care of his family, and yet worked another full-time job at Newell Company, also in Freeport, on second shift as head maintenance manager. Both careers fed his growing "side" business that was housed in a small garage in Mount Carroll until 1976 when he purchased a 4,400 square foot building and moved production there, where it still is today.

Upon the death of his dad in January of 2000, the ownership of the antennas was passed down to Tom and his wife Nola, who is also active in the businesses' success.

Maco alone has distributors and dealers in all 50 states and foreign countries such as Australia, Canada,

Europe and the United Kingdom.

However products and parts can also be bought directly from Charles Electronics, LLC, without going through a middleman. The beauty of that for a customer, Tom says, is their excellent customer service and their same day shipping, unless the order comes in late in the day. That's what he says sets his company apart from the competition.

"Nobody can match the quality and the turnaround time with our same day shipping," Tom said. "And while there is competition out there, we are the biggest in the country, probably the world in our market. And we ship worldwide."

Charles Electronics, LLC employs seven full-time staff members and some contracted employees for technical jobs that arise. The streamlined staff is due to the automation of some of the more labor intense processes Tom says he was able to orchestrate over the years.

"You know, one of the best parts about working here is when somebody orders a antenna and they come to pick it up," Tom concludes. "Just the reaction you get and the smiles on their faces and knowing that we make them all here in the USA."



Subsidiary Companies of Charles Electronics, LLC

Maco Antennas

The Maco antenna line originated in 1977 when Maco Manufacturing acquired the complete antenna line, assets, and trademarks from Wilson. Maco Manufacturing produced the antennas for over three decades before the line was acquired by Charles Electronics, LLC. The company was then renamed Maco® Antennas and relocated to Mount Carroll, Illinois.

Gizmotchy

The Gizmotchy antenna was established in 1964 by the Utica Radio Corporation. In the mid-to-late 1960s, the Charles Radio Company (later Charles Electronics) in Mount Carroll, Illinois, acquired the rights to the antenna and has been manufacturing it ever since.

SkipShooter

Manufacturing high-quality, American-made antennas since 1967. Specifically, their signature fiber-glass wire-wound antenna design has been a proven performer on the market since 1977.

Antenna Parts Outlet

Antennas Parts Outlet (the retail storefront) and its parent manufacturer, Charles Electronics, LLC, have been in business since 1967. Operating out of Mount Carroll, Illinois, the company manufactures and supplies brands such as Maco, Gizmotchy, and SkipShooter.

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