

American Athletic Equipment Division

A typical American fad lent the needed push.

Late in 1959 the pit trampoline craze swept the country and for eight months American Athletic Equipment Company had all the business it wanted or could handle. As such fads do, this one collapsed. American survived the following crash, healthier and luckier than some 30 other firms which sprang up, cashed in, and died. The brief boom provided American with additional working capital and an important object lesson—it needed to diversify if it were to survive.

The American story began in 1954, with Bill Sorenson building, selling, and delivering trampolines, one at a time, from the basement of a Jefferson, Iowa, hardware store. In making this step he moved into a field he knew best. As a member of the University of Iowa gymnastic team he had been Big 10 trampoline champion. He also had spent a year with an acrobatic trio.

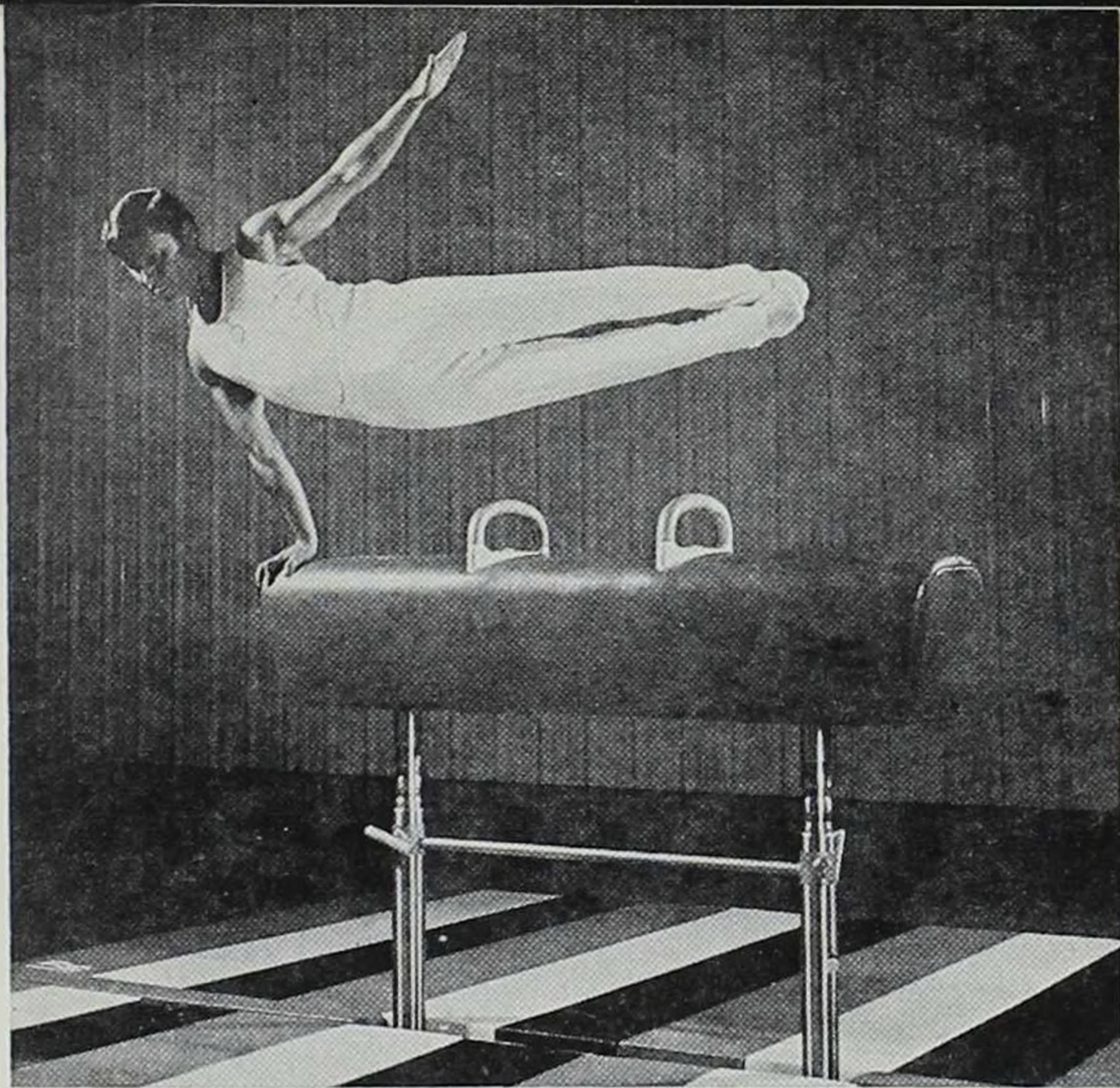
Business grew steadily although slowly. Sorenson formed a partnership with his brother-in-law in 1956 and American Trampoline Co. was formed. The following year the company's product line was expanded and the name changed to American Athletic Equipment Co.

American operated independently until 1968 when it became a wholly-owned subsidiary of Head Ski Co. When AMF acquired Head in 1971, American became a division of AMF.

Today, the company manufactures trampolines, three full lines of gymnastic apparatus, tumbling and wrestling mats, isometric gear, field marking equipment, and a line of portable aluminum seating. An acquisition, phased into the Jefferson organization in 1969, added an aluminum javelin line. Three subsidiary companies, becoming extensions of the Jefferson firm, added knitted sportswear, track and field equipment, and high quality tournament and hunting archery equipment to the product line.

Presently employing some 120 people in a 60,000 square foot plant, American has emerged as one of the two largest manufacturers of gymnastic equipment, gymnasium accessories, and related products, one of the two largest trampoline builders in the world, and a large producer of field marking equipment.

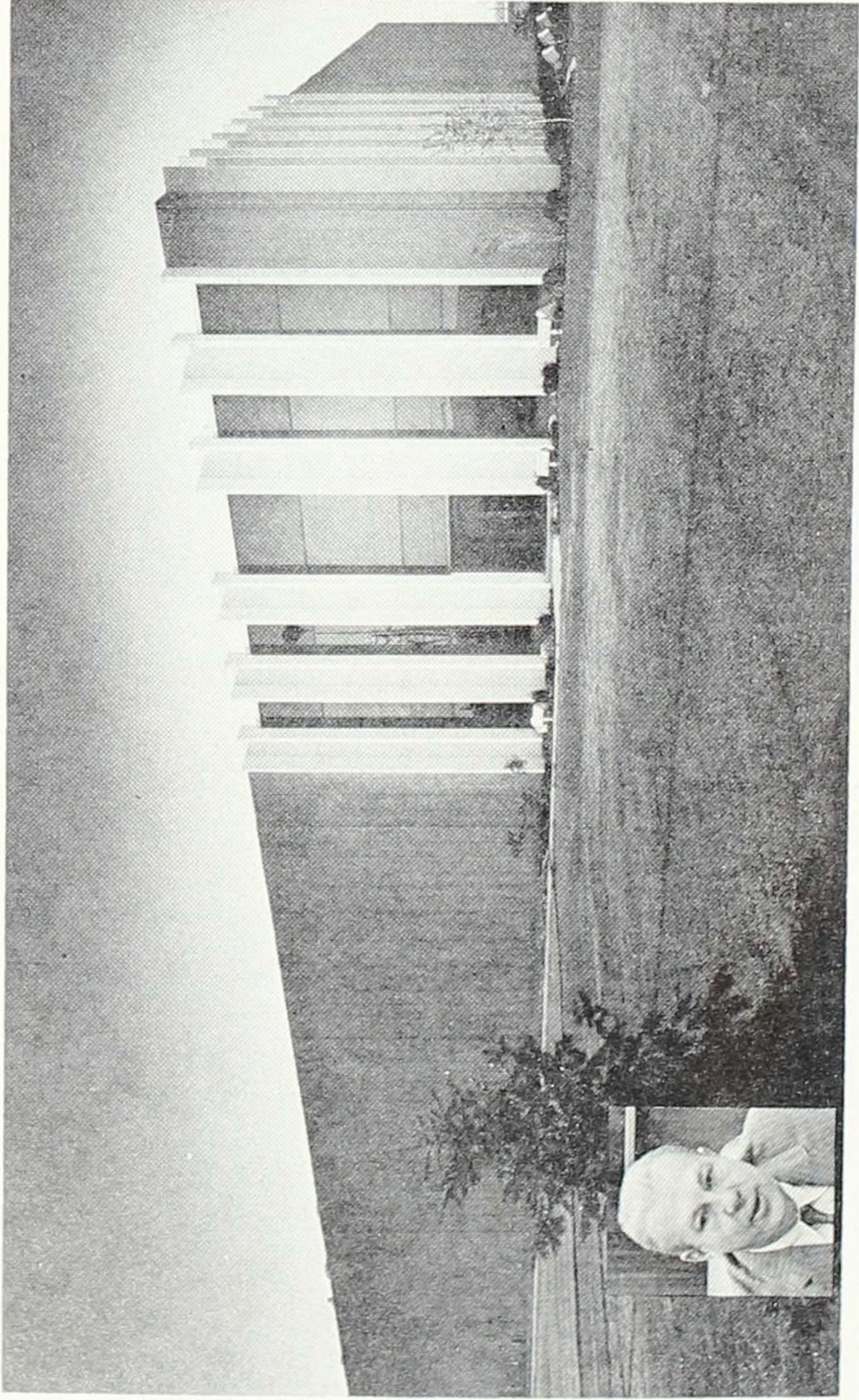
"Flexibility," says Sorenson, "is a key to our success. Because of it, we were able to move into the pit trampoline craze when it swept the nation and out-produce everyone. Because of it, we can develop and put a product on the line quickly and smoothly."



American features three lines of gymnastic equipment: one is built to Olympic specifications for competition; another is for teaching classroom gymnasts; and the third is used in junior high and elementary schools.

With a dozen or so models to select from, approximately two-thirds of American's trampoline production is sold for back yard use. Yet its largest customers are the schools, colleges, military bases, and youth organizations who use gymnastic apparatus in their physical education and competitive programs.





Bandag's \$1.5 million research and development center was opened in 1971. The 47,000 square foot facility is located in Progress Park just south of Muscatine. This is thought to be the only R&D building of its size in the world devoted completely to retreading. It has facilities for working on all kinds of tires: truck, passenger, off-the-road, aircraft, industrial, and miscellaneous kinds. (Inset) Roy J. Carver, chairman of the board.