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MARY ELLEN EDGAR: A COMPANY PRESIDENT WITH AN EYE ON ECOLOGY

President of Eucalan Inc, Ms Edgar has been ahead of the *Green Game* for 20 Years

Mary Ellen Edgar lights up a room when she enters. Chic, energetic and dynamic, it's obvious from the get-go that Ms Edgar is passionate about Eucalan Inc., the company she founded two decades ago in 1989 in the pretty, rural town of Paris, Ontario. Twenty years later, Paris remains the head office and heartbeat of this Canadian company which now sells its Eucalan products all over the world.

The derivative of the company name, '*Eucalan*', is the combination of two of the prominent ingredients from the original product formula -- eucalyptus and lanolin. The eucalyptus scented product is still available along with recently launched sweet-smelling lavender (which like eucalyptus has moth-inhibiting qualities) and grapefruit, a natural disinfectant. There is also a non-scented option for people who suffer from allergies.

In addition to its ecological value, the practical significance of Eucalan is that it can be used in both front and top-loading washing machines as well as in a basin for hand-washing. And with its unique 'no-rinse' benefit, Eucalan is the perfect travel companion, making it simple to wash delicates in away-from-home accommodation and hotels.

Mary Ellen Edgar's story is an inspiring one. Her venture into the world of alternative laundry products all started with a visit to a friend in Australia who gave her a Ministry of Agriculture home remedy for a no-rinse laundry product for woolens. Living in the country and accustomed to economizing with well water and a septic tank, Ms Edgar tested the formula herself and was amazed at the results; her best red and white Argyle wool sweater washed up beautifully and she saved time, water and energy because of the no-rinse benefit of the formula. Encouraged and enthusiastic, Ms Edgar proceeded to go to the next level and produce the new product on commercial basis.

Once the marketing process began, initial sales came from independent local yarn shops. Ms Edgar's big breakthrough happened after selling a case of Eucalan to a merchant who promoted hand-knitted sweaters at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE). More sales started to happen when Ms Edgar showcased Eucalan at the Creative Sewing and Needlecraft Festival in Toronto and her first US order (from a yarn store owner) became the launch-pad for opening up retail accounts in the United States. World-wide sales developed through magazine advertising and participation in international trade shows.

After handling all the business herself for a year, Ms Edgar was joined by members of her family and the company began its steady expansion through the employment of a sales representative and other staff members. Today, Eucalan is still very much a family affair with Mary Ellen Edgar as hands-on advisor and daughter-in-law, Jennifer Edgar, at the helm as Managing Director. With this new regime has come different directions for Eucalan including a strategic targeting of the Canadian and international fashion market through aggressive sampling and publicity campaigns.

Although the original retail customer base of yarn and lingerie shops remains strong, the potential growth lies in the company's ability to impress a broader consumer demographic that Eucalan offers a new spin on laundry and a practical alternative to dry cleaning fine woolens, lace, embellished apparel, stretch materials, silks, wool, cashmere, etc. The product is also perfect for baby's clothing, dancewear, lingerie and even upholstery.

"As president I am more of an advisor, ambassador, and scout," says Mary Ellen Edgar. "I'm always on the lookout for potential customers and remain driven to provide the very best service and the very best product at the very best price – and to succeed at business in a fair and honest way. I still derive a great deal of satisfaction in seeing the company grow and the market expand."

From humble beginnings in 1989 to a Canadian success story in 2009, Mary Ellen Edgar's vision for the company for the next five years is that the Eucalan brand name gain more recognition as the number one specialty laundry product in the world. And confident that the team running the company will achieve this goal, Ms Edgar plans to spend more time with her husband, Harold Edgar, a dedicated farmer who has no intentions at this point of retiring.

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