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More than 6,500 customers had paid Deltona \$77 million by 1976 when the Corps of Engineers halted the Marco Island project.

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### **Deltona Corporation . . .**

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was an idea as simple — and as powerful — as presliced bread. With one stroke it shifted Mackle Brothers Inc. out of the house sales business and into the land sales business.

With the backing of Canadian investors, the brothers began placing full-color ads in *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Tens of thousands of people responded to the \$10 offer, this time flooding the mail with cash, checks and even such items as cuff links. The Mackles' success had changed forever the history of Florida and the concepts of marketing real estate.

Today Frank Mackle Jr., 64, is the white-haired chairman of the Deltona Corporation, the company whose name has become synonymous with the housebuilding activities of the Mackle brothers. Frank Mackle sits alone now in the large office that once accommodated the three brothers. Elliott, the eldest, died a few years ago, and Robert, the middle brother, retired in 1977.

**A** tall, angular man with chiseled features, Mackle speaks softly and happily about the company. His blue eyes are expressive and he appears to have the wit, intelligence and self-confidence of a man who has invented something that really works.

When he rose to address an assembly of 600 Deltona salespeople this past January, the audience welcomed him with enthusiastic applause. The company patriarch walked stiffly across the stage, smiling broadly, waving a hand as though his entrance were accompanied by the blistering light of hundreds of flashbulbs. Here was the real thing, the audience thought, the company father. He was there at the beginning, when the entire enterprise was but a few ideas, a couple of tiny houses and a lot

of vacant land.

In 1979 the company had record revenues of \$121.8 million, and in 1980 revenues may reach \$200 million. Today Deltona Corporation employs 2,300 persons and has sales offices worldwide.

Like Henry Ford's black Model-T, the Mackles' basic house of 25 years ago has been joined by a variety of Deltona housing products, ranging from one-bedroom houses in North Florida for \$29,000 (including the lot) to high-rise condominiums on the gulf for about \$325,000. The average Deltona customer is still a retiree with a modest amount of money to invest. While the average Florida house today costs about \$72,000, Deltona's average house sells for \$55,000.

Today, the company is selling more property to foreigners than ever before through a network of 50 overseas offices. Last year 25% of all housing orders came from overseas buyers.

**A** West German salesman for Deltona says his customers (mostly dentists, doctors and pharmacists) are not only familiar with the state of Florida but are often familiar with the Deltona name. "What the Germans want is a piece of America," he says. "They want a place on the water where they can stretch back in a reclining chair with their feet up and watch the sun set in the gulf." The powerful German Mark can buy a lot of house priced in U.S. dollars.

In fact, the German salesman complains that Deltona has too little of this expensive waterfront property. "At Tierra Verde (a Deltona development west of St. Petersburg) they are going to provide 35 more gulf front lots," he moans. "That's only 35 for the entire world. Not enough!"

Deltona's executives are well aware of the international market's potential, acknowledging that just as national sales once helped the fledgling company escape the vagaries of the Florida economy, so an international market may now help it withstand a U.S. economic slowdown.

The impact of foreign sales is but one change expected in the housing industry. Deltona president Frank Mackle III predicts that in the 1980s the housing industry will move toward consolidation, with several large suppliers controlling more markets than ever before. "Deltona will emerge as a leader in that consolidation," he says, adding that the strength of the company will rest chiefly on the sophistication of its far-flung

sales organization. "Most major builders are simply a conglomeration of small local builders who are well organized. We're different because our marketing can be done through a single marketing network. With 100 sales offices around the world — and more to come — we can truly be an international company."

Deltona executives even hint that the company may soon expand its housing and property sales beyond the state of Florida, indicating that Arizona is fertile territory for the organization. (The company has developed ten communities, all in Florida.)

In this decade Deltona will continue the shift it began in the 1970s from land sales to marketing of houses and condominiums. In 1970, 78% of the company's revenues came from land sales and 22% from housing sales. Today land sales account for 20% of the revenues and housing, 80%.

Deltona is eagerly awaiting the 1982 opening of its "most exciting" new community, the 5,400-acre Tampa Palms project just north of Tampa. Tampa Palms will offer 13,497 single-family and multifamily dwellings in a community carefully designed to include parks, ponds, golf courses, hotels, churches, fire stations, commercial centers, bikeways and tennis courts. It will be Deltona's first project in an urban area and its first designed for working professionals and young families with children.

**M**aking it into the 1980s was not an easy task for Deltona. During the past decade the company battled legal disputes, recession, high interest rates and even a cash-flow crisis that nearly brought the firm to bankruptcy. It was a decade where one housing firm after another went under, and only the toughest managed to survive. But the survivors, now with fewer competitors, are stronger than ever.

Although Deltona Corporation was founded by the Mackle brothers in 1964, the company's character had been formed years earlier and has endured through three generations. It began in 1908 when Frank Mackle, a 25-year-old emigre from Great Britain, formed the Mackle Construction Company in Jacksonville. Soon the young engineer was constructing office buildings and hotels throughout the South and even participating in the construction of the nation's first all-steel submarine. One time he invested in a steel bridge which was to span the St. Johns River, only to