

# True success is having a good history to look back on

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Texas Dairy Review

In 1959, Joe Junfin, an immigrant entomologist from Russia, began a small venture in South Texas because he wanted to help farmers find an affordable and better way to control pest insects. As an expert in his field, he was familiar with a natural process where thousands of beneficial parasites are released into field crops. The parasites interrupt the life cycle of adult insects when they deposit their eggs inside of the pest insect egg.

Junfin's introduction of biological control to South Texas was the beginning of a method that is now widely practiced in agriculture communities throughout the United States. His initial work is also responsible for the establishment of his family owned and operated company, Kunafin, where millions of parasites are grown and sold each year on a nationwide basis.

*---Joe Junfin is considered a pioneer in his field.*

Today, at age 70, Junfin is considered a pioneer in the field of biological control. The process is recognized by experts for its effective method and its environmentally conscious concept. The biological method, integrated with chemical use as a last resort, stresses the use of the natural process when possible.

The company owns and operates two insectaries in the South Texas area. The insectaries, located at Quemado and Eagle Pass, were developed and started by Joe's son, Frank. Initially, the Junfins bought parasites from an insectary located in California. But, Frank said as the demand for their program increased, so did the demand for growing parasites in larger numbers. Frank studied how to grow parasites in massive quantities in a pilot program while earning his degree in entomology from Texas A&M University. He returned home to the family business to open the insectaries, expanding Kunafin's capabilities toward supplying customers.

Frank's wife, Adele, is also involved in the family business. She is considered an integral part and is responsible for seling the pro-

gram to many customers in North Texas. Although she is a registered nurse, her interests turned toward the biological program after she married into the Junfin family. She is now regarded by other family members as a "self-made entomologist"

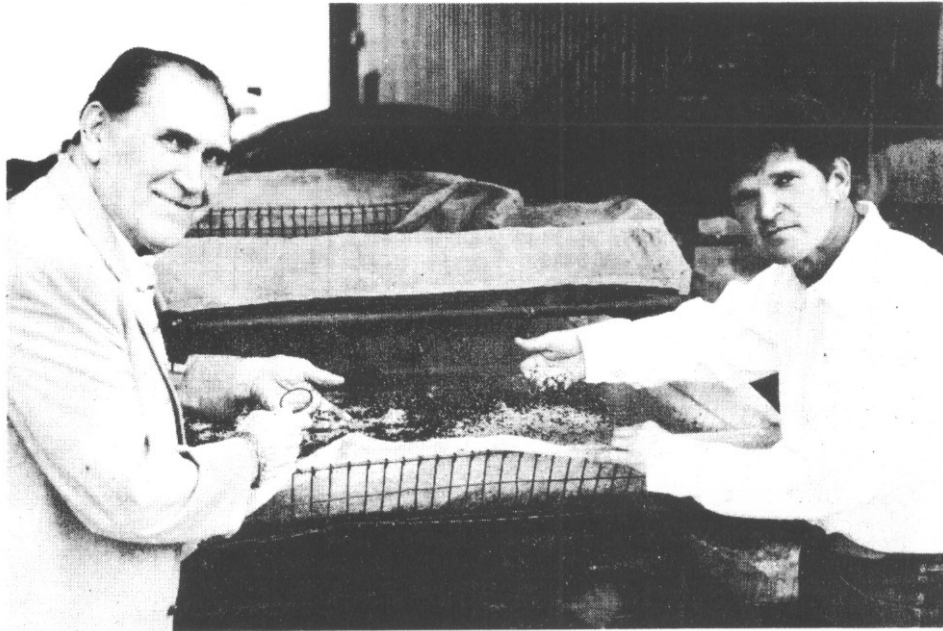
In the past 15 years, the biological program has become especially useful for fly control in cattle feedlots, dairies and other confined animal operations. The method of control requires that thousands of parasites be released simultaneously on a weekly basis throughout the fly season.

"We grow millions of adult flies at the insectories in thousands of different cages to feed the parasites," Frank said. "Then, we collect the eggs and put them on a feed media composed of a special ration so that they'll hatch. They soon become a larvae and when they become the pupae, we expose them to the wasp. The tiny wasps 'sting' the pupae, which kills the fly cycle."

Frank said several species of parasites are collected and studied from various fields for sampling purposes. "We make parasitization samples before releasing species to our customers. Such things as weather conditions, humid or dry areas, are taken into consideration. Areas such as West Texas, for instance, require a different species than in some other areas."

The parasites are released into the soil or manure where their only purpose as adults are to reproduce. "The parasites must be released in an ongoing cycle in order to maintain equilibrium in the process," Frank said. "A person may think that they don't need the parasites once the flies are gone, but they will come back if the process is stopped."

The process initially gained recognition when Frank's father first tried the method on a 25,000-acre commercially grown cotton crop in South Texas. The results proved immediately successful. To those who have seen Joe escalate from the hardships he experienced as a Russian immigrant to his success today, it may seem he's fulfilled the American Dream. However, Frank feels his father fulfilled the biggest part of that dream the moment he set foot on American soil many years ago.



**The Bug Business**---Joe Junfin, left, and his son Frank, owners of Kunafin, are holding in their hand samples of parasites they raise at their insectaries. The parasites are sold to Kunafin customers nationwide. Joe is considered a pioneer in biological control, a method that uses parasites for pest insect control.

Frank considers his father a person who has always been guided by his own integrity. This, in turn, has led to true success, Frank said. "My father always told me, 'if you don't have a history you can be proud of, then you don't have anything.'" According to Frank, Joe Junfin's history speaks for itself.

Of German descent, Joe was born and reared in the Yral Mountains of Russia. He trained to be an entomologist and was teaching school by the time he was 18 years old. But, his ultimate dream was to come to America. "He didn't believe in the communistic form of government," Frank said, adding that since Joe was a child, he had dreamed of moving to the United States.

*If you don't have a good history---you don't have anything.*

*---Joe Junfin*

But, Joe's opportunity was a longtime coming. When World War II erupted, he was sent to a German concentration camp for refusing to submit to Nazi beliefs.

"People were starving in those camps and my father hated it. But, he knew he had to be strong for himself and others." To survive, Joe used every vein of his intelligence. He repaired watches and

made liquor by distilling iodine. He exchanged the liquor for bread which kept him and his cousin alive. He also learned several languages from other prisoners that eventually helped him to come to the U.S.

Joe eventually escaped from the prison camp to the American lines. When the war ended, he went to work as a teletype operator for the Stars and Stripes. While there, he excelled in typing and won numerous awards for his outstanding abilities. Soon after, and with the help of a Texas senator, he came to the U.S. as a translator.

Although that job did not work out, Joe's ability to survive and to succeed prevailed. With his wife, Lilo, and their three children, Joe made South Texas their home. He went to work as a dishwasher at a restaurant, soon escalating to the position of manager. He ended up buying the business where he and Lilo served German food to their customers for several years.

During the restaurant years, Frank said his father's philosophy was, "Always give the people plenty to eat. If they go away hungry, they'll never come back." That same philosophy has been applied to Kunafin and is instrumental in the company's success. "We always give enough parasites," Frank said.

Joe's big break came when a customer, familiar with his entomology background, asked him to check his cotton fields for insects. Joe walked the fields, studying the farmer's problem, and discovered

*"Always give the people plenty to eat."*

*---Joe Junfin*

that the farmer was using unnecessary chemicals to control insects. Joe suggested to him the method he knew best---a natural process---which was safer and more affordable. "You can eat free in my restaurant for a week if you find one worm," Joe said to the farmer when telling him of the biological advantages.

Although the farmer lost the challenge to Joe, he won the battle against the insects by listening to Joe's advice. Today, Kunafin, is a successful nationwide business primarily built on Joe's integrity and the historical impact he's made in the field of biological control.

And, what does he think about all of it? Frank is sure his father would say, "True success means being able to look back and be proud of how you got to where you are."