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STIHL Contra: the legendary chainsaw turns 60

“To ease people’s work with and in nature” was the vision that the engineer Andreas Stihl had when he founded his company in 1926. The mission of making work easier while providing safety and flexibility continues to drive the chainsaw and power tools manufacturer STIHL to this day. One product that successfully carried the company founder’s vision to the world starting in 1959 was the STIHL Contra, which hit the market 30 years after the first STIHL two-man gasoline-powered chainsaw. The first gearless STIHL one-man chainsaw was a milestone for the world of forestry and for the company. In 2019, the “legendary Contra” – the pride of collectors and owners alike – celebrates its 60th anniversary.

200 percent more productivity: STIHL revolutionizes forestry in 1959

In 1959, Andreas Stihl achieved a technological breakthrough. The Contra, a gearless one-man chainsaw, made forestry work significantly easier. Equipped with a chipper-tooth chain and a diaphragm carburetor capable of working in any position, the chainsaw offered unlimited flexibility without having to manually change settings. Thanks to its compact and streamlined design, the Contra weighed in at just 12 kilograms while also being more efficient than its predecessors, with engine performance of 6 hp (4.4 kW) and a maximum speed of 7,000 rotations per minute. As a result, it was lighter and more efficient than any other product on the market, allowing forestry operations to increase their productivity by 200 percent. The Contra made it possible for STIHL to revolutionize the world of forestry in 1959 and set new standards in the field of chainsaws.

The beginning of a success story

After its official launch, it did not take long for the Contra to gain recognition as the one-man gasoline-powered chainsaw with the highest cutting performance. Its successful start on the German market would soon give way to a global sensation. The Contra’s success ushered in a new era at STIHL, helping the company achieve a double-digit increase in revenue. With all signs pointing to prosperity and growth, the rapid expansion associated with the gasoline-powered chainsaw’s success made it both possible and necessary to increase the company’s capacities. In the years that followed, STIHL would build new production facilities and an additional new plant in Waiblingen. In the following 10 years, the company’s workforce grew from roughly 640

employees in the year 1959 to over 1.500 in 1969. Production volume also saw marked growth. Since 1971, STIHL has been the world's top-selling chainsaw brand.

Basis for countless innovations in chainsaw technology

Based on the technical foundation laid by the Contra, STIHL has worked constantly in the years since to further improve the safety, ergonomics, environmental friendliness and performance of its chainsaws. From the anti-vibration system first installed in the Contra in 1965 and the QuickStop chain brake to catalytic converters, emission-reduction technologies and the launch of battery technology for chainsaws 10 years ago, STIHL has constantly been raising the bar. The latest milestone is the STIHL injection technology, which is featured in the STIHL MS 500i gasoline-powered chainsaw – the world's first mass-produced chainsaw with electronic fuel injection. The chapter "[progress](#)" in the STIHL annual report 2018 gives an overview about important technical developments of the chainsaw.

Company Portrait

The STIHL Group develops, manufactures and distributes power tools for professional forestry and agriculture as well as for garden and landscape maintenance, the construction sector and private garden owners. The product range is complemented by digital solutions and services. Products are distributed exclusively through authorized dealers, including 38 sales and marketing subsidiaries, about 120 importers and more than 50,000 servicing dealers in over 160 countries. STIHL produces in own plants in seven countries: Germany, USA, Brazil, Switzerland, Austria, China and in the Philippines. Since 1971 STIHL has been the world's top-selling chain saw brand. The company was founded in 1926 and is based in Waiblingen near Stuttgart. In 2018, STIHL achieved a worldwide sales volume of 3.78 billion euros with a workforce of 17,122.

This press release and pictures are available for downloading from the STIHL website at <http://www.stihl.com/daily-pressbusiness-press.aspx>

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