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Ball Celebrates 75th Anniversary of the Beer Can

BROOMFIELD, Colo., Jan. 22 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Beer cans have come a long way since January 24, 1935, when Krueger introduced its Special Beer and Cream Ale in steel cans. As the largest supplier of beer cans in the world, Ball Corporation (NYSE: BLL) has played a key role in the evolution of the beer can, one of the most widely used and sustainable beverage packages on the market today.

Innovation – Building a Better Beer Can

From the beginning, cans have offered a light weight, durable alternative to glass beer packaging, with a large surface area for branding. The first three-piece steel beer can weighed 35 ounces and required a church key for opening. Since that time, can makers have worked to continuously improve the cylindrical package; today aluminum cans that hold 12 ounces of beer weigh just .47 ounces and feature easy-open, stay-on tabs.

The first steel beer cans featured flat tops or cone tops. The cone top cans appealed to small brewers who could fill the cans using the bottling lines they already had instead of buying new can filling equipment. The first aluminum beer cans debuted in the U.S. in 1958. These cans were made of just two pieces - the base and the body were made from one piece, and the end, or lid, was seamed on later. That is essentially the same process Ball uses to make beer cans today.

In 1963 the first pull tab beer cans appeared on the market. Consumers loved them because they no longer needed to use an opener, but the used and discarded tabs raised questions about litter and safety. In 1975, the first fixed or stay tab beer can was introduced. The safe and convenient design caught on and has remained relatively unchanged since.

In recent years, Ball has brought many innovations to the beer can which have benefitted brewers and consumers alike. They include visual effects like colored tabs, magazine-quality printing and thermochromic ink that lets consumers know their beer is cold enough to drink; as well as smooth-pouring ends and Ball's Alumi-Tek® bottle, which provides all the advantages of the beer can with the extra benefit of reclosability. These continuing improvements have helped keep cans a beer package of choice.

Beer Cans – a Sustainable Solution

While brewers and consumers have benefitted from the evolution of the beer can, the environment has probably gained the most from can innovations - many of which have

focused on light weighting. Since Ball first began manufacturing aluminum beer cans in 1969, light weighting has been a fundamental part of its business for economic and environmental reasons. The size of the end diameter has been reduced five times, saving substantial amounts of aluminum each time. Ball's newest can end uses over 10 percent less aluminum per end than its predecessor. The amount of aluminum used for the can body has also continually been reduced. Today's 12-oz. aluminum can uses about 40 percent less aluminum than in 1970, from about 22 to 34 cans per pound today.

In addition to being the lightest beverage package, the can is also the most recycled package in the world. In 2008 the U.S. aluminum can recycling rate was 54 percent, the highest rate for any beverage container. In Europe the rate was about 70 percent in 2007. Aluminum cans are 100 percent recyclable infinitely, and using recycled aluminum requires 95 percent less energy and generates 95 percent fewer emissions than producing can sheet material from bauxite ore.

What Goes Around Comes Around – Craft Beer in Cans

Cans began as a niche package for beer in 1935 and quickly grew to become the predominant beer package in many parts of the world. Cans are light weight, unbreakable, efficient to ship and store, excellent brand billboards, and are impervious to light and oxygen, providing unparalleled flavor protection and long shelf life for the beer inside. These qualities made beer cans an attractive choice not only for major brewers, but also for craft brewers who have experienced a boom in America since the 1980s.

Craft beers were initially packaged only in glass bottles because craft brewers did not have the space or capital to install the large-scale canning equipment used by major brewers. That has changed, and recently craft beers have been appearing more often in cans. About 10 years ago Ball began working with Cask Brewing Systems to provide craft brewers with smaller scale canning and seaming equipment tailored to meet their smaller volume needs. There are now more than 65 craft brewers serving beer in cans in the U.S. and Canada, and the list continues to grow.

Beer Cans around the World

Today Ball is a leading manufacturer of beer cans all over the world, including North and South America, Europe and Asia. Ball began making beer cans inNorth America in 1969 when it purchased Jeffco Manufacturing Company in Golden, Colo. Jeffco had been producing beer can ends since 1962. Ball expanded internationally in 1974 when the company began licensing its beverage can making technology in other countries. Since then, the company's global beverage can business has continued to grow.

-- Ball licensees manufacture cans today in Asia, Australia, Central America, South America and the Middle East.
-- Ball entered the Chinese beverage can market in 1985 and built a joint-venture beverage can factory in Guangzhou. Its partner was M.C. Packaging (Hong Kong) Ltd. Today, through its own plants and joint ventures, Ball supplies almost half of the cans sold in China.
-- Ball formed a Brazilian joint venture in 1995 called Latapack-Ball Embalagens, Ldta., initially building plants in Sao Paulo and Jacarei. A third plant in Tres Rios opened in November, 2009, to serve the growing can market in Brazil.
-- In 2002, Ball acquired Schmalbach-Lubeca, now Ball Packaging Europe,

which produced the first beer can sold in Germany back in 1951.

Ball's can manufacturing operations around the world share best practices, borrowing and implementing the best ideas to help ensure that high quality, innovative, sustainable beer cans will remain a favorite beer package among brewers and consumers for many years to come.

Ball Corporation is a supplier of high-quality metal and plastic packaging for beverage, food and household products customers, and of aerospace and other technologies and services, primarily for the U.S. government. Ball Corporation and its subsidiaries employ more than 14,500 people worldwide and reported 2008 sales of approximately $7.6 billion. For the latest Ball news and for other company information, please visit www.ball.com.

Forward-Looking Statements

This release contains "forward-looking" statements concerning future events and financial performance. Words such as "expects," "anticipates," "estimates" and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking statements. Such statements are subject to risks and uncertainties which could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied. The company undertakes no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Key risks and uncertainties are summarized in filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including Exhibit 99.2 in our Form 10-K, which are available at our Web site and at http://www.sec.gov/. Factors that might affect our packaging segments include fluctuation in product demand and preferences; availability and cost of raw materials; competitive packaging availability, pricing and substitution; changes in climate and weather; crop yields; competitive activity; failure to achieve anticipated productivity improvements or production cost reductions; mandatory deposit or other restrictive packaging laws; changes in major customer or supplier contracts or loss of a major customer or supplier; and changes in foreign exchange rates or tax rates. Factors that might affect our aerospace segment include: funding, authorization, availability and returns of government and commercial contracts; and delays, extensions and technical uncertainties affecting segment contracts. Factors that might affect the company as a whole include those listed plus: accounting changes; changes in senior management; the current global recession and its effects on liquidity, credit risk, asset values and the economy; successful or unsuccessful acquisitions, joint ventures or divestitures; integration of recently acquired businesses; regulatory action or laws including tax, environmental, health and workplace safety, including in respect of climate change, or chemicals or substances used in raw materials or in the manufacturing process; governmental investigations; technological developments and innovations; goodwill impairment; antitrust, patent and other litigation; strikes; labor cost changes; rates of return projected and earned on assets of the company's defined benefit retirement plans; pension changes; reduced cash flow; interest rates affecting our debt; and changes to unaudited results due to statutory audits or other effects.

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