An Anatomy of an Experienced UBC Millwright

By David Park, Business Representative

Local 1554

The percentage of millwright skills adequately taught in class was minimal. Fortunately, the work experience portion of apprenticeship was very good to me. Jobs that afforded the most education for me included projects in paper mills, printing, rubber, auto industry, chemical and power generation. Again, this proved to be a great experience for me. One thing that became obvious to me was how much I could learn in trying to prepare lessons. The most satisfying effect in the first few years of teaching was an increase in the number of apprentice graduates that were accepting of foreman responsibilities.

When the Carpenters and Millwrights Apprenticeship Training Fund became more solvent, I accepted the position of apprenticeship coordinator. This was a whole new world of experiences, dealing with the Department of Labor, JATC, public school adult education programs, and other administrative local contractor’s jobs. The program was in need of as much re-building as we could afford. Unfortunately, this was again an effort that could not be financially sustained for long.

Going back to work with my tools led me to supervising machine installations in an expansion for Bridgestone Tire. In 1990, I was able to continue this job in a new plant in Warren County. Jobs were scarce today. However, in the 22 years of relationship with this customer, the opportunity to start a business resulted in becoming President of Millwright Services, Inc. The success of this company has greatly impacted my family’s standard of living and afforded me opportunities I never would have imagined in 1979. The employer role allowed me the flexibility to make changes that were needed on a daily basis. We are very thankful for these contractors and their cooperation and efforts.

In our line of work, there should be a work ethic that makes every employee an asset to their employer. No one in our membership has a right to be a poor employee. In reality, that is a liability to every brother and sister on that job, every member in the Local union, and the training fund. The one thing that never changes is that the millwright trade is one of incredibly dedicated brothers and sisters who choose to do the hard work involved in this craft that others won’t, or can’t, do.

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Business Representative Updates

Local 1554

By Tim Brown, Business Representative

Several of our local contractors cater to what we call “General Industry.” The General Industry of our Local 1554 has a very strong relationship with the Tri-State Vicinity, and parts of Northeast TN, consist of an assortment of manufacturers:

• Soft Drinks (Coca-Cola and Dr pepper)
• Snack Foods (Moebe Bakery, makers of Little Debbie Snacks, Chattanooga Bakery, makers of Moon Pies; Wrigley Co.; makers of Life Savers, Altoids and Wrigley Gum;
• and Turnbull Cone, which makes ice cream cones.
• Paint Plant Components (Alstom Power, now producing & maintaining steam and gas turbine components)
• Chemical Companies (W.R. Grace, Chattem, BASF, Dupont, Invista, Kodara and Aico Chemicals)
• Paper Products (Rock Tenn Paper Mill and folding carton division, Chattanooga Paperboard)
• Automobiles (Volkswagen and supporting suppliers)
• Asphalt and Road Paving Equipment (Asta Ind., Roadtec and Heatc.)
• Earth Moving Equipment (Komatsu)
• Steel (Hudson Steel Co., L.J. Tube Co.)
• Water and Chemical Absorbent Products (Industries)
• Cast Cookware (Lodge Cookware)
• Cooking Appliances (Magic Chef, Roper Ind., Whirlpool)
• Industrial Valves and Hydrants (Mueller Foundry Co.)
• Tires (BridgeStone/Firestone producing to distribution)

All of these businesses and many more are serviced by our local contractors on a daily basis. We are very thankful for these contractors because they have been major contributors to our Local’s’ man-hours for many years.

Most of our local contractors have long been affiliated with the local millwright union because some of the owners and their parents before them worked at the trade, and so the heritage and tradition lives on. Other owners came from a different union craft. But regardless of their origin, our contractors and owners know that they have more internal expertise to put on project when they partner with the union, our membership and our training centers, to build one of the best partnerships that this Brotherhood could ask for.