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41 Years of Service with Tim Heiss

Tim Heiss has achieved 41 years and 10 months of service at Americhem working his way up from running lines as a compounder to becoming a plant manager for 3 different plants throughout his career. Today, Tim is the Plant Manager of Americhem's Liberty, North Carolina plant. He was hired on September 12, 1979 at age 18 after working at a local steel mill. At the time, Americhem's Illinois plant was right across the street from Tim's apartment. When he saw they were hiring for a second shift compounder, he applied right away and was hired.

To celebrate Americhem's 80 year anniversary, Tim was kind enough to be interviewed as one of Americhem's longest tenured employees. The dialogue was as follows:

What was the field of plastics like when you first started?

Although the work was hot and dirty back then, it was truly a team atmosphere. We all looked out for one another. There were also a lot of opportunities since Americhem was growing so quickly; you could relocate or even move up through the company pretty quickly as long as you were willing to put the work in.

What were some of the biggest challenges back then?

We weren't in a lot of markets at the time so breaking into the Building & Construction market took a lot of time and learning curves because we were developing, testing, and producing all new products. It took time, but we really have perfected a wide variety of B&C products that go into applications like vinyl siding, decking, etc.

What changes have you seen in plastics?

We watched the transition of the auto industry shift from their heavy reliance on metal to now preferring plastic for a multitude of benefits. Cars used to rust all the time and now they don't because of plastics.



Picture 1: Tim Heiss (third from the right) with his colleagues at an Americhem event.

What have been the greatest developments in the field of plastics over the last 41 years?

Plastics entering the medical field, and specifically Americhem growing that business globally, has been remarkable to see. When I first started here, we only did business in the U.S. and now look how far we have come.

From your perspective, what would you say are Americhem's greatest accomplishments?

How many families we employ. Through economic ups and downs, global wars, and just the natural progression of the world, Americhem has always landed on its feet and continued providing employment over the years. When I first started, there were about 100 employees and today we employ over 1,000 people.

In your opinion, is there anything that Americhem should have done differently over the years?

We've been successful for 80 years; so, no. We are very well run and have always taken care of our people first.

What are some of your fondest Americhem memories?

The friendships that I have made; they will far surpass my retirement. Another fond memory that I've always kept with me is when Dick Juve Sr, the 1st generation of the family ownership, took me out to lunch to celebrate my promotion to plant manager. I was 30 years old at the time and I wore my finest suit. We took Dick's station wagon and drove to a local spot that all of the Cuyahoga Falls employees will know called Swensons Drive-In.

What are the key issues that you see Americhem addressing in the future?

The biggest issue, which is also a great issue to have, is that we are growing fast and have many exciting opportunities lined up, but we need more human capital to support it. It is really hard to find enough people to meet our growth plans, but I already see Americhem starting to address this and open a lot of positions. The problem is that we also have to fight the uphill battle of manufacturing jobs becoming less and less popular amongst future generations as a career choice.

Please share one memory of a funny situation that you encountered at Americhem.

When I was working at the plant in Illinois, there used to be a bank tube where we would send samples straight from the line into the lab. Occasionally, we would try to catch mice running around the plant and send them through the tube so that when someone from the lab opened the tube, a mouse would jump out at them. Needless to say, the bank tube didn't last long...



Picture 2: Tim and his wife, Joan, whom he actually met at Americhem.

Describe what Americhem means to you, on a personal level.

Nearly everything I have attained in my life, I can thank Americhem for. I met my wife here and we just celebrated our 20 year wedding anniversary. I've taken care of my family from this job. They gave me the opportunity to get an education through the tuition assistance program where I completed my Bachelor's Degree in Business. And every major life event, good or bad, the company has stood behind me and supported me. Americhem means everything to me.

Thank you Tim for your endless commitment to Americhem and your timeless friendship to so many of us. We wish you continued success in your long standing career and look forward to your ongoing positivity you spread across the company.