

February 5, 2019

50 Years of Service with Bill Fowler

Bill Fowler has achieved 50 years of service at Americhem working all types of jobs in the production department. He was hired in January of 1969 through a job interview that was set up by the Akron Urban League. Prior to accepting the job with Americhem, Bill had worked two other jobs: construction worker and a delivery man of restaurant supplies for 7 restaurants in the Akron area.

Bill was presented with an award from Mayor Don Walters that declared January 29 as Bill Fowler Day in Cuyahoga Falls. After receiving his award, Bill was kind enough to sit down and be interviewed in honor of his 50 years of dedication to Americhem. The dialogue is as follows:

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

The job was dirty... very dirty. Production back then was a much dirtier job than it is now and the industry has made leaps and bounds to clean it up.

What were some of your biggest challenges in 1969?

Getting to work on time! Being a young kid, working a labor intensive job, and waking up at 5:30am every morning was something to get used to.

But you've never been late or missed a day of work in 50 years; you must've found a way through this challenge.

When you take care of your job, your job takes care of you.

Have you seen many challenges over the 50 years?

As time went on, machines became more sophisticated and the job became less dirty. Most of the time, you could load the materials in, stand back, and watch it go, but with that came the added challenge of safety. We had to really pay attention to what we were doing. We looked out for each other and didn't just pay attention to our own lines, but each other's; like families do.



Picture 1: Bill with his award from Mayor Don Walters.

What have been the greatest developments in the field of plastics over the last 50 years?

The automotive industry without a doubt and what Americhem has been able to do in it. All of the major automotive OEMs get their materials from us; how do you compete with that? You can't.

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

The 401K program has changed people's lives and one of them being mine. The tuition assistance program is also an amazing accomplishment to be able to offer Americhem employees.

What are some of your fondest memories at Americhem?

P&L meetings where they would have a lady and her daughter come in with home cooked meals for us. They happened once a month and we all looked forward to them.

Anything else?

Yes, company picnics at Agora Park, which had a big Ferris Wheel. It was a family affair.

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

The close bonds you build with coworkers at one plant doesn't translate over into the other plants. Maybe if there was a program for us to build relationships with people at the other plants.

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

We can solve a lot of issues in industries outside of our main markets. Americhem will expand into other industries once we put the right resources towards that effort.

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

One of my funniest memories while working at Americhem was when I was working on a line and I noticed my buddy go outside for a minute. I went back to doing my work; meanwhile, the guy who went outside caught a raccoon out there. He came in and threw it on my platform where I was working! If you can picture it, I was running around in my area screaming and yelling as a raccoon was running around my feet. All of my buddies were standing back laughing so hard. I had a good laugh too once the raccoon was back outside where it belonged.



Picture 2: Bill is surrounded and thanked for his service by many. (Left to right: Mary Thomas, Jim Huston, Matt Hellstern, Rick Juve, Bill Fowler, Rod Manfull, Diane Shields.)

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

Americhem gave me the opportunity to achieve my goals and provide a lifestyle for myself. The relationships and interactions with all the different people I have met at Americhem has shaped me into the person I am today and made me a better man. My grandmother was a wise woman who raised 13 children and she always told me, "what was in a book is not always what it is like out in the world," and man was she right. The lessons I've learned and the wisdom I've gained from working here is priceless.

Thank you Bill 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 continued positivity you spread across the company.