



Fresh and Flourishing

Success and Growth—A Tribute to the Importance of a Caring Company Culture

When Bill Fields joined Rubber Teck in 1965, his career in the elastomer component industry coincided with America's first exciting ventures into space. Almost 43 years later, he is still producing mission-critical elastomeric parts for customers in the aerospace, aviation, and transportation industries. During those years, Rubber Teck became part of Rubbercraft®, a Sanders Industries company, and today Rubbercraft continues to meet its customers' needs with a commitment to innovation and quality.

CONTINUING A DISTINGUISHED TRADITION

"I began as a press operator on the production line," said Fields. "Within a year I had been promoted to assistant foreman and then foreman. We were making parts for almost everything that flies—aircraft, missiles, and space vehicles—during this exciting time."

The company had been founded in the early 1900s, and throughout its history it had played a key role in enabling America's major aviation and aerospace advances. Rubber Teck parts flew on the space shuttle, the lunar landing module, the moon rover dune buggy, and in a replica of Charles Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis.

When the original company founders passed away, the heirs stepped in to manage the company for a period of time before putting it up for sale in 1992. Rubber Teck employees became aware that the company was for sale in April and while they welcomed a change in ownership, speculation about their jobs and futures ran wild. Numerous bidders were vying for Rubber Teck, and one was Rubbercraft, a Sanders Industries company and chief competitor.

"Everyone was hoping that Sanders Industries would win the bidding," remembers Fields. "Rubbercraft was geographically located close to Rubber Teck, which meant that employees would be less likely to be relocated. However, we really did not know what would happen."

STARTING OVER AS ONE COMPANY

Employees' hopes were realized when Rubber Teck was officially acquired by Rubbercraft in June, 1992 and the transition to becoming one company began. Fields helped move the company's inventory to the Rubbercraft location soon after the purchase. As the company has grown, Fields notes approvingly that Sanders Industries continually invests in the company's tooling and personnel.

"Sanders Industries knows the business and really cares about its employees," he said. "We have excellent benefits. We are all encouraged to help each other and learn aspects of other employees' jobs so that we can pitch in to help when necessary. If you need a specific tool or capability to do your job, it is provided. That level of care is reflected in our products and output."

Fields has become the "go-to guy" for newer employees who are not familiar with some of the older parts that the company still supplies. For example, Rubbercraft still receives orders for parts used in old DC-3 aircraft that now are used by customers in South America. Rubber Teck made many of those aircrafts' original parts—now Bill is the only employee that is familiar with them. And when Rubbercraft or Sanders Industries executives have questions about aspects of Rubber Teck's business or product line, they go to Bill too.

BRING ON THE FUTURE

How has Fields seen the business change?

"The job is always changing and interesting," he said. "We're expanding our customer base and creating parts that I never would have dreamed existed five years ago. I think our growing number of customers and order sizes speaks highly of Sanders' management, and the high employee morale speaks highly of its fairness."

New challenges continue to fuel innovation with elastomeric components. With a strong company culture and commitment to quality, Fields and the rest of the Rubbercraft team look forward to a strong, vibrant company for years to come.