

# THE INNOVATOR

A quarterly publication of...



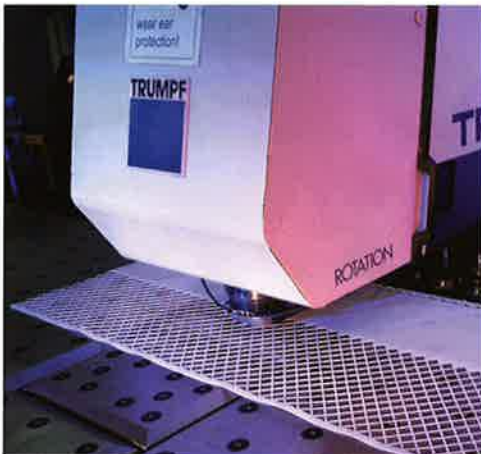
**BEGNEAUD  
MANUFACTURING  
INCORPORATED**

*Innovation Through Common Sense*

## Partners on a Handshake

Advanced Wirecloth, Inc. was founded in 1988; its relationship with Begneaud Manufacturing began soon after. Jeff Walker, vice president for Advanced Wirecloth (now owned by TuboScope), says that the first contract between the companies was done "with a handshake, and it has turned into a very profitable alliance for both of us through the years."

As the world's largest manufacturer of replacement shale shaker screens for the oil and gas industry, Advanced Wirecloth's need for consistently high quality and on-time delivery is undeniable. "Early on," says Walker, "we were using an East Coast supplier. But their quality was very inconsistent, and timely delivery was a constant problem. I explained our needs to Don (Begneaud) and he promised that his team could handle it. It's ten years later, and they haven't disappointed me yet."



Plastic, as well as metal, can be perforated on the CNC Punch Presses.

Every drilling rig in the world must use some version of a shale shaker screen to filter out impurities in drilling mud. The screens consist of a substrate of perforated metal or plastic that is bonded to a stainless steel wirecloth. There are countless designs of screens, and each screen lasts only five to eight days in the field. According to Walker, many of the company's current designs and patented products began with a single question. "I'd ask Don, 'Can you build this?' and the answer was always, 'Yes'." ▶ page 4

## Company Focus... Education

"I remember when the 'continuing education' light bulb went off in my head," says Don Begneaud. "I was wondering why problems and confusion seemed to increase as we increased our employee numbers through the years. Then I realized - we had great people, but our mistake was in assuming that everyone's experience and level of understanding were equal."



What Begneaud understood was that with a small group of employees working side by side, everyone was involved in every project. "We were training each other on procedures, techniques and problem-solving without even knowing it," he laughs now.

Begneaud Manufacturing is one of a growing number of employers recognizing that today's workers need specialized training to achieve expected outcomes. According to Begneaud, "In manufacturing, schooling must be a continuous growth process. I look to European programs, particularly German apprenticeship training, as a model." Trumpf Inc., the worldwide machine tool manufacturer with international headquarters in Germany, is a major equipment provider to BMI, and Begneaud is familiar with their training modules. "Through apprenticeship programs, their engineers learn first how to work with their hands, before receiving university degrees. I think this helps them to better understand the computerized machinery they will later use."

To begin his own training program, Begneaud has brought back to BMI Russell Greene, who was a part of the BMI team for more than six years before leaving to start up his own metal casting operation, in addition to other ventures. "We want to help mold positive attitudes through perseverance and education," says Begneaud, "and Russell has the knowledge and skills to help our employees reach their full potential."

Greene, who also has experience in marine surveying, design work and oilfield drilling, is intrigued by the challenge of beginning such a program, especially since there are no established guidelines to follow. "The first step is to determine the current level of expertise, which will give us an ▶ page 3

## Partners to Success

"Our success as a company is directly related to that of our partners."

Don Begneaud  
Owner/President  
Begneaud



Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Innovator*! We hope to have this quarterly publication further our belief that a successful business communicates with each of its publics - staff, customers, vendors, the general public, and community and legislative decision makers.

*The Innovator* will, of course, highlight various areas of expertise within Begneaud Manufacturing Inc. But we will also focus on our partners: clients, vendors and others. We know that this is a bit different from most company newsletters, but then again, we believe BMI to be a different type of company. And we realize, and emphasize, that our success as a company is directly related to that of our partners.

In our first 20 years, we have seen our mainstay, the oil and gas industry, explode, implode, and everything in between. The manufacturing industry as a whole has seen many challenges during the last two decades. But we have always believed that "innovation through common sense" is the guiding force to our success. We have talented people proud to be part of a team that values creativity. Our clients, large and small, have faith that we can deliver goods that are better than specified, and deliver them on time and on budget. And we have vendors that believe in our dream, and help us reach for the next star.

This first issue highlights Advanced Wirecloth, one of the first companies to utilize Begneaud Manufacturing for high volume production work. Our thanks to them for their support, and to Jeff Walker for his help with the article. This issue also concentrates on something that is very important to me, education and training. While many of us bemoan the state of education, it is important for business owners to take responsibility, not only for the direction of our education tax dollars, but to acknowledge that the best education is merely a beginning. The workplace today is too specialized to expect an entry-level employee to understand the intricacies of any business. We must think about the skills our employees need to succeed, and ways in which we can teach those skills. To do less is a passive acceptance of complacency.

I hope that you enjoy *The Innovator*, and please call or write if you have any suggestions or comments for future issues. ■

## We Hear You...

October 20, 1999

Dear Don,

Thanks for the beautiful motorcycle cut out that you presented to me recently. I have displayed it in my office, next to the smaller one I received from you last year.

It was good getting to visit with you and please don't hesitate to give me a call if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,  
M.J. "Mike" Foster, Jr.  
(Governor, State of Louisiana)

June 15, 1999

Dear Don and Andy,

On behalf of Lafayette Tech Prep, we would like to sincerely thank you for allowing our teachers to visit Begneaud Manufacturing this summer. The response of the teachers was extremely positive!

We appreciate the time that you spent with this particular group of educators. We realize that you are busy and that it is not always easy to fit such a "tour" into your daily schedule. You have helped these teachers by giving them true business applications which they can now present in the classroom. ...

Once again, thank you so very much for your help and hospitality!

Sincerely,

Deanie Spikes  
Tech Prep Facilitator  
Lafayette Tech Prep

April 12, 1999

Dear Don,

I would like to take a moment to offer you my congratulations on your 20th anniversary. You were quite busy with your guests at the celebration and I did not have the opportunity to speak with you at length. I can truly appreciate what you have accomplished over the last 20 years. You should be quite proud...

I also thank you for the opportunity to do business with you. When we started to do business with you we were very small and had a limited credit history, but you opened up an account for us with no questions asked. That meant a lot to us. As you know, you have a few competitors that want to furnish us with coil boxes and they say that they can do it for a lower price. Well, sometimes price is not the only factor to consider. I feel that no one can offer us the quality and the service that you can, nor can they offer us the feel of a personal relationship that you can.

The only advice that I would like to offer you is please continue to follow your dream.

Warmest regards,  
Thomas P. Taylor  
(Taylor Industrial Ignition & Controls, Inc.)

## Company Focus... continued...

employee baseline. Then the curriculum will be developed." Greene envisions converting part of the BMI facility to a classroom and lab where employees will spend part of their workday before moving to the manufacturing side of the plant for hands-on work. "The curriculum will have a base in theoretical, or book-based, education. But it will lean heavier to the hands-on model of training." And the training will not only be for new hires, as current employees will undergo "incumbent training" to help insure that everyone remains at the highest possible level of expertise.

Greene's ultimate goal is to have employees with enough confidence in their knowledge and training to take initiatives on the shop floor. "Everyone will be better served by employees who are responsible, who can think on their own, and examine a project from every direction or angle. And we think a heightened level of business values and ethics will be a natural outcome of the process."

Igniting a passion for metal work is one goal that BMI vice president Rene DeMoura has for the developing program. "Our society has moved into almost a worshipping of high technology," he says, "while somehow diminishing the importance of the practical skills that helped to develop that technology over the years."



"Everyone will be better served by employees...who can think on their own, and examine a project from every direction or angle." Russell Greene, **Begneaud**

DeMoura feels this path may be a natural outgrowth that began at the turn of the century, when immigrating European craftsmen swelled the numbers of American craftsmen. These craftsmen, while very highly skilled, tended to focus on one part of their industry or trade. Over time, if that part became obsolete, the craftsmen's skills also became obsolete. Wanting better opportunities for their children, each succeeding generation encouraged a more formal education, which favored the theoretical over hands-on skills.

## The Begneaud Touch!



Don Begneaud, Danny Dechamps and Rene DeMoura at the Annual Begneaud Manufacturing crawfish boil.



Pete and Liz Latino and Bruce and Donna Comeaux at the crawfish boil.



All enjoyed lots of steamy crawfish and passed a good time!

Begneaud Manufacturing assists the Association of General Contractors with their fundraising efforts for the Acadiana Children's Shelter.



"Most students studying manufacturing today do not want to be skilled craftsmen working the 'line' - they aspire to be engineers and managers. But what they don't realize is that hands-on knowledge, the experiences of the craftsman, is what technology is based upon. We need to understand the characteristics of the material we work with, what its idiosyncrasies are, in order to fully utilize the technology available to us today and that which will be developed in the future."

Many in manufacturing feel that hands-on experience is the cornerstone of technological progress, but that technology may be surpassing practical knowledge. The fear is that if practical knowledge is lost, so is the potential for future growth.

But Begneaud feels the tide can turn. "We are seeing a great interest from high schools and technical training facilities," he says. "More and more students are seeking the fulfillment that comes from seeing a project through from start to finish, the pride that comes from getting their hands dirty and working together. They want to be able to point to something and say, 'I was part of the team that built that.'" Pride in development and production, always hallmarks of the American worker, is what the BMI team will build upon.

"We are working with, but not waiting for, various state departments which have an interest in this type of program, and may be able to help us," continues Begneaud. "My ultimate goal is to develop a true, state-approved apprenticeship program that will produce a skilled workforce not only for Begneaud Manufacturing, but will enable workers to grow in any industry." ■



Russell Greene, **Begneaud**

*Partners on a Handshake continued...*

Don Begneaud, president/owner of BMI, and Walker are equally quick to give credit to the other for their successful partnership. "Advanced Wirecloth will always be one of our most important clients," says Begneaud. "They were one of the first companies to come to us with a need for high-volume production work on a consistent basis. Being able to handle Advanced Wirecloth's needs confirmed to other clients that Begneaud Manufacturing was the real deal."

For his part, Walker feels that the exchange of ideas between the staffs of both companies has played a major part in Advanced Wirecloth's success. "Don and his staff are constantly upgrading equipment, modifying procedures and training personnel. This insures the quality product and timely delivery that we depend upon."

Walker goes on to say that success can be linked to partnering with good people. "We began as a 5,000 square foot screen plant in Lafayette, and did maybe \$100,000 in business that first year. Now, we have three plants around the world with unsurpassed manufacturing facilities, and are a multi-million dollar business. Begneaud's commitment to quality has helped us to stay a step ahead."

Definitely not bad for a handshake deal. ■



*Innovation Through Common Sense*

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## Calendar of Events

January 19-20	LOBO'S (Beaumont)
January 25	Donation of Time Capsule - Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting
January 27	Houstex 2000 Show (Houston)
February 9	Acadiana Society of Human Resource Management (ASHRM) Labor Law Seminar
February 14-16	Metal Form Show (Nashville)
March 7	Happy Mardi Gras!! (office closed)
March 21	American Welding Society (AWS) Meeting at Begneaud Manufacturing

Don't forget - Begneaud Manufacturing hosts lunch and tours most Fridays. Call Don, Andy or Kathie for more information.

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