



News

PPG Aerospace marks 40th anniversary of Huntsville aircraft products plant People key ingredient to success

HUNTSVILLE, Ala., Oct. 16, 2009 – For Bill Norman and Jackie Jones, this year’s 40th anniversary of PPG Industries’ (NYSE:PPG) Huntsville plant holds special meaning. It’s their 40th PPG anniversary, too.

Norman, 65, of Huntsville’s Hurricane community, and Jones, 64, of Toney, Ala., are the last two of about 100 employees who helped launch operations in 1969 at the PPG aircraft windshield and window plant, now part of the aerospace transparencies group.

“The plant opened Feb. 17, 1969,” Norman said. He started his job as “the original towmotor operator” the next week on Feb. 24, 1969. After being discharged from the U.S. Air Force, he learned PPG was hiring and applied. He had been a mechanic in the service who worked on baggage loaders for aircraft and towmotors, or forklifts.

After a brief stint in component fabrication, Norman became a tool maker, a job he’s held since 1976. “I’ve always liked to work with my hands,” he said.

Jones applied for a job at the new PPG factory because it offered better benefits and pay than his work as an electrical contractor. He clocked in at the Huntsville plant for the first time on March 10, 1969. “The parking lot wasn’t even paved,” he remembered.

Production began April 9, 1969, and the first shipment was made May 27, 1969 – windshields for the Convair 340 commercial airliner for which PPG still maintains tooling even though it has been years since it produced any of the windshields.

Jones said his first duties were mostly utility work because construction was still in progress. He moved into various windshield production assignments and settled in as operator of machinery to produce *Aircon* heating mat. “It looked like something I wanted to do instead of just building windshields,” he said.

The job entails embedding thin, barely visible wiring into interlayer material that is laminated between glass or plastic plies and supplies heating for the finished windshield. It’s intricate work, which Jones has done for 35 years.

For both men, the best part of working at the PPG factory has been their fellow employees, who Jones called “great people.”

“When this plant first opened, we had a team ...who did an excellent job,” Norman said. “The people were smart, and there was no buddy system. They were all professional. If you didn’t do your job, you didn’t stay very long. They were all real good people.”

Norman plans to retire early next year after a 41-year PPG career. “I think it’s about time.”

According to Tom Clark and Brian Pollock, it’s people like Bill Norman and Jackie Jones that help make the Huntsville plant a success. Clark, himself a 40-year PPG veteran, is general manager for PPG Aerospace’s global transparencies group. Pollock is Huntsville plant manager and about to begin his third decade with PPG.

Pollock described the plant as a “high-tech, highly skilled job shop. There are no production lines with conveyors stamping out thousands of identical parts. Our employees produce more than a thousand different parts per month from Boeing 747 windscreens to Apache helicopter windshields. These are very different parts, and our people do not perform repetitive tasks every day.”

He described the work force as “one of the best with which I’ve had the pleasure to be involved,” saying, “The Huntsville team has a positive can-do attitude. Our people are intelligent and caring: They care about the product, the business and the customer. As a result they challenge. They are what makes our business successful. If it wasn’t for the Huntsville team, we wouldn’t be celebrating our 40th year.”

According to Clark, “The reason company leaders built the plant in Alabama was because of the positive labor climate and work force. The plant is based on good people and solid technology, and that’s given us a great customer position in the marketplace.”

Several differentiating technologies, according to Clark, fueled PPG Huntsville’s growth to become the largest producer of aircraft transparencies. One such technology is *Herculite II* chemically strengthened glass. Originally developed for F-111 fighter jet transparencies, *Herculite II* glass is up to five times stronger than basic flat glass.

“*Herculite II* glass gave us an edge in the marketplace for many years,” Clark said. “This proprietary PPG glass enabled us to win many new aircraft programs beginning in the 1980s and continuing today because we could offer stronger and lighter-weight designs than anybody else in the industry.”

Another key technology is the proprietary PPG 112 urethane interlayer developed at PPG’s chemicals facility in Barberton, Ohio. It is a superior material for bonding glass and plastic in aircraft windshields and windows. PPG has a patented design combining PPG 112 urethane and vinyl, producing technology that has contributed to significant advances and windshield reliability.

“We continue to develop and commercialize new technology for this global business,” Clark said. “We recently won a contract to supply electrochromic passenger window systems for the new Boeing 787. We also are developing solar-reflective coatings for aircraft transparencies in response to the industry’s drive for environmental improvements as they would reduce the amount of cabin cooling equipment needed.”

After holding engineering and operations assignments at a plant near PPG’s Pittsburgh headquarters, Clark moved to Huntsville in 1978 to join the aircraft products business as manager of new business development. “We identified ways to use technology developed for aircraft transparencies in other areas such as railroad impact-resistant glazing and automotive ballistics glazing,” he said. “Back then we thought of ourselves more as an aircraft windshield producer. Today we position ourselves as a technology leader in aerospace transparent materials and a systems integrator.”

He moved to Paris in 1982 as European sales manager for the business and returned to Huntsville in 1990 as director of marketing and design, later assuming sales and marketing responsibilities as well.

“In the early 1990s, we were just starting in the aftermarket business,” he said, referring to when PPG began marketing and selling replacement windshields and windows directly to airlines in addition to serving airframe manufacturers with original-equipment parts. “That business transformation yielded tremendous results.”

Clark said the transformation was spurred by PPG targeting four new key aircraft programs: the de Havilland Dash 8, Saab 340, Embraer 120 and ATR 42/72.

“They were all about 50-passenger turboprops intended to serve the then-new hub-and-spoke system in the airline world,” he said. “On every one of those programs, we negotiated and got the rights to sell direct to the airlines. That put us in a whole different venue of selling.

“The transformation from marketing only to original-equipment manufacturers to selling to the aftermarket as well was based on our operation’s technology and skills to build new lightweight transparencies. The reason we won the programs we did was because we could offer the lightest-weight window with the best performance and service life. Early in the 1990s, we won the Bombardier CRJ regional jet and the Airbus narrow- and wide-body programs that enabled us to penetrate the aftermarket further. In the late 1990s, we started marketing rebuilt transparencies for Boeing airplanes to the airlines.”

In addition to commercial aircraft, PPG makes transparencies for several military programs, from the B-2 bomber to the C-130 airlifter. “We leveraged our commercial transparencies technology and successfully entered the upscale military helicopter segment on programs such as the Sikorsky Black Hawk and Boeing Apache,” Clark said, both of which were on display at the Huntsville plant during the 40th-anniversary open house.

“The company continues to be pleased with the talented people of the Tennessee Valley,” Pollock said. “To this day, their skills and our technology help to make PPG the global leader for aerospace transparencies.”

PPG began construction of the Huntsville aircraft products plant in May 1968 on a 64-acre site. Production began on April 9, 1969, with about 100 employees. The first shipment from the PPG plant on May 27, 1969, was of windshields for the Convair 340 commercial airliner, for which PPG still maintains tooling. PPG also operates a windshield framing facility in Huntsville.

PPG Aerospace is the aerospace products and services business of PPG Industries. PPG Aerospace – Transparencies is the world’s largest supplier of aircraft windshields, windows and canopies. PPG Aerospace – PRC-DeSoto is the leading global producer and distributor of aerospace coatings, sealants, and packaging and application systems.

About PPG

Pittsburgh-based PPG is a global supplier of paints, coatings, optical products, specialty materials, chemicals, glass and fiber glass. The company has more than 140 manufacturing facilities and equity affiliates and operates in more than 60 countries. Sales in 2008 were \$15.8 billion. PPG shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange (symbol: PPG). For more information, visit www.ppg.com.

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PPG Huntsville Plant by the Numbers

64 – Acres on which the plant was built

05/27/1969 – Date of first shipment from the plant

358,000 – Size of the facility in square feet

710 – People employed at the plant today