

Cold Metal Products Company

OK

I started working in the steel mills at Cold Metal Products Company in Youngstown, Ohio on January 5, 1950. Cold Metal Products (CMP) cold rolled strip steel, thirty-six inches and less in width, from large rolls of steel called hot rolled which was purchased from steel mills such as Youngstown Sheet and Tube, Republic Steel, Jones & Laughlin Steel, and Sharon Steel. Cold rolled steel has smooth surfaces rolled to specific thicknesses which can be used to make automobile doors, hoods, and rooftops, sides for refrigerators, stoves, washing machines, and like products.

The first process before cold rolling the steel was to run the hot rolled steel coils through 'pickle' (acid) baths to clean off the dirt and iron scale. I was assigned to the pickling department at the lowest level. John Steele was the foreman. I worked the swing shift from 7am to 3pm, 3pm to 11pm, or 11pm to 7am. Each week we would change to the next shift and readjust our sleeping and eating routine. Some weeks we were off on Tuesday and Wednesday, then Wednesday and Thursday, etc. We liked the weekend when we finished at 7am on Friday and didn't start again until 7am on Wednesday. That gave us a long weekend. I liked and eventually succeeded in working the night shift most of the time. I was then able to do some odd jobs like landscaping, hauling, or building outdoor fireplaces during the daytime after a short sleep in the morning.

I often worked overtime - double shifts - when some workers were sick or didn't show up for work. One time I worked the night shift, then the day shift when someone didn't show for work. When someone failed to show for the afternoon shift, and noone would stay, I stayed on until 11pm. A full twenty-four hours. I was going to stay for my regular night shift, but the night plant superintendent sent me home for safety reasons. I was tired. I was always willing to fill in the extra shift.

Cleaning the two long acid tanks was a horrible job, but necessary every several days. We had to empty the tanks, get into the tanks, scrub and rinse the tanks before refilling them with a new acid solution. Many of the men didn't want to do the job, so Al Barwick and I mostly did the cleaning job. The acid wore holes in our clothing. There was no protective clothing to wear in those days. We did use a rubber apron for some protection and had shower stalls nearby in case we got an acid burn.

The company was located beside the Mahoning River. Rats came into the building from the sewer lines. The company spent thousands of dollars trying to get rid of the rats and had no success. One stormy night a female cat wandered into the mill and was given milk and food by the workers in the pickling department. She stayed around, but must have had a boyfriend nearby as she had thirty-five kittens within the next few years. We called her 'Mrs. Cat'. She soon was catching the rats - even dragging them to our work areas to show us that she caught them. Within a few months we never again saw a live rat. That cat was the best rat exterminator and at no cost to the company. Mrs. Cat's picture even made the company's monthly paper.

Beegly

When I started working at CMP I joined the Steelworkers Union (AFL-CIO) which wasn't too well received by my father. One evening, in late 1952, the union shut down the plant at 7pm and ordered all members to meet at the union hall. There they told us that an incentive plan would bring us a lot more money. A vote was taken and only six or eight of the two hundred or so members were in favor of the plan. After more talk about the money we could make with the incentive plan, another vote was taken with only about fifteen 'for' votes. One person whospoke against the proposal was forcibly carried out of the meeting. After more rabble rousing and several more votes that were far from passing the proposal, it was announced that the proposal was passed. No further discussion was allowed. A few days later the union representatives (I had been selected probably because I had been to college) met with Charles Beegly, the company vice-president, at a downtown hotel. Mr. Beegly said that the company was agreeable to an incentive program if it was fair to both union and management. He said that the company had an incentive program to propose. The union president, who sat across the table from me, said, "We don't want to hear it". I asked why we didn't want to hear it, and he said, "Because management proposes it". That seemed unfair (actually, stupid) to me and I asked him what the union had to propose. When he answered "Nothing", I said, "Then let's listen to what the gentleman has to offer". It was very fair and we approved the company's incentive program.

⊕ One day I got a phone call to quote on a government contract for many tons of a specialty steel. I told them to mail the full paper contract to me that we would have to see the contract before so as to go over all of the specifications before quoting. They mailed the contract to me. I ~~received the~~ In the absence of Earl Whittemore, I went over the contract, worked up our costs, production time, and figured a sales price which gave us a fair profit. ^{the group VA} I mailed the showed it to Charles Beegly who reviewed it, told me to sign it, and mail it. A week later it was returned with a letter from the government agency saying that the contract was not acceptable since it was not signed by an officer of the company. I showed the letter to Mr. Beegly and to Mr. Hochwood. Mr. Hochwood returned a letter to the government agency saying that I was a trusted employee of the company and that my signature had the same authority as that of any officer of the company. We got the contract.

→ For the next couple of months management had a dozen or so time-study personnel in the mill watching all operations and establishing production wok rates. The workers reacted with slow downs or anything that might establish a lower production rate. When the incentive program was finalized and in operation, many workers refused to cooperate. One night the line operator in the pickling department came to work drunk. Another guy and I put him in a corner where he slept all night. I then talked with the work crew and showed them what they could easily earn on the incentive program if we ran the line at a certain faster speed. I told them that I would run the line if they would cooperate. They did and, by seven in the morning, we had earned the equivalent of twelve hours on the old system. The day shift followed our example, as did the afternoon shift. Soon the incentive program was off and running throughout the whole mill.

○ *Para - Salary scale*
 One day in early 1953, before Margaret McBride and I were married, I was told to see the personnel officer at three that afternoon. He asked what my plans were, and I told him that I was planning to quit as I hadn't gone to college to work in a steel mill. He offered me a job in the production office working for the manager, Fred Prudner. I took the job - - white collar, 8am to 5pm with Saturday and Sundays off. Much better. I then could play golf every evening after work. My experience in the mill and my acquaintance with the workers were a great help in my new work. I could talk with the workers and understand any problem in the production process in the mill.

After nine months in the production department I was asked to meet with Earle Whitmore, the manager of the Specialty Spring Steel Division of CMP. He said that, because of his many business trips, he needed an assistant to run the division and that I had been selected. He told me that there would be long hours handling sales and customer calls, buying steel, scheduling the production of equipment and workers, and scheduling the maintenance of equipment with a minimum shut-down of the production lines. I accepted the job.

As said
 Earle Whitmore was a good boss. He taught me all that I needed to know to run the division, and then let me run it. He always gave me copies of business letters that he wrote. He was a master of long letters, with wonderful sounding phrases, that said very little, but pleased or satisfied our customers. Earle lived in the Poland Manor, as did many of the executives, and drove the first Ford Thunderbird when they came on the market.

because since they had
 Four or five men in the production department were angry because I had gotten the job even though I had less seniority. I went to see Mr. Bruce Lockwood, the president of the company. I knew him as he also lived in Poland and his oldest son and I were on some of the same school teams. We, as high school teens, used to hold 'sock hop' dances at his house. He told me that I was selected over the others because they felt that I would work harder than the other men.

And work I did. I worked long, ten or twelve hour days and many times four or more hours on Saturdays. Margaret and I had been married only a few months, and I'm sure she didn't appreciate all the extra hours that I worked. I did enjoy the work and learning a new phase of the steel industry. We were running a lot of high-tempered steel used to make saw blades, springs, and auto parts. *my annual salary in 1954 was \$47,500*

generate
 → One day in 1954 Earle Whitmore told me to take a company car, drive to Pittsburgh, and see if I could make some sales. I didn't know Pittsburgh although Margaret was from there. She told me some of the area to visit. About 11:30 in the morning I stopped at the Fort Pitt Manufacturing Company, and visited with the purchasing manager. He was an old man, probably mid-fifties, with a tweed jacket, and smoking a pipe. He asked me to have lunch with him at the Steeler's Club. After lunch he gave me a tour of his company which made mattresses and box springs. Then he showed me some Ford blueprints and asked if we could make the steel to meet the specifications. It was for the clutch plate disk for all 1955 Fords, Lincolns, and Mercurys. I told him that we could and that I would furnish him with a sample coil of steel made to those specs. We did and it was the only steel approved by the Ford Company for that part. So, CMP had all of Ford's contract for the steel for that part. Great - - - except that it really caused scheduling problems. I had all of our equipment running twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It became impossible to meet delivery dates. Charles Beegly called me into his office and I told him that the division was operating efficiently and at full production. I said that we needed more equipment, and was told that that was impossible unless we built a larger building. So, I worked longer hours, juggled production schedules to keep customer's production lines running, and wrote 'Earle Whitmore' letters. It was 'boom' times.

said that he was getting complaints from customers about our P. to deliver

CMP

✓ minimum wage in 1950-1953 \$.75

I don't recall what the pay scale was when I started working at CMP. In those days the minimum wage was 75 cents an hour. The steel mills, ^{because of the unions,} were paying above the minimum wage. I do know that in 1954 I earned \$4,815.00, in 1955 - \$6,070.00, in 1956 - \$6,418.00, and in 1959, my last full year, - \$8,802.00

Jan 1950 - started working for \$1.32 per hour.

In 1950 the minimum wage was \$.75 an hour. However, because of the unions, the steel mills paid above the minimum wage. I started working for \$1.32 per hour at a job that was rated slightly above the janitors. ~~In 1954 I earned \$4,815.00, in 1955 it was \$6,070.00, in 1956 I earned \$4,875.00 in 1954, \$6,070.00 in 1955, \$6,418.00 in 1956, and \$8,802.00 in 1959, my last full year.~~

Sometime later I was called to Ted Bachman's office. Ted was the vice-president of sales. He was a fine gentleman and liked classical music. His father had founded the Sharon Steel Company. He said that he wanted me in the sales department. I told him that I wouldn't work for him because I heard him screaming at his salesmen, and that, since World War II, I didn't let anyone scream at me. I refused the job. Ted asked me again a few weeks later, and promised to not scream or yell at me. I told him that if he did I would walk out. Ted and I got along very well.

I enjoyed playing in the company golf league. There were some very good golfers. One especially was an old Scotsman - Scotty MacLendon. He was always enthusiastic and always encouraging us - even the duffers. We played at Mill Creek Park which was cut out of the forest. The fairways were narrow. It was challenging.

In early 1956 Ted Bachman gave me the choice of moving to Cleveland or Chicago. I chose Chicago because I thought there would be greater opportunities in that city. I should have chosen Cleveland because the district manager's position became open within two years. I started working in Chicago on May 1, 1956. Ted flew Margaret to Chicago in the company plane on Fridays so that we could look for a house.

Marshall Shields was the district manager in Chicago. My territory was the northern part of Chicago, northern Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. About this time the Jones & Laughlin Steel Company bought Cold Metal Products Company. CMP became the Stainless and Strip Division of J & L Steel, and the Beegly family of Youngstown became the major stockholder. Charles Beegly became President and CEO of the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation.

I enjoyed the travel and calling on the many accounts. One of the accounts that I called on was American Motors in Kenosha, Wisconsin. They made the Nash and Nash Rambler. One day I was telling the purchasing agent about the superior quality of our steel when he interrupted me with, "Young man, I'm not interested in quality. We build these cars with the expectation that they will be replaced in three years". One time, in Appleton, Wisconsin, the purchasing manager told me that another salesman by the name of Dave Nicolls called on him. He said, "That guy is the best salesman that's ever called on us". I thought, "Thanks a lot" but said, "He's my brother". Dave covered much the same area for the General Fireproofing Company of Youngstown, Ohio. He was good. He took that territory from the bottom of the list to third place in about three years.

A customer in Oshkosh, Wisconsin told me about a company in a small town - Marshfield. It wasn't near any of the places that I visited. One day in early 1958 I saw a sign that pointed to Marshfield. I turned around and drove into Marshfield. I found the company and got in to see the purchasing manager at 11:40am. He said that his company, which made large stainless steel tanks for hauling milk and juices, had been buying stainless steel from United States Steel Corporation for fifty years and didn't figure to change. At noon I suggested that he join me for lunch since I didn't know the town. He called his wife to tell her that he wouldn't be home for lunch - he 'had a live one'. After lunch Jim gave me a tour of their plant. The foreman stopped him to say that they were having some trouble with the steel. In his office he showed me the steel specifications and asked if we could make the steel. I told him that it was at the top of our range, but that we could make it. He gave me three orders of twenty tons each for three sizes. Back in Chicago Marsh Shields told me to send them back because they were too difficult to make. I didn't. The next morning I drove to the division headquarters in Detroit and asked to see the vice-president of sales and the general manager of sales. Both refused to see me. I then drove to Louisville, Ohio where J & L's new stainless sheet mill was located. Fred Prudner was the plant manager. He assured me that they could make the material to meet the specification, but that I would have to get the okay. I drove back to Detroit and again was unable to see the VP or the general manager of sales. I drove to Chicago with the three orders still in my pocket. Marsh Shields was angry with me for making that trip against his permission.

That evening we had a telephone call from Charles Beegly who was at the airport. He called to see how we were doing. I told him about the three orders and my attempt to get them processed. He told me that I would get a call the next morning from the sales VP, and that I was not to give the orders to Marsh Shields or anyone, but to personally take them to the VP in Detroit, and that I should stay in Detroit for a few days to oversee the paperwork on the orders.

I did get a phone call the next morning and drove to Detroit to deliver the orders to the VP-sales. I spent several days in Detroit following the paperwork on the orders all the way through each department and finally into operating orders at the mill. When I got back to Chicago Marsh Shields was furious and our relationship deteriorated rapidly.

Those three orders opened the door for us. That company became the largest stainless sheet steel account for Jones & Laughlin Steel. It was worth over a million dollars a year. Big money in those days.

In late 1959 Marsh Shields pulled a fast deal on me and took that account away from me. He made it a house account (for which he then got credit), saying that it was too big an account for me to handle. I started looking around for another job. In late February, a couple of weeks after Martha was born, Marsh Shields called me late one night. He was so drunk that he could hardly talk. He told me that I was fired at the end of the month. The next morning I went into the office, cleaned out my desk, put the keys for the company car on his desk, and walked out. End of Cold Metal Products Company and Jones & Laughlin Steel. Ten years - no retirement benefits - but lots of experience in operations, production, and sales.