

BACK IN THE DAY

7/23/2019

I've been reminiscing recently about my 32 years here at B/F and the changes I've seen. On my 1st day on the job I had a 40 year employee, named Wilbur Grimes, take me under his wings and teach me all I needed to know. I will never forget this man. When I thanked him his comment was, "I was new once, I'm just paying it back. Someday you'll be doing the same." We must do all we can to help the new folks out. Back when I started in Final it took 30 years of seniority just to hold A shift. Everyone was passionate about the quality of their work and extremely protective of each other. If you messed with one of them you messed with all of them." An injury to one is an injury to all" was how it was throughout the factory, not just in Final Inspection. This isn't to say that everyone was the best of friends; that was never the case. What we were was Union Brothers and Sisters, so no one *EVER* tattled on someone or went to Labor Relations in hopes of costing someone their job. That was unthinkable. Disputes were handled through the Union. Back in the day we didn't even have a Civil Rights Committee, who nowadays do a wonderful job resolving issues and advising members of their rights under the law.

Back in the day it was not OK to not be a Union member. Nowadays it is still not OK to not be a Union member. The small handful of Non-Members need to understand that everything we have is because we are a Union shop. They are hurting themselves by not being a member. It is wrong not to belong!

Back in the day we actually spent our workdays building beads, cutting stock, mixing batches, and all the other jobs needed to produce tires. Nowadays we are still expected to produce at the same level while our days are consumed with paperwork. Whether it be work orders, run sheets, scanners, TRT's, or tracking NOT time so you don't get written up for not hitting the magic number, our actual productive time has been drastically cut. Back in the day paperwork was done by the supervisors. Nowadays many of the supervisors spend their time in the office watching us work on the cameras.

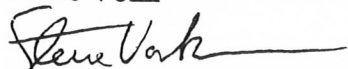
Speaking of cameras, nowadays there are close to 500 cameras in the plant that watch your every move. There are more cameras in this plant than at the Newton Correctional Facility. As a comparison, the Russellville, Arkansas plant has only one camera that is aimed at the gate. Cameras were never intended to be used this way. They were allowed in for safety and security reasons. No supervisor should ever be sitting in the office watching us work! This has to stop!

What prompted me to get on the soapbox was an incident that happened on July 18th. Brother Chase Rhoads, Dept. 401 was fired for Falsification. Chase was seen on camera by his supervisor driving in slow circles while waiting on an elevator. He said this was to cool off. Chase was also seen taking his hands off the wheel. Not smart, but something I may have done back in the day. This is Chase's first job out of high school. He is a good worker. Back in the day this would have resulted in a butt chewing, not a discharge. Chase was taken to Labor Relations where he was asked the loaded question, "How many times have you done this?" His response, "Once." Of course the Company had already viewed a lot of video in preparation for this meeting and they knew the answer was not, "one." Chase was fired for giving a false statement. This was a classic case of "Gotcha!" In my 32 years I can think of dozens of members of management who would have been fired under this new interpretation of the Falsification Policy. If you are taken up front be aware that you have to be absolutely positive in your answer you give. A simple misstatement is now grounds for discharge. To assist us in the eventual arbitration of Chase's discharge, if you have examples of management lying to you please forward that information to the Union Hall.

One other thought came to mind while writing this. Back in the day when the Now Hiring sign went up there were thousands lined up, in hopes of working here. Nowadays, very few. What happened? See above.

In Solidarity,

Steve Vonk



President USW Local 310L



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