What Does Manufacturing Mean to You?

In October 2014, SME launched a new campaign, #MFGis..., in an attempt to address the misconceptions surrounding manufacturing. Through this campaign, we want to emphasize all of the positives in manufacturing, while ultimately using descriptive words to define and promote it. We’ve therefore asked for everyone involved in manufacturing to share their personal stories on why and how they became involved in manufacturing.

To date, there have been several exceptional individuals who have been willing to share what intrigued them most about manufacturing and why they’re so passionate about it. Below are a few highlights of their manufacturing journeys.

#MFGis Fun: Jake McCall

I’ve been in manufacturing for about 10 years. I began as an intern machinist at a local shop when I was 17. In 2012, I became a build engineer for the Oklahoma State University Mini Baja vehicle production team. I’d been around subtractive manufacturing machinery for years, but wasn’t accustomed to fabrication equipment and processes. Building the Baja car was a blast for me; I was able to build a really fun car that rode hard and crashed a lot.

I like that manufacturing is similar to golf. You’re not necessarily playing against any one individual. You’re playing against the entire course. No shot will be like any other. You can rely on past experiences or techniques, but you have the shot that’s in front of you now; what you do with it is up to you. Learning something new every day is fun to me. Manufacturing allows that, especially at this time.

#MFGis Educational: Jayme Coggin

I made the decision in the eighth grade to attend Westfield Vocational Technical High School, thinking I was going to pursue culinary arts. After going through shop exploratory, I realized it just wasn’t for me. Manufacturing technology really sparked my interest in many different ways. The instructors helped me realize the importance of having a good education and learning a good trade.

I took part in a cooperative education program the summer before my senior year working as a toolmakers’ apprentice. My senior year involved me going to work every other week, while still working in that role, and after graduation, I was offered a full-time position. I eventually took a job working as a CNC machinist and programmer, and was making enough to buy my own house. Eventually, the opportunity came up for me to become a manufacturing technology instructor at the program I graduated from. At the age of 24, I’ve now been involved in manufacturing for 10 years.

#MFGis Generational: Rodney Grover

Since childhood, manufacturing has definitely been in my blood and provided the avenue for my successes along the way. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was very little advancement in the mobility products industry for special-needs patients. A friend of my father’s had an idea in 1968 to
invent and create an electric (self-propelled) scooter for his wife, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He worked with my father and grandfather at Grover Machine Products, Inc. to design and build a product with accessories that changed the industry for the better.

At the time, my dad could never have imagined himself needing the products he once designed and built so many years ago, but he did after being diagnosed with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis). Knowing there were many young people with the ability to design, create and build machines that could one day help him and others like him, gave him great comfort.

#MFGis Diverse: Dianna Huff

My first manufacturing job was in college sewing sails for sailboats. I learned about production flow, sourcing materials and running machinery. After graduation, I became an office admin for a women-owned manufacturing company. We made custom-sewn cloth products for the military, industrial and aerospace industries.

Now, I’m in my early fifties and have a few “gender” firsts that I believe have led to my success in a male-dominated industry. I was the first girl in my town to get a paper route, be a student in shop class in the seventh grade before taking Home Economics. I used to also do my own tune-ups on my car due to my working knowledge of tools and mechanisms. I dropped the engine, replaced the heads and put it back together, and it ran great! Today, I work with small, family-owned industrial manufacturing companies, helping them succeed with my marketing services.

#MFGis Diverse: LaRoux Gillespie

It seems unusual, but I came from a farm environment in Kansas and went on to become an international leader in one area of manufacturing, as well as a generalist in many areas. I was required to take a class in manufacturing in college for my mechanical engineering degree. We built metal vises, poured molten material in molds we had individually made, ran machines, assembled, measured, finished and took home our product. We studied the theory of machining, went to companies to see how they made things. We invited experts in to tell us about their specialty.

I have worked in manufacturing for 50 years, beginning as a junior process engineer and working up to leading 200 employees. Today, I consult and write books about manufacturing technology. During my many trips abroad, I’ve eaten local cuisine, learned new customs, saw outstanding sights and met many lifelong friends. My lifelong career in manufacturing made all that possible.

Summary

Earlier this year, I shared a bit about my own manufacturing journey and will be sharing more through #MFGis... at a later date, as are many other SME volunteer leaders. I would encourage you to visit sme.org/mfgis to submit your own story or your company’s story. If we select your story, you’ll receive a gift, and your submission will be featured on the Web site and on social media. You can also read the complete stories of the individuals above who are making inroads in manufacturing, as well as view the pictures and videos they’ve shared. Their stories are inspirational, as I’m sure yours are.