

American Longwall Remembers 25-Year Reunion with Friendship and Hard Work



David Cole, Phyllis & Allan Hearle, Carole & Clarence Bandy, Bill & Thelma Reid, Robert Salyer



Dennis Henninger, Mary & Clarence Bandy, Robert Salyer

Former American Longwall employees and their wives met on September 23, 2022 for a fine dinner in the Tavern, Main Street, Abingdon, VA, to celebrate the 25-Year Anniversary of the end of American Longwall when it was purchased by Harnischfeger in 1995 and merged into Joy Mining Machinery the following year.

Those in attendance were: Mike Franklin, Ronnie & Teresa Meade, David Cole, Don Schnegg, Dennis Henninger, Allan & Phyllis Hearle, Clarence & Carole Bandy, Ron Thorne, Mary & Odie Dudley, Robert Salyer, Terry Allerton, and Bill & Thelma Reid.

Former long-time President, Bill Reid, remembered those, who had gone to a better place including: Willie Cummins, Ron Wiggins, Jud Siekmann, Dave Griffin, Terry Miller, Larry Malone Gary Curtis, John & Joy Allinson, Ken May, Glen Feagens, Larry Smith, John Melkowski, Dan Almond, Ken Savidge, Andy Cameron, Dave Challinor, John Smith, and Bill Ryan. A moment's silence was held. Also remembered were those, who wanted to be at the Tavern but could not including: Ken Walker, Linda Robinette, Ken Dunn, and Linda Remington.

Bill described his arriving in America on December 17, 1968 as a young man to expand the Huwood-Irwin division of Irwin-Sensenich Corp. in Irwin PA and market longwall mining equipment and parts. A new face conveyor was badly needed for American mining conditions and Huwood Limited in England failed to produce one. In 1974, Bill went to see Arthur Snipe, the managing director of Mining Supplies, Ltd. of Doncaster, England, who had developed a new design of conveyor. Snipe told Reid that several other manufacturers in the U.S., including Joy and Jeffrey, had been to see him and he told them all that the company who wins the first order for an M.S. conveyor gets the exclusive sales agency in America.

A few months later, Bill returned to see Arthur Snipe with not one but two orders: a single strand 30 mm chain conveyor for Florence Mining Company, Seward, Pa. and a 26 mm twin inboard conveyor for Jim Walter Resources No 3 Mine in Brookwood, Ala. Huwood-Irwin then signed the agency for M.S. equipment in the U.S. and sales flourished. Arthur Snipe soon saw the wider opportunities in the U.S. and wanted a bigger part of the pie. During a meeting in Las Vegas, which included himself, Michael Bell, John Killeen, Terry Allerton and Bill Reid, he announced his interest in purchasing Huwood-Irwin. Babcock International, who owned Huwood-Irwin, and Mining Supplies, Ltd. negotiated but could not reach an agreement on the purchase price and Arthur Snipe ended the sales agreement with Huwood-Irwin on a technicality and formed his own U.S. company, which he called American Longwall Mining Corporation or ALMIN for short.

ALMIN built a beautiful 40,000 sq. ft. plant in Abingdon, Va. A little later, Michael Bell, Arthur Snipe's son-in-law, offered Reid the job of Executive Vice President of ALMIN and Bill, who had returned to England for two years, came back to America. A loan of \$3 million had to be spent quickly to avoid paying taxes, and the existing 40,000 sq. ft. building was enlarged by 20,000 sq. ft. Production machines, such as the Cincinnati 500-ton press brake, shear, metal worker, radial arm drilling machine, as well as fork lift truck, profile burner, and welding machines, were bought. The company brand name was changed to American Longwall and rebuilding equipment as well as manufacturing new equipment began. Reid was elected President.

Mining Supplies and American Longwall developed the first revolutionary cast composite conveyor line pan, where all the parts, including ramp plates, line pans and spillplates were cast and welded as one piece. In 1987, American Longwall became the leading supplier of longwall face conveyors in America. The following year, the company was purchased by Dobson Park Industries, who owned Gullick-Dobson, the roof support manufacturer. The Gullick team, led by President Jack Kilkenny, was moved from Pittsburgh to the Abingdon facility. In 1989, a second building of 20,000 sq. ft. was constructed for compatibility trials, stockroom, electronic rework, and transmission shop.

In 1991, American Longwall topped the list of operating face conveyors in America. In 1993, Dobson Park merged with Mecro to form Longwall International. In 1994, Dobson Park purchased 100% of Longwall International. In 1995, Longwall International including American Longwall was acquired by Harnischfeger and merged into Joy Mining Machinery. This was the fourth acquisition in American Longwall's history.

At that time, American Longwall Face Conveyors, as it became known, had 206 employees comprising:

- Sales/service 21
- Engineering 23
- Manufacturing 136
- Quality 7
- MIS 4
- Financial 9
- Administration 7

Sales in 1995 were just under \$50 million and trading profit was around 3%. During the period 1979-1995, American Longwall supplied 127 face conveyors and total sales were \$287 million. At the conclusion of the Anniversary Dinner, Bill said:

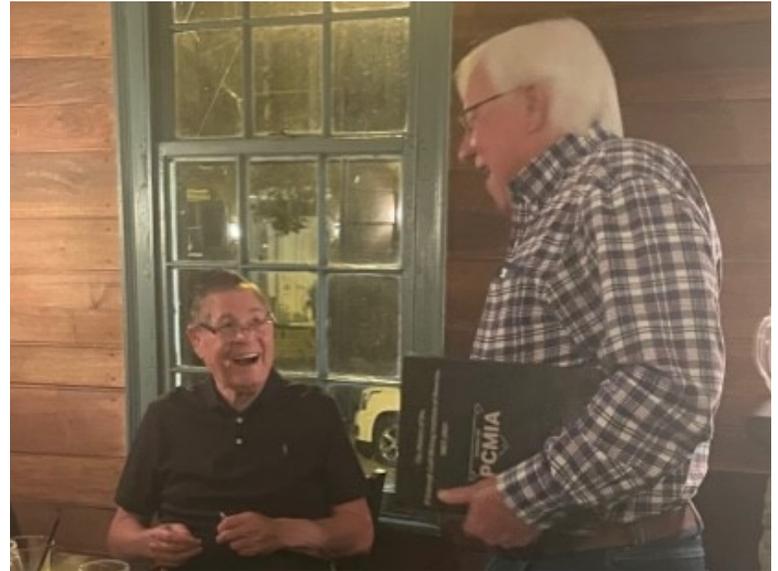
"Some of you may be familiar with the words of the Chairman of Viking Cruises, who speaks on his TV ads on PBS. He talks about the way he was brought up with three important things in his life:

- Honesty
- Kindness
- Hard Work

"All of you possess these qualities and I'm so proud that for a part of our lives, our paths came together at American Longwall! Thank you for everything!" said Reid.



Ronnie Meade, Mike Franklin, Don Schnegg



Bill Reid Shares a Laugh with David Cole



Carol & Clarence Bandy with Robert and Terry Allerton in Background



Carol & Clarence with Terry Allerton, Thelma & Bill



David Cole, Don Schnegg, Dennis Henninger, Phylis & Alan Hearle, Carole Bandy



Dennis, Mary, Clarence and Robert

Saturday, September 24, 2022



Cheryl & Robert Salyer



Ronnie Meade and Paul Neil



Mary & Dennis



Darlene Sturgill



Mary, Bill, and Dennis



Bill & Thelma



Don, Ronnie and Mike



Teresa Meade, Mike Franklin, and Ronnie Meade



Carole and Phyllis



Don, Carole & Clarence

The rain came down heavily on Saturday morning but this did not dampen the excitement of the old American Longwall team, who packed into the Wolf Hills Fabricator conference room behind the original plant, with standing room only, to listen to presentations of the American Longwall history. In two parts, these were illustrated PowerPoint presentations narrated by Reid. The group were joined by a number of friends including Darlene Sturgill, Paul Neil, Ivan Caudill, Jim Watkins, Tom Watson, Ralph Watson, and Peanut as well as some of their families. Ivan is the nephew of the late Bill Caudill, who was the fourth employee at American Longwall after Terry Allerton, John Allinson and Andy Cameron.

Following those, a presentation called "One Big Family" was presented, which described the company's activities but this time focusing on its greatest asset, its employees. A few tears running down cheeks could be seen in the room and everyone burst into simultaneous applause at the conclusion. The last presentation was a movie made by Dallas Whaling on March 7, 2006 at the plant, which featured clips of every employee, who was at the plant that day, with some of them providing farewell comments. At that time, none of them knew if they had a job under the new regime, so it was an emotional time.

Then it was time for lunch and the group went outside to the tent specially erected for the occasion. By then the rain had stopped. A delicious lunch, provided courtesy of Steve Thorogood of Wolf Hills Fabricator, was served comprising tasty pulled pork barbecue sandwiches with baked beans and potato salad. Attendees were presented with a T-shirt and an American Coal CD. Bill spoke:

"Thank you, Steve, for the great hospitality at the original American Longwall facility without which this reunion could not have taken place. We are all most grateful to you!" Bill concluded, "This Reunion means so much to me and I would like to thank all of you for taking the time to come along to participate in our 25-Year Celebration and to see many of your old friends. Wherever life has taken you, we wish you continued success, happiness and good health."



Group Walks to Tent for Lunch



Phyllis & Allan



Ivan Caudill's son and Jim Watkins



Allan and David



Ronne and Peanut



Odie & Mary



Phyllis & Allan, David, Darlene, Ronnie & Teresa



Clarence & Carole, Steve Thorogood, and Paul Neal



Cheryl & Robert Salyer



Bill & Thelma



Clarence & Carole



Steve with Paul Neil

A large group expressed an interest in joining the plant tour which Steve conducted. In both the first shop and in building "B" the very heavy fabrications carried out were viewed. The examples of massive water doors used in municipal water control tunnels were particularly impressive with their thick plates and heavy weldments. The visitors were also very interested to see mining fabrications such as stageloader drive frames and fail ends. Many old memories came alive and the visit to the "old" plant was a fitting way to end what was a very happy and memorable weekend that American Longwall employees will remember for many years to come.



Steve Thorogood, Allan Hearle, Clarence Bandy



Clarence and David



Ivan Caudill & Son with Peanut



Bill Reid, Steve Thorogood and Allan Hearle