

# Luebke Logs 50 Years At MEC

‘Company’s Asset Is Its People’

by Ed Zagorski

It all began for Wally Luebke on Nov. 9, 1964 in a small, rented garage, which was the original manufacturing facility for Mayville Engineering Company just off Main Street near the river.

Luebke had planned to buy the Standard Oil garage and was set to operate the service station, but the owner of it wanted his son to run the shop instead.

Since Luebke had worked on Ted and Grace Bachhuber’s cars he knew the family and gave them a call.

“I wanted to become a journeyman tool and die maker and the Bachhubers helped me get my start at Mayville Engineering Company,” Luebke said.

Growing up, Luebke built anything and everything.

“That’s the very ingredient one needs in tool and die making,” he said. “We started making shotgun reloaders here at Mayville Engineering.”

Fifty years later and still employed at MEC, Luebke, a 71-year-old Mayville resident, said he enjoys his job because it is something

new each day.

“When I first began with Mayville Engineering Company, the new employees would spend time in all of the different departments to see what we liked,” he said. “I worked the drill press and punch press just to get experience, but I knew I wanted to become a tool engineer.”

He said the biggest thing an individual can have is a can-do attitude.

“If the customer came to us and wanted something built you tried to engineer it in a way that could provide the lowest cost, but give them the best product you could.”

“I was 20 years old so I thought, ‘there is nothing I can’t do.’ That’s always been the attitude with Mayville Engineering. We did whatever we could to do it and do it right for the customer.”

Luebke said Mayville Engineering did work for Hewlett Packard, IBM and John Deere.

“We were always working on new things and that’s what kept me here for so long,” he said. “The opportunities were endless at Mayville Engineering Company.”

“I built tools for a lot of years then went into design and then sales,” he said. “I got to see it from start to finish so the nice

thing about working in sales was I knew what needed to be done to make it so the product was easier to sell to the cus-

tomers.”

In the early years tools were designed on drafting boards with slide rules.

“Now we have solid modeling,” he said. “When we started it was all done with pencil and paper. Years ago we didn’t make a fixture until we had the sample parts, but now we can make the sample because we are able to build it around the model.”

“When someone says, ‘It can’t be done,’ you have to ask the question, what do we have to do to make it happen?”

He said technology has helped the company become very innovative in design and engineering.

“We try and make the product better for less,” he said. “It is more demanding now because the customer wants the product quicker and for less money, but with more data.”

Luebke said he was with the company when it became 100 percent employee-owned in 1985.

“That says a lot right there,” he said. “I have seen a great deal in my 50 years with Mayville Engineering. That was great for the employees here.”

He said there are com-

panies struggling to stay together for 50 years, but he has been lucky to stay on doing what he has loved for a half of a century.

“I truly enjoy what I do,” he said.

Brian D. Johnson, senior manager of marketing and communications, said Luebke is the only Mayville Engineering Company employee who has his own parking space.

Luebke laughed it off.

“I am honored,” he said. “I am.”

Luebke said he has no plans to retire.

Mayville Engineering Company President and CEO Robert D. Kamphuis is happy about that.

“His work example and his abilities are noteworthy,” Kamphuis said. “He’s a special person for his family and the company.”

He said what may have kept Luebke at Mayville Engineering Company for 50 years is the company’s diverse and interesting customer base, coupled with the challenge and growth employees experience each day.

“No two days are alike here,” he said. “That’s what employees like. They also



MEC employee Wally Luebke, who has recorded 50 years of service at the Mayville Engineering Company, displays a piece of machinery made at the plant. (Ed Zagorski | Dodge County Pionier)



MEC employee Wally Luebke sits at his desk. He has been employed 50 years at Mayville Engineering Company. (Ed Zagorski | Dodge County Pionier)

enjoy the ability to share in the benefits and rewards of the company.”

For Luebke, he just enjoys going to work.

“The biggest things God has given me is my health, my family and this very place to work,” he said.

When he is not at Mayville Engineering Company, Luebke can be found on his boat in Florida or tooling the Great Lakes. He also enjoys fishing, skiing and hunting.

“Right now, I am just taking one day at a time,” he said. “I strongly believe

Mayville Engineering has great assets to continually succeed. Anybody can buy brick and mortar machines, but the true asset of a company is its people, but those people have to work together for the company to succeed.”

Luebke and his wife, Janice, have been married for 50 years, too. The couple have three daughters: Lisa (Rick) Billings, Shelly (Todd) Schellpfeffer and Amy (Troy) Justman. The Luebkes also have seven grandchildren and one great grandson.