

# Omer Plourde – A Man of Many Talents

Omer Plourde has been with DeWAL for more than 18 years and has been in the PTFE industry for almost 42 years. He has grown and excelled in his journey from Dixon to DeWAL. During his time at DEWAL, Omer has become something of an icon – someone people come to with tough questions and difficult problems. Omer has worked with and known some of the great pioneers in the PTFE industry and has been instrumental in developing many of the processes and products that are made today by DeWAL and its competitors.



Omer Plourde

## BEGINNING AT DIXON

Omer entered the PTFE industry in 1966 at Dixon Industries in Bristol, RI as a lathe operator in the fabrication department, then skiving lathe operator, and later lead person in skiving. Dixon was vertically integrated in all aspects of PTFE production. He worked with people like Saul Ricklin, Robert Rulon-Miller, Jack Holland, Bert Katznak and Ted Rulon-Miller. It was a great start to an impressive career. He was soon promoted to supervisor with responsibilities for billet molding then to Department Head with responsibilities for powder preparation (Blending) and Etching.

**The College of Hands On...** Right after joining Dixon, Omer earned an Associates Degree in Business at night, then starting taking Engineering courses at Roger Williams University. He had to stop due to overload with new family, work, and working nights for his father to help him out of a jam. Omer said, “Everything I learned in the industry was by getting my hands dirty, volunteering, and getting involved.” He learned billet molding, skiving, blending, etching, ram extrusion, making free/low flow resins, laminates, fabrication of parts, stamping, etching, slitting, etc. on his own.

**Corporate Duties...** Omer was transferred to Corporate administration, reporting to Bundy VP, to implement a Hewlett Packard MRP computer system which would be the groundwork for expansion to the other Dixon Industry manufacturing sites. This required 2 years of his time. After accomplishing this project, his new objective was to identify and rectify a poor profit situation caused by inventory, productivity and system problems at one of the other facilities within the group. Omer spent a year on this project, which eventually led to closing down the facility and transferring equipment to 3 other facilities.

**Bearing Wear Pads for Alaskan Pipeline (1975-1977)...** Dixon received the “largest single PTFE order ever placed” for bearing wear pads for the Alaskan pipeline. Product was a proprietary filled PTFE compound skived/etched then bonded to stainless steel plates, drilled, machined and polished. Volume was approximately 300k lbs of a special formulation that needed to be blended, pulverized, billet molded, sintered/ skived and sodium etched. Omer’s responsibility was to make this happen then transfer the pads to their bonding department for finishing to a wear plate. These pads were installed on the piers that supported the actual pipeline to allow the pipeline to move due to seasonal contraction of the pipeline steel.

**PTFE Film for Russia (1978-1979)...** Right after the pipeline job, Dixon won a quote for a special PTFE product destined for Russia. The product was for PTFE film skived and calendered to 1.5, 2.0, and 3.5 mils thick in various widths. Omer was assigned Project Manager for this job. They hired all the necessary personnel for a 3 shift operation and purchased all necessary equipment. The primary piece was an old Waterbury Calender which was rebuilt and retooled with periphery multiple payoff and takeoff stations. They ran a 3 shift operation successfully, and shipped the 100k lbs order to Moscow.

**“Bullwinkle” Job (1985)...** Omer was also involved another unique job – the production of large PTFE bearing wear pads for the “Bullwinkle” job. *This was the largest oil drilling derrick in the world.* The derrick was constructed on its side, atop bonded 4’ x 10’ pads. The derrick was 1800’ long and 425’ square at the base. The construction took place along the intracoastal waterway near Corpus Christi, Texas. The top of the derrick had aircraft warning lights installed. After construction was



Omer around 1990

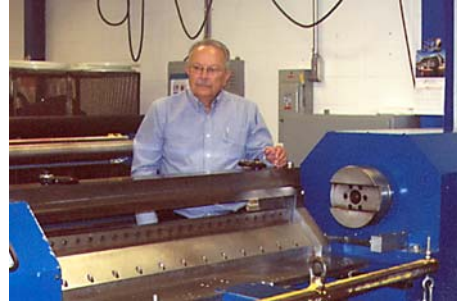
complete, the derrick was maneuvered down a ramp on the PTFE filled bonded wear pads onto a barge to be towed to the Manatee Oil Field, 160 miles Southwest of New Orleans. The entire project cost \$500 million, and surpassed the Alaskan pipeline job in PTFE volume by over 2.5x.

**Promoted to Operations Manager...** Omer was promoted to Operations Manager during mid-eighty's (1984) with additional responsibilities for Purchasing and Engineering. He served as technical and processing manager for Marketing and Sales in addition to Operations manager. Omer was responsible for 250 employees at all levels.

### MOVING TO DEWAL

Omer was hired to be DeWAL Plant Manager in June 1990 by founding fathers *Hugo DiClemente and Ed Walsh*.

In 1998, Omer was promoted to Director of Development & Technology, an important position in which he has been instrumental in developing, designing and implementing many of the processes and processing that make a difference at DeWAL today. He built a highly productive and efficient Engineering/Maintenance team developed the Axis manufacturing MRP system, established a costing system for all products now produced, and much more. He continues to hold this position.



**Omer on DeWAL Factory Floor**

Omer is an integral part of the DeWAL family. In addition to being Director of Development and Technology, he is Product Manager for Film Products and Technical Advisor to customer service and field sales. He works with production, quality control and the sales department in setting up and monitoring SOP's, process development and new equipment design. **Omer is truly a man of many talents.**

**His Key to Success...** Omer said, "I think my success was/has been attributable to the principle that people make mistakes, but they must learn from them. My favorite comment has always been 'I refuse to work with, hire, or keep on board personnel that tell me that something is broken!!!' I surround myself with people that say 'Hey Omer, that's broken, but I think I can fix it!!!' I want doers, – that is what makes a business work. I delegate and then watch! *I have made a lot of friends in this business by being fair, honest, and appreciative of efforts.*"

Omer likes his work, but in his free time, Omer loves to play golf, read, and spend time with his wife, children, and five grandchildren. He lives with his wife in Portsmouth, RI. ■

**Based on an article from DeWAL and further input and pictures from Omer Plourde. Written and edited by E. Robert Hill, Hill Business Writing LLC.**