

USWA Local 746L

The Labor Leader for East Texas

On August 10, 1964, workers at the Kelly-Springfield/Tyler plant successfully organized forming United Rubber Workers (URW) Local 746. The early sixties were turbulent years. It was the era of the Cuban missile crisis, the Kennedy assassination, Vietnam War, segregation and civil rights movement.

The employees at the Kelly-Springfield/Tyler plant experienced their share of trials during these early years. Hourly workers had very limited rights and benefits. As a result, an effort was made by URW International Organizers T.D. Steinke and Thurman Brown with the help of many plant employees to organize a labor union.

In 1963 the Tyler workers petitioned the company to hold elections for the organization of a local union. With their second election, the hourly workers of the Tyler plant voted to organize. The charter members of URW Local 746 were determined from a large pool of workers by pulling names from a hat.

Charter Members

Billy E. Allison
Earl E. Cayard Jr.
Charles B. Harris
Roger Loechel
Herman Stidham
Travis E. Turner

H. K. Baird
G.C. Curtis
Joe F. Kellum
Earl Kinzie Porter
L.W. Taylor
J.R. Vickers

Bobby H. Burns
E.H. Dinkins
J.R. Kolb
Harvey Shipman
James R. Tomlin
Charles A. Webb.

The new local elected a negotiating committee composed of John Nash, Charles (Chuck) Harris, Carl Ask, C.T. Shackelford, and Harry Johnson. During officer elections, the membership elected Earl Cayard to serve as its first president. Cayard joined with the negotiating committee in negotiations with the company. The negotiations lasted three months and yielded a three-year agreement ratified in November of 1964.

President Cayard would serve the local from 1964 through 1966. However he declined to run for a second term and in the 1966 elections, the local elected John Nash to serve as president. Nash would serve the local with distinction for the next twenty-three years. In 1989 he declined to run for re-election and the local elected Danny Parker for its next president. Parker served the local well for three years but lost to Nash in the 1992 elections. Nash continued to serve the local until the 1998 elections when he lost to Ed Moore. Ed served until the 2000 election when Jim Wansley was elected.

In the 1982 contract negotiations the company approached the union concerning the conversion of the Tyler plant to radial tire production contingent on the union agreeing to work a continuous operation. At that time, the plant produced only bias ply tires. The bias tire market was in a downward spiral and the future did not look bright for the Tyler plant if radial capability could not be secured.

In 1983, President Nash and the negotiating committee composed of Joe E. Denton, Herman Sherman, Carl Bishop, Wyley Smith, L.C. Mosley, Ronnie Jack Smiley and Carl Worley held contract renewal negotiations with Plant Manager Jim Borgerding, Industrial Manager Frank Peycke, Billy Ben Tompkins, and Ray Jackson on the establishment of a continuous operation and conversion of the plant to radial production. A tentative agreement was reached and was ratified by an overwhelming majority of the membership late in November of 1983. Subsequently membership voted on a work schedule that provided for a continuous operation.

This agreement opened the door for the plant to receive capitol investment approaching \$300 million to convert to radial production. At this same time the company and union embraced a new labor/management relations concept: Participative Management. The firm Dolan and Associates introduced this concept to the Tyler plant. This concept evolved into what we commonly refer to as Employee Involvement. Through this process, the company and union worked together to improve management/labor relations while increasing the plant's productivity.

On January 18th, 1999, the lab employees were admitted into the union. Up until this time they were salaried employees.

In 2000, Jim Wansley was elected to President of Local 746L. He has served the local during some of the most difficult times of our existence. We changed our work rules, our work schedule and our attitudes to keep our jobs. Despite all of this, in December of 2007, Goodyear partially shut down the Tyler plant and over 500 people were laid off.

In January of 2008, Vice President Harold Sweat took over as President of Local 746L. It is only through the leadership and determination of the union officials along with the cooperation of the union membership that we have survived this long.