

Stephen Copeland

2016 ARM Hall of Fame Inductee

by Jennifer Gibson Hebert, JSJ Productions, Inc.

Stephen ("Steve") Copeland, President and CEO of Jerico Plastic Industries, Inc., was honored with induction into the ARM Hall of Fame on September 26, 2016 during the ARM Meeting & 40th Anniversary Celebration held in New Orleans, LA. The Rotational Molding Hall of Fame is dedicated to the recognition of rotational molders, suppliers, and professional members. The award is the highest honor the Association of Rotational Molders (ARM) bestows on an individual for outstanding service, accomplishments, and contributions to further the growth of the rotational molding industry.

During Steve's acceptance speech, he talked about his journey into rotational molding and his great appreciation to the industry and the members of ARM for whom he's had the great fortune to be associated with for over 31 years.

Steve grew up in Alliance, Ohio, the eldest of five children. His father was a union worker in aluminum manufacturing and his mother worked in the health care industry. He earned his B.A. degree in Business Management, and early in his career worked in the plastics and polymers industries. He worked for Harwick Chemical as a Color Tech Supervisor prior to joining A. Schulman as a lab coordinator for PP development.

Early after Steve began working for A. Schulman, William Zekan



Continued on page 62

Copeland continued from page 60

called him into his office and ask him if he had ever heard of a technology called “rotational molding”. Not knowing what to say, he replied “Yes, I’ve heard something about that.” It was that conversation that would change Steve’s life, and the lives of his family, according to Steve. Mr. Zekan was working hard to close a significant agreement with Exxon Chemical Canada (now ExxonMobil). Steve was promoted Product Manager of the new Rotational Molding program for Schulman. In the ensuing days, Dennis Mote, Exxon’s Director of PE Sales, presented a program that would open up a world of possibilities in rotational molding. Steve was given a sales benchmark to hit within 12 months, and he went to work to accomplish the task.

Steve attended his first ARM Meeting in 1985, the same year he became Product Manager. It was at that meeting where he learned what an inclusive group ARM was. He recalled that it was Bud Boyce who first took him under his wing. “I have always appreciated the way ARM treats its first time attendees. They talk to you and make you feel at home,” Steve said. He left that meeting feeling part of the Association.

As the program progressed, Steve requested help on the technical part of the program. It was then that Tom Wyszynski joined the division. “This was the beginning of a heck of a good time,” Steve said, and the two began traveling across the nation to visit rotomolding plants. Steve was later promoted to National Sales Manager and Greg LeFevre was named Product Manager of Rotational Molding.

In 1997, Steve left Schulman, however, his heart was still in rotomolding. He, along with his wife Brenda, started Jerico Plastic Industries, and are now in their 20th year of business. “Our daughter and son-in-law, Brandi and Chris Frey, have been instrumental in building the business,” Steve said.

As for the future, “I believe the rotomolding industry will proceed as it has in the past by pursuing steady improvements, advancements, and growth,” he said.

Steve thanked the Association as well as his family. “Today, I feel that we are a good and important part of the industry and the Association. Let’s move on for the next 20 years,” he said. Steve has been a force for growing rotomolding for the past 31 years. He has served on the ARM Board of Directors and many ARM Committees. He worked hard to help in raising the public perception of rotomolding and awareness of the Association.

Steve and his wife reside in Wadsworth, Ohio and have two children and two grandchildren. In his spare time, Steve enjoys traveling, reading, and spending time with his family. **R**

Wyszynski continued from page 61

in both natural and compounded forms. An old electric molding machine from one of the Bonar plants was added to my tool box and Steve Osborn, Trilogy Plastics, was kind enough to give me a few old molds, so I was off and running never to look back,” Tom said.

As Tom began to travel more it became apparent that there was a genuine thirst for knowledge and enthusiasm within the roto industry. “I can say that I never visited a customer without learning something,” Tom said. Steve had encouraged him to sign on to an ARM committee, and thus started his long tenure with the ARM Education Committee.

While being on the road was tough, it really helped Tom understand the process and some of the variables associated. “July in southern Texas is not February in Minnesota,” Tom said. He recalled “once wearing thermal underwear under his suit in Minnesota and another time climbing pyramids in Mexico in a suit, tie, and wingtips”. He cited the well-known cliché “love what you do and you’ll never work a day in your life,” and said for him it is really true.

“Schulman has been a good company to work for, and I’ve enjoyed my time there, but the real attraction for me is the people. That entrepreneurial ‘can do’ attitude is always great to work with and seems to be very common in the rotomolding industry. I have learned the hard way never to tell a molder this or that cannot be done because I’ve been proven wrong too many times,” Tom said.

As for the future, Tom says the newer, younger members are some of the brightest people he knows. He looks forward to seeing these new people and people he may not have seen in a while at meetings, and taking the opportunity to share some information and to help promote the growth of the industry.

While at Schulman, Tom’s written formulations, performed analytical and physical testing, overseen production, overseen quality, and has been in general responsible for the roto compounds from the technical aspect. He said has really only worked for two people over the vast part of his career, Steve Copeland until about 1992, then Greg LeFevre for almost 25 years until his recent retirement. “The respect I have for both these men is huge,” said Tom. “They’ve helped me understand the importance of honesty and integrity towards customers, suppliers, and coworkers. And to receive this acknowledgment from the Association and to be considered part of this esteemed group, is truly humbling,” Tom said.

Tom grew up in Tallmadge, Ohio with 5 brothers and 2 sisters. His father worked in the rubber industry and his mom had enough to keep her busy at home. Tom attended Tallmadge High School and The University of Akron.

Tom and his wife, Debbie, reside in Diamond, Ohio. They have two children and three grandchildren. When not working in rotational molding, Tom enjoys his small hobby farm and raising cattle. **R**