

Joanne's 30 Years of Making the Grade

When Joanne Wallace sifts through 30 years of Bright Wood memories, she treasures the people most. "I've always been treated with respect and integrity by the supervisors and individuals I've worked with," Joanne said. "That says a lot for the caliber of people they hire here and the people that lead us." It also says a lot about Joanne.

Joanne knocked on Bright Wood's door in August 1979 seeking a higher wage than she was earning in the local hospital's kitchen. She started as a moulding patcher in Madras Plant 2. Later she became a grader before moving on to Plant 5 and Plant 14. She joined the Quality Department, eventually returning to Plant 2 where she works today. "After being here for as many years as I have, they can just about put me in any of the floating positions with the exception of moulder operator," Joanne said.

One of her favorite early memories is the time Bright Wood founder Ken Stovall personally handed each associate a crisp \$100 bill for the first Christmas bonus. She was deeply touched when she learned that Ken asked a coworker how she was doing not once, but three times, while she was on a leave of absence for a fami-



Joanne Wallace reported to Madras Plant 2 for her first day of work on August 15, 1979. Thirty years later the veteran grader is back in the original moulding plant and using her experience to fill in where needed. Joanne tries to start each shift with a smile and good morning to set the tone for the rest of the day.

ly crisis. "That is so amazing to me," Joanne said. "That would not have happened in a big corporation. There you are just another number, but here people care about you."

Sometimes that care has been the tough love kind. "When I was younger I was headstrong and not necessarily the best employee," Joanne said. "Thank goodness my supervisors worked with me on that one."

Joanne was once on the brink of being fired when she was told to report to the plant manager's office. "He called me upstairs, read me the

riot act, showed me the worst evaluation I've ever gotten, and said, 'Now is your chance Joanne. If you want to walk out, you can. Or, you can improve.'"

Six months later Joanne was called back to the plant manager's office. "He gave me my all-time best evaluation," Joanne said. "It was a wake up call and all my evaluations have been good ever since."

At one point Joanne felt the itch to move on. "I was encouraged by people here to go to night school and see if I wanted to make a career change," Joanne said. "I got my GED when I was 37. I never thought I would make this a career, but after working here 10 years I decided to stay because I know so many people, I like the working atmosphere, and just the fact that so many people care about each other."

Thirty years down the road with at least four more to go before retirement, Joanne has developed an outlook on life and work that makes each day a beginning. After she had a plant manager who greeted everyone on the crew, Joanne decided to do the same. "I say good morning to people before anything else," she said. "A smile and good morning sets the tone and just may help us all get through the day's rough times."