

Randall L. Alexoff, OH B '81

Endowment for the Ohio Beta Chapter at University of Cincinnati

GROWING UP in Poland, OH, Randy Alexoff had dreams of pursuing a career in music. As a trumpet player in the high school band, he enjoyed his time performing and playing in small groups noting, "I liked that it was artistic and creative."

Randy's plans for his future changed as he was exposed increasingly to the field of engineering. His father was a partner in a machine tool building company and Randy often worked there after school. He admired the engineering professionals who were their customers and took a special interest in one who happened to be a metallurgist at a steel company in Ohio.

Randy chose to attend the University of Cincinnati as he liked their co-op program and the idea of working and learning concurrently and also making some money to help out with college expenses. He began taking courses in electrical engineering but during his sophomore year (of a 5-year program) changed to materials science.

In 1985, Randy founded Vari-Wall Tube Specialists beginning operations in an 800-square foot garage in north-east Ohio. Their mission is to provide solutions to customers with tubular design problems and many of their initial projects centered around automotive suspension and bicycle frame tubes where they developed and perfected their patented processes. The company began manufacturing operations in 1986 and quickly grew into a high-volume parts manufacturer. His father joined him in this new endeavor and together over the next three decades they designed and built 150 custom machines needed to make their products.

Revolutionized Mountain Bike Frames

During the late 1980s, they helped revolutionize mountain bike frames and suspension fork systems creating the world's first butted aluminum frame tubes. These parts helped push weight reduction in bicycles while increasing performance. In a few short years, Vari-Wall became a key supplier of butted bicycle tubing for many companies including Cannondale Bicycles, Huffy Bikes, Trek Bikes, RockShox, and Gary Fisher Bicycle.

By the early 1990s, the business expanded into automotive suspension systems and their products were used in many areas including independent suspension link arms on Toyota Camrys and variable wall thickness twist axles on PT Cruisers. In 1992, upon meeting Ray DeMarini, Randy helped his company build a full line of single and double-wall aluminum baseball bats. The business continued to expand into light truck axle housing tube

manufacturing in 2002 producing 100% of the axle housing tubes for Jeep Grand Cherokee and Dodge Durango vehicles. By 2006, they were building over 1,000,000 housing tubes per year. Six years ago, Vari-Wall moved into the aerospace seating market and their parts revo-

lutionized aerospace seat beam design by providing the ultimate light-weight variable-wall thickness tubes manufactured from high strength aluminum alloys.

The company celebrated 32 years of business last year and continues to evolve and change to meet the needs of current and future customers. One recent personnel change within the company is particularly exciting for Randy. His youngest daughter and her husband recently joined the Vari-Wall team. He is enjoying mentoring them and looks forward to collaborating with them as the company develops new products and processes.

Randy notes, "Some of the most fun things looking back on our history were dealing with people who were starting small companies and helping them to make better performing light-weight products. We worked with

many founders of companies trying to make the next 'latest/greatest' product and along the way we helped various industries improve things that didn't exist before we were there."

"Good Work Ethics"

Reflecting on his ten years, Randy shares advice for future engineers, "A good work ethic is critical," adding, "Whether you recognize it at the time or not, as the years go by, you understand the effort required to make a business survive. Keep searching for a work or activity...something you feel inspired to do in life...you've got to have passion and be 100% committed to the end result."

In his spare time, Randy enjoys collecting and refurbishing cars from Model Ts to muscle cars and enjoys driving all of them. This past year saw the completion of an extensive rebuild of a '23 Model T and the addition of a 2016 Super Snake.

Regarding his \$100,000 gift to the Chapter Endowment Initiative in support of the Ohio Beta Chapter, "This is a long-term commitment to support my home chapter, and I like the fact that it will support our students' attendance at the annual Convention and district conference. It's nice to know that you've left some legacy that will help future generations of engineering students."

