

# Chief Agri / Industrial

CHIEF INDUSTRIES INC'S AGRI / INDUSTRIAL DIVISION REACHES 50TH ANNIVERSARY



*Key Chief managers from left: Mike Lewis, controller; Roger Townsend, president/general manager; Ed Benson, general sales manager; Steve Ginter, marketing manager*

In 2011, the Chief Agri / Industrial Division of Chief Industries, Inc. marks its 50th anniversary. Chief Industries, Inc. (a diversified company with 12 divisions and subsidiaries) was formed in 1954. The Agri / Industrial Division followed soon after in 1961. The privately-owned company was started in 1954 by Virgil Eihusen and his family. The Eihusen family continues to be majority owner. Virgil's grandson, DJ Eihusen is CEO and chairman of the board.

## **Then and Now**

Chief Industries, Inc. began as a small construction company operating from Eihusen's garage in Grand Island, NE. "The company originally constructed single family dwellings and later branched out into grain bins purchased from Big Chief of Kansas," says General Sales Manager Ed Benson. "When Chief wanted some new designs for the bins, Eihusen started Big Chief of Nebraska, which later became just Chief Industries, Inc."

Today, the diverse company has operations around the world and employs

nearly 1,500 people, with approximately 250 working for the Agri / Industrial Division based in Kearney, NE.

Chief Agri / Industrial offers a full line of quality commercial and farm grain storage systems, including grain bins, grain conditioning, and material handling systems for new and existing grain facilities in markets throughout the world. Chief Agri / Industrial Division is a significant exporter of grain storage equipment, with over 40% of its sales outside the United States. It has a worldwide network of qualified dealers.

The company prides itself as being "Chief Titans" or "giants" in the in-



*Aerial view of the Chief Agri/Industrial Division 178,640-sq.-ft. manufacturing plant in Kearney, NE. Photos courtesy of Chief Agri/Industrial Division.*

dustry for making products to exacting standards using material of superior strength, offering efficient designs for ease of installation, and providing dependable service. Many of its products include the word Titan as part of the

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*-Steve Ginter*

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product’s name.

### **Company Slogan**

The company’s slogan – “We Engineer Relationships” – says Marketing Manager Steve Ginter means, “The customer comes first at Chief, and all of our employees know this. We want to engineer the kind of relationships with customers, where they know they are doing business with a company that really cares about their needs.

“Although we are a diverse company with operations around the world, we share an unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction and manufacturing excellence. The president of our company once said: ‘We are big enough to meet your needs but still small enough to care about you.’ And that is really true.

“Key factors to our success are a continuously evolving product line and our loyalty to customers. We set high

manufacturing standards and have a highly-trained workforce who are committed to achieving and exceeding these standards. What our customers have to say is vitally important to us. We listen to what customers have to say and are customer-driven. We even have a special dealer advisory board that helps us understand what customers and dealers are looking for. We are loyal to customers, and they are loyal to us.”

### **Complete Systems Provider**

Ginter goes on to say that Chief Agri / Industrial is a complete systems provider. Its core products are grain bins, commercial hopper tanks, and product lines that go with these like catwalks, bucket elevators, and conveyors, Caldwell conditioning equipment and grain dryers, and Lemanco modular square bins for the feed industry.

*Sheet steel awaits fabrication on the shop floor at Chief Agri/Industrial Division using the latest CNC machining equipment.*



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*-Steve Ginter, Chief Agri / Industrial*

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Chief kept the Caldwell and Lemanco brand names when they were added to the product line because of the market recognition of these brands as quality products.

“Through our Chief manufactured products and strategic alliances, we are able to provide a one-stop option for customers to purchase nearly everything they need from one company,” says Ginter. “More recently, we have opened an additional manufacturing facility, Chief Environmental Products, to manufacture and distribute environmental products, such as secondary containment systems used by the oil industry to contain oil spills and modular wastewater treatment systems as a part of the Chief Agri / Industrial family.

“All of our divisions work closely together in providing support for each other around the world. The ability to utilize additional manufacturing capabilities across other Chief divisions, when needed, translates into added value for our customers. Chief even has a grain dryer manufacturing facility in the U.K. and a grain bin manufacturing facility in France, as well as a representative office in China.”

### **Acquisitions**

On July 8, 2010, the Chief Agri-In-



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dustrial Division finalized acquisition of the American Grain Dryer product line from Northern Grain Equipment, LLC. The grain dryer product line is marketed under the Caldwell brand name. Chief has owned and produced Caldwell grain aeration products for over 30 years.

Chief manufactures and assembles the Caldwell Continuous Mix-Flow grain dryers at Chief Agri's facilities in Kearney.

In 2005, the Chief Agri-Industrial Division acquired certain assets from Material Storage Systems, Inc., including the Lemanco product line of modular bolted bins systems, discharge gates, and various other accessories for use in the grain and feed industries. These products are produced at Chief's Kearney facility.

"Since the 1950s, Lemanco has been a well-known name in the feed milling and industrial bulk systems business," says Roger Townsend, president and general manager. "Adding these products into the Chief family was a natural exten-

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sion of our grain and feed storage and our conditioning and handling product lines."

### **Leaders in Development**

When asked what sets Chief Agri / Industrial apart from other companies, Ginter responds: "We are a leader in development, always on the forefront of developing what the industry needs. For example, about three years ago, we were the first company in the United States to produce a grain bin with a peak capacity of over 1 million bushels (Titan 1.1). Our bins have the size and strength needed to safely store the record yields of today's crops.

"Another example can be seen in the galvanization of steel we use on corrugated steel bins. A lot of companies use G-90, but we use G-115 galvanized steel on our sidewall sheets,. G-115 provides 27% more protection than the G-90 ensuring greater corrosion resistance. But first and foremost, what truly sets us apart is our commitment to taking care of

our customers. 'We Engineer Relationships' is not just our mantra; it is our way of life at Chief.

"Our Chief products utilize state-of-the-art designs that simplify construction and save our customers time and money," says Ginter. "We manufacture farm and commercial products out of our Kearney facilities, then ship them around the world.

"For customers located west of the Mississippi River, we supply from our manufacturing facilities in Kearney. To better serve our eastern grain belt customers, we needed to have materials closer to their locations. In April 2010, we opened a distribution center in Atwood, IN, from which to supply their needs. This is just another example of our commitment to our customers, by having product available closer to them."

### **Customization**

"Certain projects are going to require something out of the ordinary," says Ginter. "We don't hesitate to work with the customer and offer solutions. If a project needs customization, we do our best to provide whatever is needed. Our equipment is built with flexibility in mind."

*Shirley Brooks, contributing writer*



*Chief Agri / Industrial offers a complete line of Caldwell grain condition equipment (above) and grain handling equipment (below).*

