

## Christmas Greetings from CEO Chuck Klammer

Ahhhh, Imagination! Is there anything more wonderful than observing children actively involved in their own special brand of creativity? That is where all good ideas really begin, isn't it? - in the mind's eye. If we can imagine a new concept, chances are, we can eventually achieve it.

Many of the people at AFI have used a similar technique this past year - imagining the most efficient production facility possible, and taking small, but steady steps toward actually creating that work environment! It has been an exceptionally busy and rewarding 40th year for our company. Of course, it goes without saying, that our success could not have come about without our customers, who provide the incentive to improve our services. Or, without the united efforts of our employees and management teams. These people accepted the challenge to study the concepts of Lean Manufacturing and implement them in our own plant. It's an ongoing process, but we are well on our way! We sincerely hope you are experiencing similar success within your own company and will continue to prosper in the years to come.

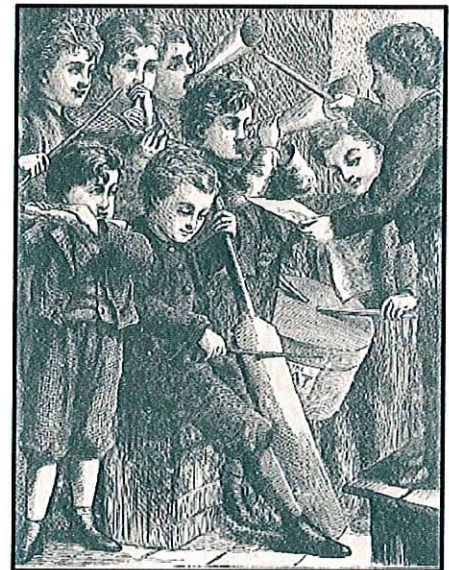
At the moment, however, my mind is not really on commerce. It's back at home in my machine shed! I'm remembering plans being made last June by of a group of children hoping to give their families a special gift. It was to be a Christmas Musical which they would perform themselves! ("Not a puppet show like last year, Grandpa!")

Well, *imagination* became reality! The *idea* mushroomed into a cast of 25 people, and I found myself building a three tier stage right where my John Deere tractor and snow mobiles used to reside! On November 26th, their musical - ***Mayhem In Bethlehem : A 30 Minute Special Report***- opened for a 5 day run in an almost "*real theater*" which could seat 60 people!

WEE KIDS "gift" not only touched the lives of their own families, but served to remind scores of other people (many unknown to them), about a monumental event which took place in our world - the birth of God's own Son, Jesus Christ ..... THE Messiah ..... God's personal gift to all ages of mankind.

I may never look at my humble machine shed in quite the same light again!

**And now, we at Associated Finishing, gratefully pause to wish you and your loved ones a Warm and Happy Christmas.** "Chuck" Klammer



"Joy to the World, the Lord has Come"

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# Lean Manufacturing? What is Goin' On?



*Educating*



*Sorting*



*Red tagging unwanted items*



*Setting: A place for everything and everything in it's place!*

For many months, AFI employees have been learning about the concept of Lean Manufacturing as a way to improve the efficiency, productivity, and profitability of their workplace. But, on Thursday October 13th, we actually began to "walk our talk". This was **5S Day!** Everyone came to work dressed in 'grubbies' to begin the monumental task of **Sorting, Setting, Shining, Standardizing and Sustaining** (improvements) in their work environment! It was truly a 'Sight to Behold'.

Each employee was given a blaze orange 5S tee shirt to wear as they critically examined their assigned areas. Clutter and seldom used items were taken to a "Red Tag Area", where Supervisors determined their ultimate fate. (Throw away? Sell? Or, store for future use). Items retained were assigned permanent locations. Those spaces were marked & labeled so future users would know exactly where to return tools and equipment.

Phase #3: Brooms, dust pans, mops & dust cloth! Each work area was given a much needed cleaning.

Later in the day, teams made decisions on the amounts of inventory to be kept at each work station and stored in-house.

Finally, 5S-ers undertook the all important task of planning how these positive changes were to be sustained over the months and years ahead.

The accomplishments made on this one special day were AMAZING in terms of the camaraderie observed among our employees and the noticeable improvement in the appearance of their plant.



*SHINE!!!*



*Standardize inventory*



*Discussing methods to Sustain our improvements*

## A Time for Work - A Time for Play



Company picnics don't have to take place in parks. In fact, AFI discovered they can be just as much fun when combined with other community events. This past summer, AFI set up a Corporate Tent for our employees at Mankato's annual **Rockin' in the Quarry Concert** (left) and **Downtown Ribfest** (right).

Rockin' in the Quarry was geared toward our families. We grilled turkey legs, set up tables of various munchables and beverages, and just let everyone kick back and enjoy the smorgasbord of music provided by the Mankato Symphony, Blue Ox Jazz Babies and other area musicians.

Ribfest, on the other hand, was a "date night" for our employees and one guest. The food was catered to us from each of the participating vendors in the rib making contest. We were able to sample all the various barbecued rib recipes while we sat in the shade of our tent and enjoyed entertainment from a nearby bandstand.

