

Ajax Innovator

News, Events and Special Features From EJ Ajax

Fall 2015



Feature Story: Patt Patterson takes the lead in the toolroom at EJ Ajax. Story on Page 2.

Manager's Message

From Erick Ajax

70 Years Young

No, I'm not 70. Not yet, anyway.

I'm referring to our company. EJ Ajax is completing its 70th year of operation, a milestone shared by thousands of American companies that took root following WWII.

The black and white photos of my grandfather working with the materials and machinery of his day give me a strong sense of pride in his accomplishments, and an equally strong sense of responsibility. And no small measure of amazement at the changes that have taken place in manufacturing.

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EJ Ajax Wins Employee Award

EJ Ajax is the winner of the 2015 Employee Training and Engagement Award, part of the 2015 Manufacturing Awards hosted annually by Minnesota Business magazine.

This award recognizes EJ Ajax for excellence in providing training to Minnesota-based employees to help improve technical and leadership skills.

EJ Ajax has worked with many of its direct competitors, nonprofits, foundations, government agencies and community colleges to invest in workforce development.

Since 1993, more than half of EJ Ajax's frontline workforce either entered into or graduated from apprenticeship programs, and most Class-A journey workers have nearly doubled their entry-level wages.

The company also participates in the M-Powered and the Precision Sheet Metal fast-track training programs at Hennepin and Anoka technical colleges, which put 25 to 30 of its entry-level employees on a career ladder that would not otherwise be available.



Event News

Design-2-Part Show

Connect with Erick Ajax and Don Wellman in Greenville, South Carolina

EJ Ajax will exhibit at the Southeast Design-2-Part Show at TD Convention Center in Greenville, South Carolina on November 18 and 19 in booth 305.

The Design-2-Part Show is the most efficient place to meet hundreds of high-quality, reliable American manufacturers to help you improve quality, lower costs, and get products to market faster. From design and prototypes to production, finishing, and assemblies, you'll find the answers you need at this show.

Erick and Don will be on hand to display products and explain EJ Ajax manufacturing capabilities. We invite you to stop by booth 305 and connect with us in Greenville!

Machinery News

New Acquisitions

EJ Ajax takes delivery of Cincinnati press brake

This month EJ Ajax took delivery of another new Cincinnati press brake. This AUTOFORM 90-ton 5-axis press brake combines precision forming capabilities with leading edge control technology. A great new addition.



Special Feature: In The Toolroom With Patt Patterson

Quick, what's the most important function in the metalforming business? 3D CAD? Materials planning? HR? Sales and marketing? All good choices, sure. But here's an area you may not have considered: the toolroom.

Tooling is a complex and extremely important function in metalforming. Complex because of the high-level CNC (Computer Numeric Control) and machine programming skills required to do the job well. Important because a perfectly made machine tool leads to perfectly formed parts.

A good tool, fitted on a servo press or turret press for example, can produce hundreds of thousands, even millions of high-quality metalformed parts from tons of steel, aluminum, brass, copper and other metals. All that work and expense hinges on the quality of the tooling.

Precision is the name of the game. Metal forming tools require tolerances within one ten-thousandth of an inch (.0001), or 1/30th the thickness of a human hair. Anything outside of this tolerance can, and probably will, cause

problems downstream. Replacing an imperfect tool costs time, money, and sweat. Thus, it falls on the toolroom lead to be very, very precise.

Motivating and mentoring others add another layer of responsibility to the toolroom lead's tasks. The toolroom lead must have mastery over all the materials, machines and processes, plus the ability to direct, motivate, inspire, and mentor colleagues. This person must lead by example, accept full responsibility for outcomes, be disciplined, and elevate efficiency.

At EJ Ajax, Arthur "Patt" Patterson fills this role.

In many ways, Patt represents an ideal example of how to pursue a career in advanced manufacturing. As Sergeant First Class in the Minnesota Army National Guard, Patt has successfully applied his 22 years of military service and training to his role at EJ Ajax.

Among the most important was his leadership training. Last summer, Patt completed a very intensive five-week

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Patt operates a Haas TM3 toolroom mill, requiring precision to within .0001 of an inch.

Toolroom (cont.)

Senior Leaders Course at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, acquiring the skills needed to lead small groups.

Patt met Erick Ajax, co-owner of EJ Ajax, at a veterans' career fair in Minneapolis in 2012. Patt began as a Training For Hire employee in August of 2012.

His early assignments included running a punch press, then logistics, where he excelled at efficiency and workflow. Patt was later assigned to the Salvagnini L3 Fiber Laser (a very expensive piece of hardware that requires a very attentive operator). In fact, Patt has operated most all of the fabrication machinery at EJ Ajax at one point or another.

Patt oversees others who are Class A Machinists, and who are farther along in their careers than Patt. But because of his capabilities, Patt applied for and was awarded the toolroom lead position.

Ongoing Education and Training

Patt began attending technical college at night soon after he was hired at EJ Ajax. He enrolled in the M-Powered program at Hennepin Technical College in Minneapolis, a Fast Track training program that couples technical training, critical/soft skills and industry credentials.

Erick Ajax contributed greatly to the design and development of the M-Powered program at Hennepin Tech. Patt's success is proof that Erick's involvement in these programs has been worthwhile.

Patt continued on to the full degree program at Hennepin Tech, gaining mastery in CNC, machine programming, and other metalworking areas of expertise.

Patt also fulfills his Minnesota Army National Guard duties, where he receives additional training. EJ Ajax provides flexible scheduling for all employees who are members of the National Guard and Reserve.

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EJ Ajax Hosts MFG Day 2015

EJ Ajax hosted MFG Day 2015 on October 2, with more than 100 area high school students and faculty members in attendance. The general public was also welcomed, as were friends and family members of EJ Ajax colleagues, vendors, and customers.

Events included a video demonstration of how products are made at EJ Ajax, a plant tour, and a presentation by EJ Ajax Co-Owner Erick Ajax.



MFG DAY is an annual event that gives manufacturers an opportunity to open their doors and show, in a coordinated effort, what manufacturing is — and what it isn't. By working together during and after MFG DAY, manufacturers use this event to address the Skills Gap, connect with future generations, and take charge of the public image of manufacturing.

The event is sponsored by the National Association of Manufacturers, the Precision Metalforming Association and the Manufacturing Institute.



Patt's extensive training and enthusiasm for his role make him an effective mentor and team leader.

Toolroom (cont.)

Mentoring At EJ Ajax

Patt acknowledges the importance of mentoring as part of his career growth at EJ Ajax. From company President Kent Djubek and Co-owner Tom Ajax on down, EJ Ajax employees help each other learn and grow in their careers.

In Patt's opinion, mentoring is one of the most important ways to make a contribution to the team. Patt's message to new EJ Ajax colleagues is derived from his extensive training in the U.S. Army: "Be excellent at every phase of the game. That's what military veterans do. That's why veterans very rarely let you down."

Manager's Message (cont.)



Have we really come this far in just 70 years? You bet we have.

Our updated plant, now at 50,000 square feet, houses millions of dollars of modern presses, servo technology, fiber laser machinery, and other manufacturing assets that require significant training and experience to operate.

There's more. On the horizon are advanced digital machine control systems, automated workflow controls, predictive maintenance, and smart energy management systems, to name just a few. Who will operate all this technology?

People. Smart, productive, motivated people.

For a case in point, read this issue's feature story about Patt Patterson. His career growth has been impressive, and he will learn more (and earn more) in the future.

For our part, we've provided an environment that makes Patt's success possible.

Can we repeat this success with others? Big yes. For instance, we're delighted to have been named as the 2015 Employee Training and Engagement Award winner by Minnesota Business magazine. That tells me we are on the right track.

Boil this down and here's what you get: while our continued investment in new machines and technology keeps us relevant, it's our investment in people that gives our customers what they really want – the best combination of precision, performance and value. Every time, every customer.

It's up to us, the management of EJ Ajax, to carry the founder's torch, to take what my grandfather built and make it better, stronger, and ready for the future. Through the continuing efforts of our people, we'll do just that.