

The Sealweld Secret

Burly and bushy-bearded Dean Chisholm still growls with laughter about being compared with “the Colonel and his carefully guarded secret recipe.”

Some people think he’s joking but he seriously admits that all kinds of people, including the Chinese and the Russians, have been trying for many years to find out and replicate the secret Sealweld ingredients which Chisholm’s father concocted 40 years ago. “No luck! And they never will find out.”

The Sealweld products and service technology is all about what the company and the industry call lubricants and sealants, products that deliver effective and tremendously cost-efficient preventative maintenance services for pipeline valve systems of all types and sizes.

Of course the jargoned technicalities, details and specs are voluminous but ferociously industry savvy and up-to-date Chisholm manages to lace even the explanation of his internationally acclaimed and Calgary-manufactured product with a gregarious and good-natured sense of humour. “It’s just very sticky, synthetic grease that’s stickier than molasses in January.”

He is blunt and straightforward about the worldwide use of his Sealweld ‘grease.’

“Experience has taught us that valves in natural gas pipelines are more likely to have leakage problems than valves in crude oil pipelines, for the simple reason that the oil itself is self-lubricating and dry natural gas is not.”

Today, more than 40 years after his father mixed the first batch, Sealweld has a 98 per cent success rate and is shipped from Calgary to over 90 countries around the world.

Just as the valve system technology on the pipelines that Sealweld services are constantly upgraded, so are the Sealweld lubricant and sealant delivery systems.

Staying independent allows the invaluable flexibility for the Calgary-based company to often customize products.



The Sealweld mixer does a small batch of the secret ingredients

“We blended up a special mixture for some 72-inch valves,” Chisholm recalls. “It ended up saving the company \$43.5 million.”

Sealweld technology and techniques are also constantly updated. Chisholm devoted more than 12 years to developing a computer-based service program, originally on CD and now online, to deliver the latest training techniques and technology for field personnel. “Initially it was for our service staff in Canada, the U.S. and the UAE and we are now finalizing Spanish, Russian and Arabic versions,” he says, with pride and accomplishment.

His other source of pride is his family. Just as he transformed and grew his father’s small valve lubricant ‘recipe’ into an internationally respected industry brand, he beams that Sealweld is now moving to the next level with the third generation of Chisholms. His two daughters and son now work in the family business.

But they also will never, ever, divulge the Sealweld secret!

donald-Laurier Institute (MLI). Authored by MLI economist Philip Cross, the report traces the point that most troubles of Canadian manufacturers can be blamed more on structural economic changes than a higher Canadian dollar.

“The numbers tell the real story,” Cross says, definitively. “Canadian manufacturing output has grown the third fastest among 18 major industry groups since the 2008-2009 recession, even outstripping growth in mining, oil and gas. There is no question Canada’s factory sector took a hit during the recession but there is no evidence to track a higher Canadian dollar as a blame.”

He cites, “The auto sector used to be the Crown Jewel of Canadian manufacturing. Will cars in general – or Canadian cars – ever return to their dominant role? Probably not. The three manufacturing specialties that took the biggest hit during the recession were cars, clothing and forestry.”

Cross explains the meltdown of Canada’s clothing manufacturing industry as a prime example. “It was a simple and natural evolution. There was too much investment in the clothing industry in the 1990s but – what were they thinking?” he asks with exasperation. “An industry built on low wages and a low dollar? We have no chance against Vietnam, China or India. We will never compete against low wages.”

Wilson says the immediate outlook for Canadian manufacturing is encouraging and strong. “The manufacturing sector is busy and productive. The sector’s unemployment rate is at 4.5 per cent, compared with the national unemployment rate of 7.5 per cent.”

Two unique and entirely different Calgary-based manufacturing companies are exceptional examples to underscore that innovation and dynamic strategy knows no market boundaries. **BIC**