

BILLY JUNGE

Interview 162a

May 22, 2000 at The Industrial Training Center, Diboll, Texas

Becky Bailey, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Becky Bailey, Billy Junge describes Temple-Inland's Industrial Training Center and its apprenticeship program. In the early 1990's, Temple began training recent high school graduates as maintenance apprentices to eventually work at their mills. Apprentices learn valuable skills that will enable them to care for and maintain Temple's high tech and increasingly complex industrial equipment. He describes the requirements for entry into the program, the tasks apprentices must complete, the company's relationship with Angelina College, and the rationale behind the program. Mr. Junge also describes some of the program's successes and some of the other local companies that have used Temple's Program as a model for their own apprenticeship programs.

Becky Bailey (hereafter BB): Okay, today is May 22nd and we are interviewing Billy Junge at, what is the name of this office?

Billy Junge (hereafter BJ): The Industrial Training Center.

BB: The Industrial Training Center, and he is in charge of the apprenticeship program for Temple Inland. So I'm asking a little about you personal, where you were born and just a little of that, where you grew up and education?

BJ: I was born in Angelina County, grew up in Angelina County. This is my home. I live, actually live now, within about a mile of where I lived most of my life. So, I didn't get very far. (laughing) I moved off and came back.

BB: Okay, and how long have you been working for Temple?

BJ: Almost 25 years.

BB: Okay. Describe some of the jobs and what you have done for them through the years.

BJ: I started out with Temple as a designer in the engineering department. And then I worked there I was actually project manager on building some of the mills. Designing the mills, and then I worked for them as a, ran jobs for them, construction jobs. I ran a fab shop for them. I've worked in engineering twice while I was in here, engineering twice. I did special projects in the mills, was maintenance superintendent for a while, and then I started Industrial Training Center about 7 years ago and I've been here ever since.

BB: Okay, could you kind of describe how the idea for the training center started, that apprenticeship program?

BJ: Well the training center got started when I was in the mill running maintenance department. I discovered that a lot of our maintenance guys were very good people, very hard working people, but they were inadequately trained to do their job. They just didn't have the skills that they needed. When I started doing training actually in the mill, and then once I got started doing that, the other mills said "we need it too." So I got moved to the corporate side to do training for all the mills. So that is how I started the Industrial Training Center. Once I started it, I guess all my life, or most of my life, I've always seen a need for apprenticeship. A lot of people have a different opinion of it. But I think the world is messed up by letting the apprenticeship go away for many, many years. Apprenticeship was started, I guess it probably started in Germany in the 1700's or something like that, or maybe further back than that. And, you know, it is a good thing. And we need to adopt apprenticeship across the board in a lot of areas. Not just what I have. I saw a need and also in some of the things that I work with, I found out that predictions were made 10 years ago that, by this time, by the year 2000, we were going to see a shortage of skilled craft people. And it has happened, we're here. And to eliminate that and keep us, the problem, we run a study in our mills that there were people that were going to retire in the next few years and we had no provisions for replacing those. Plus, seeing the skills, the skills requirements have gone up. The maintenance guy years ago, in an old sawmill, you had to be a big burly guy, strong and could work long hard days. Didn't mind getting dirty and didn't mind the cold and the rain and all that. Well today these are high skilled guys, very highly technical people in the mill. And so that has changed in this century. So we needed people to meet up to that need. The people we had in the past were not qualified to meet the technology of the time. And so we have upgraded some people, but not every person is capable of being upgraded. So, we needed high skilled people, we needed a supply of them. And right now we are right in the middle of a situation where skilled people are hard to come by. I just got off the phone with a maintenance man, maintenance supervisor just then called me about one of my apprentices, from Diboll ISD, that he is becoming a permanent employee of the mill. The fact is, of him telling me how good a quality of guy this is, why he wants him, and why he wants to promote him. And among other things, you know.

BB: That is real good.

BJ: We have mills, Temple has mills scattered, we have 19 plants scattered from Canada to Texas to Georgia. And I was in Canada last week and Oklahoma last night and everywhere I go we have a problem of good skilled people.

BB: And in relating that to what comes from our high school, how well are our high school guys ready? What do you look for when you look for a person to go into your program?

BJ: We have got some pretty stiff requirements to get into our program now. A few years ago a guy could get in pretty easy, back when Allen was on the beginning of things

tightening up. But prior to him coming in things were along about that time it was pretty easy to get in. But, you know, interview and act like he wanted to come in, we would just about take him. Today we put them through a rigorous testing procedure. They go through...they go to Angelina College for four hours of testing, which is called work keys. And then if they score adequately on work keys, they make it to step two. And step two they come to Diboll where we put them through a battery of tests which are things like verbal reason, space relationships, accountical aptitude. There is even a little bit of personality testing involved in that. But when they go through all that, then we get a full blown report on every one of them. Our industrial psychologist tells us exactly what he sees. But then we do an interview and they have got to make it through all of that now. So it is real tough. Their math skills have to be very good, their reading skills, their comprehensive skills have to be real good and then their personality skills. Their personality has to be good to meet up to what we want. We want people that are very adaptable, not rigid, they can adapt. Things change every day, they got to be able to move from place to place. People who are not real set in their ways. People that can think on their feet so to speak. We don't, they don't have to know anything about electricity or mechanics. They just have to have the ability to learn. That is cause for a high skill. The guys that we are now taking in the apprenticeship program could easily go to A&M and get a degree in engineering. That is the...

BB: That is the caliber...

BJ: ...the caliber of person we want. We're finding fewer and fewer every day. We're just picking up two right now. The last battery of test on them, we would have got five or six, we got two. We barely accepted those, they just barely, they were not strong candidates, they scored too low. The problem we are having with high school students, not across the board, take the guys we got from you, Allen, the two Stewart boys, Carlos and the Crager boy, all those have been out of school probably a year when we got a hold of them. And it seems like that is better, not at Diboll, we have not had a Diboll student right out of high school, to come out of high school and come straight here. We have had them from other schools. We had two young boys that came out of Huntington right out of high school who did very, very well. I mean just fell in with no problem. But we had some boys out of some other schools that gave us some trouble. What it is, they come to us still with the fun and games they had at school. A matter of fact, one of these boys we had trouble with was extremely smart. Probably one of the smartest young men I've had, but the problem was he was so smart nothing was hard to him. He didn't have to work, and I know that has happened to him at school. Life was easy at school and played at school and thought he was going to play here, that is what got him, playing. Playing around and we fired him.

BB: Just didn't take it serious.

BJ: That is right, just not serious. But you take a young man that is out of school, with respect if he's married, more especially if he's got a kid or two, they're dead serious. You take every one of those boys except that Crager boy, that is that stack, four out of five of

those boys are married and have children. I think all of them had children when we got them, I think.

BB: No, Allen didn't but it was on the way.

BJ: It was on the way. It was pretty close, I know.

BB: It was getting close.

BJ: That is right. So it makes a lot of difference. So I think the kids coming out of school, pretty much have the basic skills of reading, writing and math pretty well. But a lot of the things that we demand, of being punctual, very punctual, at school they can slide, be a little bit late and they get by with it. We don't deal with it. We don't have much room for that. Doing your job and tending to your business. And not, you're required to do this at this time, and this to be done. Every Monday morning those guys have to turn in a time sheet to this office or they don't get paid that week. We don't get a time sheet they don't get paid. They still punch clocks in the mill, but these guys are required to turn a paper in here every Monday morning. If they fail to do it, it is their fault. So, we had a problem with that. We had boys that could not do that. And so, those kind of things are big: punctual, follows the rules, being able to tend to their own business. Being able and not, you know a lot of kids in high school tend to let other kids sway them a lot. We are looking for kids that are not swayed by other people, let somebody lead them off. We are looking for leaders, true leaders. A lot of these guys are, they're very, you take those guys, and I don't know if Allen was in the program, I'm pretty sure Allen was. Allen was one we sent to Hope, Arkansas for a week.

BB: Yes.

BJ: Those boys had to go, we made reservations for them, got their transportation, reservations lined up, they had to go find the plant, find the people they were going to be working for, do the job, tend to their business and get back without any hitch. And they did it. They didn't have any problem with it.

BB: I remember him talking about it for a while. So whenever we try to relate what you're telling us, back to what we need to do on our school campuses, you're saying that as far as foundation they know how to do the math, the reading, communication, the written, all of those types of things.

BJ: Most of the time.

BB: Most of the time.

BJ: Most of time, I think that is pretty accurate. I'm sure that out of all we have tested I could show you a lot of people that didn't have those skills, didn't meet up. But I wouldn't say that it wasn't something the school necessarily did. A lot of times that

comes from a kid himself, of not taking the harder road through school. A lot of them take the easier route by not taking the higher level math, sciences and stuff like that.

BB: So even though they know that they are going to get out and do this kind of job, they still need to be taking the higher math's, the higher science, all of that. It is just notched up a level from what it used to be.

BJ: This is not, a lot of people think that a maintenance person is, just anybody can be a maintenance person. Thirty years, forty years ago that was true. But today this is high skilled, high tech equipment. It is everything we have in the mill now is controlled by a computer. Computer information is all over these plants. Precision is to be gained by that, very close precision.

BB: Well one thing that we have tried real hard to do and with Temple's grants and that sort of thing, we've tried to beef up the technology on all of our campuses so children are comfortable with computers and that sort of thing. Is some of that translating into the business world for you?

BJ: We have not had any problem with computers. I don't know of any problem that we have had relating to a computer. Our guys have computer knowledge, they come in here and they're in here, they check...some of them don't have them that are in the program; they come in and check out a computer and carry it home to do their work. That is not a problem.

BB: Okay. So that is a plus.

BJ: Yes, that is working good.

BB: Okay. But it is just in the areas of personal qualities, individual responsibilities.

BJ: Being adults.

BB: Being adults.

BJ: And y'all know that. You see them at school. You know you're saying "why can't that kid just grow up." He's got all the qualities he needs if he would just grow up. And what we will see, we will see them, it's kind of like you go to the college and the average age at Angelina College of kids today is still probably 27, 28 or 30 years old, something like that. Because what is happening all these kids get out of high school and flounce around a year or two and then they go to college and they get serious about it. We were just talking back there, Maria got in some ladies education papers back there a minute ago. And Maria came in with one on the lathe that worked for us, I forgot her name now. I knew her dad; he worked for us too. But she said this lady, she works from over at corporate. She has two or three children, took four classes last semester at SFA and works for us and has children. Made 3 B's and an A. She is tough, that is all I can say about her. But I'm sure she graduated from Diboll High School.

BB: Oh my gosh.

BJ: You know the scans are, came out, you probably saw the scans report what, 10 years ago or whenever it came out. And the qualities they ask for was the ability to learn, well that is very important. I think that is something that we need to work on. How they learn, giving them a problem and letting them resolve the problem. How to learn how to get information, how to...give them something and them have to go dig it out. Not, tell Dad to do it too, so to speak, learning to learn, interpersonal skills. Communication, I think that, I remember in high school myself, I would have died in speech class, was the worst thing I had to do. I think all kids ought to have a speech class, every student. I think they should have to do presentations in front of class. And they ought to be graded on them. Negotiation, I think, you know, I won't say just sports, I think a lot of the extra-curricular activities, whether it be a drill team, sports, Ag program or what, play an important role in kids learning how to negotiate. I think it is really important learning how to negotiate with one another. You know, you are never going to get it your way. If you go in there and try to make it "my way" every time, it is not going to happen. Same thing happens at the mill, so I think negotiation is real important that they learn – team work.

BB: Yes, work as a team. Yes, in all of this.

BJ: I know when I went to school there was no such thing as that in school. I understand schools are doing a lot with it now, but I think it is very important to put them in groups and let them resolve problems. Let them learn how to work with one another. I think that is real important.

BB: We have probably used cooperative learning in science lab, five or six years for sure.

BJ: I knew a lot of them used it but I didn't know how well. The guys we have, as a general rule, of the five we have all together we have, I think, there is problems that occur with personality situations. That is another thing that is really good. The schoolhouse is a very diverse location; they get to work with all kinds of people. And they need to learn to do that. In our apprenticeship program we move them from place to place a lot. Because they may get in this building and have to work with the sorriest, meanest guy in the world, get in this building and be with the nicest guy in the world. They have to learn how to get along with people.

BB: That is true. Do you look for this program to expand into other areas, you are maintenance, so in some of the production areas, do y'all look for the same sort of apprenticeship programs?

BJ: Well, not to date. But I think it is going to happen. I think that you are going to see in years to come that companies are going to continually go to an apprenticeship type, whether it be called co-op, a co-op student out of college that works summers, or whether it is a true apprenticeship program. I think you'll see more of it. I think the world is realizing that the problems we are having are not good. I think an area that you can't do

anything about at the high school, this is my personal opinion, that the world is missing, is the fact that a kid really can't work until he is 18 years old. I think that is wrong. I think a kid needs responsibility. I think it's great for a kid that raises a calf or whatever, they need responsibility. And you can't teach it all at high school at the school level. From the time they are 10 or 12 years old, they need to have responsibility. That is where a lot of parents are falling down. They are not teaching them to clean up their room, or whatever it is, the responsibility that they learn to work for money. If a kid gets 18 years old and he's never worked, he's never mowed a lawn for a dollar, or never done anything, he's not going to be interested in work. I made it 18 years without working, why do I need to work now. And, you take one of those kids that grew up on a farm, and it is really good around a rural area like Diboll, you take a kid that grew up on a farm that grew up with an opportunity to do something in his life, more apt to make it. He's more apt to fit our needs.

BB: We need that.

BJ: Even though he does like to fish and hunt, and all that, mud hog, it doesn't matter, he will still make it.

BB: Okay. Anything you would like to add? I think that is about all we were going to ask about. I was interested in how it all worked.

BJ: Well, I guess I really wish that we could get more kids right out of high school right into our program. I think it is the greatest thing. And what really bothers me, is parents and all don't see the need. Too many parents out there today haven't had too great an expectation on kid's performance of what happens after graduation from high school. Oh my kid is going to go to the University of A&M, or University of Texas and get a PhD in law, or whatever. But they are not going to do it. He might be a welder or what ever, and I think realistic expectation of parents with their kids. Now, this doesn't have anything to do with you, but realizing that little Johnny would make the best welder that ever was. He can make a living as a welder if you've got proper training and the opportunity. Just go be a welder. And a lot of people don't understand maintenance out there, even in the schoolhouse, of understanding the opportunities in the maintenance world with a place like Temple. Yes, and you can talk to these professionals and they got grease up to here, they worked hard and they put in long hours and done all that. But yet, you're seeing more and more of them in building a future that are willing to go to work dressed like this, and stay this way. Because they are not there, and right now we are working with a new project for Temple, reason I've been all over and stayed in Pineland an extra day. We've started with just changing the way we do maintenance for Temple. We've worked on these young guys. But now we have got to change the way we do maintenance. We've got to restructure our maintenance departments to align with this high technology, high school work force. If we continue to treat maintenance like we did for 20 - 30 years, it does us no good to train high school people with this high tech equipment.

BB: Are you going more into like the preventive maintenance?

BJ: Preventive, yes, that is right.

BB: That is more about what Allen's talking about.

BJ: That is what he's working in right now. Allen is really good at that, really good at that. Even though that is your son, he is really good at it.

BB: All the balancing, yes.

BJ: We've had a lot of...I don't know if he's told you about it, we have a lot of flack at the mills on getting them to putting him to doing that because he has a natural talent for that. That is an equipment doctrine, if you want to put it in plain terms to understand. We can actually predict the liability of a machine with better accuracy than a doctor can predict yours and mine. We use some of the technologies that they use. We have people that can go out there and take readings, just like the doctor running test and they can go run test and come back and tell you when...

BB: When that bearing is going out.

BJ: ...that bearing had a scratch on one ball, or on the weights, or somebody didn't grease it right or many of the other things. So we can tell a lot more. That is very important to us. We have got to have more of those people with that ability moving into that area. It is high tech and you don't take a regular maintenance man and put him on that high tech equipment. Allen is doing predictive maintenance probably in a day's time, lays his hands on equipment to the value of 50 to 100 thousand dollars. Just in them black boxes and shrapnel with this high tech expensive equipment. But we can assure that our mills run as useful.

BB: Because every time they are down that is money.

BJ: It would stagger you to hear some of the numbers that I've heard within the last 30 days that Temple is losing by a mill being down. I'm talking about billions of dollars, millions of dollars. In this new change in maintenance that we started here at our training center, we started implementing in the mills and working with the mills to change, they are working out the numbers of what they are losing. We are not telling them, but the numbers are astronomical. So we have got to get where we can run the mill consistent. You have got to have people that can do it. And those guys, the only thing they are doing, first of all it is really neat when you get a guy, and I just got a call from Pineland, Texas, maintenance superintendent, electrical superintendent called me about one of the Stewart boys, that was over there at Camden, and he was moving to Pineland from Diboll, we've already found him a home and moving him over there. He's taking a permanent position there. The problem is, and this is a neat problem, when we started this apprentice program about 7 years ago, our apprenticeship program was 2 years of going to school and working. Get a degree at Angelina College then one year we have to find them a home. If we don't have a place for them, we float them one year and then we find them a home. Usually we don't have any trouble that last year. So the total program is actually 3

years long, but they really have 2 years of schooling and training. When we started the program the mill told us that we could not train a millwright or an electrician in 2 years. It could not be done. It took 4 to 6 to 8 to 10 years to do it. Well, that man just got off the phone right there told me just then, that this young man right now is better than anything he can hire off the street, and better than half of his existing work force.

BB: Golly.

BJ: He just graduated the other night at AC, just finished 2 years. We had a mill that tried to promote one of our young guys after one year to a lead man position, but we couldn't allow it. That is the quality of these guys. That is the reason we are so tough on them up front. We are trying to get the best. And even at that, one or two slips in the cracks. We have one we have to terminate ever once in a while.

BB: Kind of explain your relationship with Angelina College because I think it is pretty unique. Do you guys have a lot to say about the courses, or is that a prescribed...I mean did y'all work together to...?

BJ: We actually helped set up the courses about 10 years ago, or what ever it was. I actually, myself and other people with Temple worked with Angelina. Close to 10 years ago we went in and helped them to revamp all their courses in mechanical and electrical. We actually went all out to help them have a good tire program. This is the only school in the state of Texas to get a tire program. I actually had to go get a certification myself to be a back up for them so they could get it. I did that, and that was no problem. We worked with them on developing all the courses that have been redone up there. Then our relationship now is we schedule all our courses for our apprentice's right here. We do all our scheduling here. Our apprentices do not go through a registration line at the college. As a matter of fact, no Temple employee does that. Anybody working for Temple can register right here at this office. All they have to do is hand over, if it's paid for by Temple and it's done. All they have to do is go to school. All the registration is handled in house. We have a real good relationship with Angelina. In fact, if things are not right, it's just like I was in town some time back, and I met one of the instructors and said "hey, where is so and so, he missed class today." They call us, they pick up the phone, "so and so, one of your students missed class yesterday." They are required to go to class, so they know them, they call us on a regular basis. We work with them constantly on programs up there. If there is a change comes up they call us. We sit on their advisory committee also. We are involved with everything they do.

BB: Are there any other mills like in Lufkin, LP, any of the others that have this type of program at all?

BJ: Yes. Well Champion started an apprenticeship program a couple of years ago back when it was Champion. But after it changed to Donahue I don't know, they kinda dropped every thing where it was at. But it is real neat, Texas Foundries has a program, it is kinda funny, they called Draper, I may have the name mixed up, but any how, he had heard about it and he called down here and wanted to know if I would tell him something about it. I said "yes, when do you want to come down." He came down and he said he

wanted to know something about it. I just pulled the book out and handed it to him. I said “there it is; there is your copy.” He said “you’re going to give me all of this. I can’t believe you would do that.” I said “here it is; do what you want to do with it.” He said “why would you want to do that.” I said “you need an apprenticeship program just like we do.”

BB: Yes.

BJ: I said “the community needs it; we need it because every time you train an apprentice that is one less person that we have to fight over out here in time to hire. In East Texas it was really bad about 10 years ago, Texas Foundry hated us, we hated Champion and everybody else because they were stealing employees from one another. And we got accused all the time about stealing, “You stole one of my good employees.” Well if we train them all we don’t have to worry about that. And the more we all train the more we all have to pick from and the easier life is. So they have an apprenticeship program and he calls ever once in a while. He’ll have a problem with an apprentice or with something. And he says “what would you do in this case.” And I’ll tell him. And he’ll say “I can’t believe y’all do that there.” I said “why not, you having a program doesn’t hurt me at all. It helps me, I feel like.” And it also helps the fact with him having apprentices at the college it assures us of having classes. If they don’t have enough students, they don’t have classes. Every time he puts a student in and I put one in, we have better chance of having classes.

We’ve actually talked with Memorial Hospital, came down and looked at our apprenticeship program. I don’t know what they ever done. They came in and grilled us and what they did with it I don’t know. J. F. Clipper out of Nacogdoches came down, we did that for them. We’ve promoted it, I think it is great, I think the more and more it gets out.

I think another good thing that schools can do is promote kids taking ‘learning more’ classes during the summer and stuff like that. Kids that can meet that goal I think it is really good. Turn it over, it’s good for them. I think it’s good when the high school can offer it as classes and they get credit for it. Some of our guys that came out of one local school had like 20 credits or something when they got here. That is a plus because they get paid for credit hours with us. They get, if they have 20 credits they got a raise when they got here.

BB: Yes, I remember that with Allen. Every time he get through taking so many hours.

BJ: I think at 17, 18 credit hours he gets a raise.

END OF INTERVIEW