KRAIBURG celebrates half a century at the Geretsberg site

Retreading specialist looks back over five successful decades and gears up for the next generation

Fifty years ago, Richard Wagner started managing eight employees as they worked on the production of hotcured compounds at the Geretsberg site. The customs barriers between Germany and Austria had prompted the shareholders of the KRAIBURG family business, based in Waldkraiburg in Bavaria, to move across the border. So, after two decades of producing at the German headquarters, they purchased a sawmill with eleven hectares of land in Geretsberg, Austria, and established KRAIBURG Austria as it is today... The company invited around 200 customers at the REIFEN trade fair in May to a special evening event to mark its 50th anniversary. Some 100 guests from politics, industry and professional associations joined the Upper Austrians as they celebrated at the company site in Geretsberg in the middle of June. The anniversary celebrations were rounded off by a company party and by an open day which was attended by some 2,000 neighbours and locals who took the opportunity to take a look behind the scenes and to join in with the many activities.

Impressions of 50 years of memories in a relaxed atmosphere

The guests of honour from politics, industry and professional associations at the festivities listened as Josef Lechner, Mayor of Geretsberg, and Dr. Josef Pühringer, Governor of Upper Austria, congratulated and thanked the company for its enduring success which is naturally also of benefit to the local region and the local people. Representing the Austrian Economic Chambers (WKÖ), Klemens Steidl of the Braunau Chamber of Commerce presented KRAIBURG Austria with the gold badge of honour for 50 years of success in business. There was a journey through five decades of company history as KRAIBURG Austria led the way in the format of a relaxed and informative meeting. Those present included Fritz A. Schmidt, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of KRAIBURG Austria, his brother Peter Schmidt, shareholder of KRAIBURG Holding, Thorsten Schmidt, Director of KRAIBURG Austria,
Richard Wagner, the first manager at the Geretsberg site, Johann Webersberger, Chairman of the Works Council of KRAIBURG Austria, commercial clerk Christin Hochradl, and Norbert Reschenhofer, Director of KRAIBURG Walzenfertigung, the roller production arm which is also based at the Geretsberg site.

From contract manufacturing of patterns to the KRAIBURG Original

Virtually none of those present knew, for example, that the first pattern rolled off the conveyor belt in 1970 – for an order from a large American company which had established a market for the precured process. Or the fact, that seven years later a serious fire brought the company to a standstill. It was a disaster which ultimately turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the shareholders decided to rebuild and install new machines, bringing a considerable boost. At the beginning of the 1980s the Upper Austrians terminated the contract with the American precure retreading company. It marked the start of the career of the KRAIBURG designs. The first "KRAIBURG Original" left the conveyor belt. After 10 years it was already time to invest in a second press. KRAIBURG Austria has gone from annual pattern production figures of 400 tonnes in the 1980s to 10,000 tonnes today.

KRAIBURG family: quality, decency and integrity

On the 35th anniversary of the company, the KRAIBURG family had 350 employees who did all they could to perpetuate the vision and traditional values of the company founder, Fritz Schmidt Senior, to serve the customers with quality, decency and integrity. The growth in business volume and sales was naturally accompanied by a demand for high-calibre staff with enthusiasm for the job. Not only does KRAIBURG have an excellent reputation for apprenticeship training, with many workers having started their long career at the Geretsberg site, but the company also has an exemplary benefit scheme which holds the KRAIBURG family together in bad times as well as in good. And so the retreading specialist continued on its way. In 2006 the company presented the first EM tyres at the REIFEN trade fair. In 2007 the millionth kilogram of rubber solution was recorded at the Geretsberg site.
Sadly, the economic crisis of 2009 did not leave the company unscathed. But it braved the storm and recovered really well: In 2013 KRAIBURG Austria posted sales of more than 83 million euros which marked a return to the level of previous years – for all divisions including ergolastec industrial mats and fiberlastec fibre-reinforced elastomer compounds. The retreading business accounts for about 75 per cent of the sales.

**Aim: to secure the future for the next generation**

Given the prolonged stagnation of the tyre market in large parts of Europe, KRAIBURG Austria is pleased with its results. The goal for 2014 is to maintain its level and to defend its position as one of the leading suppliers of quality materials and compounds for retreads in Europe and, where possible, to expand it. The KRAIBURG family has all it takes to secure the future for the next generation: the will, enthusiasm and optimism. Here’s to the next 50 years of KRAIBURG Austria at the Geretsberg site!

Holger Düx, Head of Sales and Marketing, Retreads Division
Gummiwerk KRAIBURG Austria GmbH & Co. KG, June 2014

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Thorsten Schmidt, Director of KRAIBURG Austria, and Norbert Reschenhofer, Director of KRAIBURG Walzenfertigung, welcomed the guests from politics, industry and professional associations.

A journey through five decades of company history as KRAIBURG Austria led the way in the format of a relaxed and informative meeting (from the left):

• Norbert Reschenhofer, Director of KRAIBURG Walzenfertigung
• Richard Wagner, the first manager at the Geretsberg site
• Fritz A. Schmidt, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of KRAIBURG Austria
• his brother Peter Schmidt, shareholder of KRAIBURG Holding
• Johann Webersberger, Chairman of the Works Council of KRAIBURG Austria
• Christin Hochradl, commercial clerk KRAIBURG Austria
• Thorsten Schmidt, Director KRAIBURG Austria
Klemens Steidl of the Braunau Chamber of Commerce presented KRAIBURG Austria with the gold badge of honour for 50 years of success in business.

KRAIBURG Austria is happy about the tribute and optimistically looks to the future.
Governor of Upper Austria, Dr. Josef Pühringer, caught up on the production process of tread materials.

The retreading specialists depicted the production process within twelve information desks.
Some 100 guests from politics, industry and professional associations joined the Upper Austrians as they celebrated at the company site in Geretsberg. The open day in the afternoon was attended by some 2,000 neighbours and locals.