

Date: 24.04.2023

Hans Braun was a loyal colleague for 49 years

How Hans Braun came to BECK as a young man and why he never wanted to work anywhere else.

It's a Friday in March. Hans Braun is in his office at the plant in Winterlingen. The Head of the "Regrinding and Repairs" department clears up the last of his personal belongings and takes a walk through the company to say a final goodbye to colleagues. Management is holding a reception in the afternoon. "It was a great day", Hans Braun will say later. He barely had time to get nostalgic because "there was so much going on, I didn't have time to think at all." And he was prepared, the farewell had been planned for a long time.

The 64-year-old retired in April after 49 years in the company. And at the same time as his wife. They're both excited and full of plans for retirement. They want to spruce up their home in neighbouring Harthausen, and there's plenty to do in the garden. And they've also booked a holiday on the North Sea coast. Hans Braun isn't afraid of this new chapter of his life. Especially as he knows he's leaving his team in good hands. He helped his successor get ready to take over the role. Hans says: "He will do a great job, I'm sure."

He started out as a junior worker

Hans Braun was 16 when he started as an apprentice at BECK. He found the training to become an industrial mechanic (still called fitter at the time) easy. He was already well acquainted with the company. A year earlier, he had started as a junior worker, which was not uncommon at the time. Available apprenticeships were rare in the 70s. His father had arranged the job for him. He had been at the pub, where he met the then managing director of BECK. They got talking and things progressed from there. The very next morning, his father sent him to the company. "I signed up right away", Hans explains, laughing because he had approached the matter so naively. "I didn't have the slightest idea what to expect." This year as a junior worker was tough and educational, but he also matured emotionally.

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At first, he was employed in the shipping department. “I packed reamers there all day long.” Later he became a fill-in worker in the milling shop. Hans put tools into the machines, and soon also took on more challenging duties and worked on various milling machines.

“You’ll see, you’ll be a master one day”

He remained in the milling shop even after his apprenticeship. An older worker approached the young colleague: “You’ll see, you’ll be a master one day.” Hans was taken aback and first became a soldier. He did two years of military service, which was also a formative experience. Back at BECK, he encountered the first modern CNC machines. BECK, a specialist in reamers and countersinks, also started manufacturing fine boring tools. Hans learnt new things and found it exciting and interesting. He was soon appointed deputy master, although he still hadn’t completed vocational college. He started right away, alongside work. Five years later, he succeeded his boss, who was retiring. Hans became a master and was now in charge of the milling shop and its around 25 employees.

Business at BECK was not always as good as one would hope in these years. Demand for products fluctuated, and this was noticeable. There were ups and downs in turnover and incoming orders. Sometimes, you had to work overtime, and then there was a cutback in hours again — Hans wasn’t deterred. He believed in BECK and remained loyal to the company.

Hans gets involved as a works council member in difficult times

He ran for the works council for the first time in 2002, “because I was interested in staff issues and because I wanted to get involved.” No sooner had he been elected than he had to prove himself in difficult times. A global economic downturn left BECK in a precarious situation. As the newcomer to the works council, Hans was involved in negotiations, held talks with the management, the employers’ association, and the trade union for weeks on end. Hans had a sinking feeling. But he did not give up hope. Two years later in 2004, BECK was still called BECK and was now part of the MAPAL Group. “Since then, business has been steady here,” says Hans and he’s pleased.

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“The best workplace in the world”

It wasn't long before Hans Braun's life changed again. In 2006, he became Chairman of the Works Council, a position he would hold for ten years. Two years later, management entrusted him with the regrinding service and complaints processing. He was tasked with developing an organisational structure for this department. Hans' work changed completely. “Now, I was dealing with sales issues and had to learn lots of things all over again.” Left to his own devices, he established the production process for regrinding orders. This soon resulted in a separate regrinding department. Hans came to grips with commercial processes and now spent a lot of time at his computer but remained close to production. “It was the best workplace in the world for me,” the 64-year-old says. He now also came into contact with customers and worked together with colleagues from around the world. He had learnt English at school, a long time ago, but “it worked.” He's grateful for the numerous opportunities that BECK gave him, the new retiree reflects with satisfaction. “I took advantage of these opportunities and was able to keep evolving.” When Hans Braun says today: “BECK was my life.” Who could disagree?

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Captions:

PRESS RELEASE



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Hans Braun ©MAPAL

Words:	944
Characters:	4,447
Characters with spaces:	5,381

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