

Life After Maytag



Former Maytag employee and IAM member Jim McGovern spent a year in Iraq and relocated to Michigan after Maytag closed.

When Maytag closed its Galesburg, IL refrigerator factory in March 2004, it marked the beginning of an odyssey for more than 1,600 IAM members determined to rebuild their lives after Maytag shipped their jobs to a factory in Reynosa, Mexico.

For some, the question of what to do next was answered before the last side-by-side rolled off the assembly line in Galesburg. A trio of Maytag workers were serving in Iraq after their National Guard unit was called up and attached to

the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division.

"I didn't think too much while I was in Iraq about what I would do after I got back," said former Maytag employee Jim McGovern. "I knew what was happening in Galesburg, but my family had already moved to Upper Michigan and I figured I'd try to find work there when I returned."

There was plenty to keep McGovern and his fellow soldiers occupied while they waited for orders to return home. After dozens of skir-

tag Left Town

The impact of Maytag's decision to close its Galesburg, IL facility can be seen in nearby Galva, IL, one of dozens of communities trying to cope with the loss of good manufacturing jobs.

mishes, hundreds of patrols and more than 50,000 rounds fired, the members of Foxtrot Battery returned to grateful families in and around Galva, IL, not far from Galesburg.

Mixed Results

McGovern was fortunate to find work with a highway construction crew. But when he landed a job at an iron ore mine in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, he learned again the value of working at a union-represented company.

"The pay and benefits are excellent," said McGovern, who gained a new perspective from his time in a combat zone. "Working in the mine can be dirty, dangerous and difficult. But the worst day in the mine is still better than the best day in Iraq."

Derrick Glisan and Ed Matern, two Maytag workers who served alongside McGovern in Iraq, returned to towns still trying to absorb the economic fallout from so many high-paying jobs suddenly disappearing.

"I'm working construction in and around Galva with my father, but the impact of Maytag's closure is plain to see," said Glisan, who won a

Bronze Star and Purple Heart in Iraq. "Some folks have landed on their feet, but others are struggling."

Dashed Hopes

Many former Maytag workers turned to education and federally-funded retraining programs, hoping to replace lost incomes. For many, it was a journey that began with high hopes and ended in frustration.

Gail Stubbs looked forward to a new career after seven years with Maytag. "I was excited and enthusiastic," said Stubbs. "I've always been interested in the law and I was anxious to take advantage of the training and look for a job as a paralegal."

After completing her training and sending more than 50 resumes to legal firms as far away as Davenport, IA and Peoria, IL, the only job available was a part-time temporary position for \$6 per hour.

"The reality is, there just aren't anywhere near as many jobs as there are job seekers," said Stubbs. "I'm a single mom with a 15-year old. I'll figure something out, but it's been very discouraging."

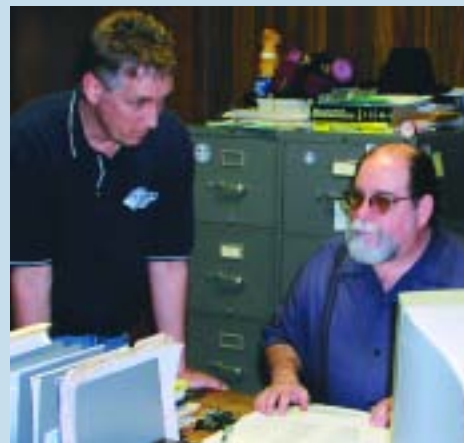
Of the more than 800 Maytag workers who signed up for retraining under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) when Maytag left in 2003, only a fraction found jobs with pay and benefits that equalled Maytag's,

according to Dave Bevard, former IAM Local 2063 president in Galesburg. Bevard now provides employment counseling for displaced workers as part of the Illinois AFL-CIO Peer Outreach Program.

Deserve Better

"Many of the people who signed up for retraining believed there would be an equivalent job waiting for them at the other end of the tunnel. That just isn't true," said Bevard. "We're all coming to grips with just how devastating it is when a major employer pulls the plug on a town like Galesburg."

"Starting over in middle age with growing children, aging parents and mortgages isn't easy," warns Bevard. "These people are the heart and soul of America. They deserve better, much better."



"We're struggling," says former Local 2063 President Dave Bevard, right, who provides counseling with Doug Dennison for displaced Maytag employees as part of an Illinois AFL-CIO Peer Outreach Program.