





Another step in product advancement came about through Dahlke's experience with the extraction of dye from wood, accomplished by chipping trees and extracting the dye content called Logwood Extract. This led Abbey to assist in the construction of a dye extraction plant in Mexico in 1980. In later years this extraction plant was added to the group of Abbey companies.

In 1991 the assets of Abbey Color & Chemical Co., Inc. were purchased by Robert S. Pettus and Roger S. Nielsen. With this purchase, the name was changed to Abbey Color Incorporated. The Nielsen family also owns and is involved in the operations of Abbey Green, Inc., a construction and demolition waste recycler in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and AbbyMex, the aforementioned dye stuff manufacturer located in Mexico.

The history behind AbbyMex began with the need to secure the long-term supply of the extract for the production of Hematoxylin and Hematine. To do so, the new owners began to pursue a deeper business relationship with this supplier. A key step in the process was to establish a cross-cultural communication based relationship, taking the norms and values of the Mexican business culture into account. Once this was accomplished, the bond between Nielsen and the owner of the Mexican plant continued to strengthen. Over the past two decades the relationship between the two companies has become formalized, creating AbbyMex, and ensuring the longevity of the product for the marketplace.

Over time, the dye stuff market changed as major dye users began to move outside the United States, and Abbey Color managers knew they needed to differentiate their products from the influx of dye-stuff products coming into the U.S. from off-shore producers. This was done by establishing industry standards for all of Abbey Color's dyes, based on scientific measurements and quality manufacturing processes that produced a consistent product for each lot. This differentiation lasted only a short period of time, however, as other dye stuff providers followed suit.

In 1998, Abbey Color purchased the assets of two companies in West Chester, Pennsylvania. West Chester Chemical was a



producer of leak detection fluids and epoxy resin repair kits for the gas distribution markets. Bonded Products was the firm's manufacturing and marketing arm to the U.S. defense industry. These businesses were merged into Abbey Products, a DBA of Abbey Color.

Abbey Color Incorporated has 27 employees in Philadelphia, 25 in North Carolina and 15 in Mexico. The company's stated purpose is to provide jobs for those needing a second chance. Thus, Abbey Color provides competitive wages and benefits, a safe working environment and the promise that no employee will be laid off. Employees may, of course, be fired for legitimate reasons, but the owners feel that a layoff is the failure of leadership in managing the company properly. Abbey Color is committed to ensuring that employees will not suffer because of leadership incompetence. Ten percent of the company's annual profit is returned to the employees in the form of an annual bonus.

An additional ten percent of the company's annual profit is earmarked for charity and the contributions are administered with input from employees. Needs are reviewed each year, and local projects are updated. Among the projects supported by Abbey Color are local church mission trips, youth organizations designated for after-school programs and individual relief organizations serving the immediate Philadelphia community.



*Peter Hughes (VP/GM) conducts a quarterly process review with employees.*





second generation of the Nielsen family. The first generation is represented by Joyce and Roger Nielsen. Second generation family members involved in the business are Brian James Nielsen, Kristen Lee Nielsen Donnelly, and Sarah Elizabeth Nielsen.

The plan is for each generation to provide the opportunity for spouses to work in the business, if they desire. However, the company will be strategically directed by the family through the leadership of the family council. Outside professionals will be encouraged to provide leadership in the businesses through direct employment and as advisors to the family council.



Building on the company's mission statement—Impact Lives...Create Wealth—additional investment is currently underway in the Philadelphia and Mexico operations. These investments will allow for additional growth in the facility and additional employment in Philadelphia.



Above: Part of the second Nielsen generation at Abbey, Brian and Sarah discuss improvements to the current inventory system.

Right: Abbey Color's Fluorescein in its final stages of production.

Below: Brian Nielsen leads a meeting with the quality control department.

Pettus and Nielsen grew the company four-fold from 1991 to 2003. In late 2002, Pettus was diagnosed with inoperable cancer and sold his shares of the business to Nielsen. This began the evolution of Abbey Color into a family business operated jointly by family and professional advisors.

Abbey Color has enjoyed a 1.7-fold increase in revenue during the past ten years and annual revenue now totals \$8-10 million from the Philadelphia location, generated from more than one thousand customers.

Abbey Color's ten-year plan calls for transitioning ownership and operating responsibility of all the companies to the

