

MERRILL, WISCONSIN, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1963

Weinbrenner Value To Local Economy Cited

Official Merrill spent an important period with the Weinbrenner Division of Textron Inc. last evening. The occasion was a dinner held in the Badger hotel as one of the highlights of a three day general sales meeting which brought Weinbrenner salesmen from all parts of the United States.

A visit was made yesterday morning to the Weinbrenner plant in Antigo, and in the afternoon the sales group toured the company's Merrill factory. The Weinbrenner plant in Marshfield was visited today. The meeting will be concluded in Wausau tomorrow morning. A number of conferences were on the agenda for the three days.

Speakers at the dinner included Mayor Ralph Voigt, William McHenry, manager of the Merrill Chamber of Commerce, Fred Wilmanns, Weinbrenner president, and P. Amos Gruett. Others also were called on for remarks, including W. B. Chilsen, who with Gruett and Clifford R. Livingston played a key role in bringing the Weinbrenner plant to Merrill.

The importance of the Weinbrenner plant as a factor in Merrill's economic life was emphasized by Mayor Voigt. He recalled that the plant was built in 1936 and was financed by public subscription. He noted the role the Messers Gruett, Chilsen and Livingston played in getting the company here.

The mayor said Weinbrenner's first tax bill in 1937 was \$2,080.13, and added that the city assessor explained that the assessment on a full value basis must have been about \$48,375. He asserted that the '63 assessment based on full value is \$2,325,000, and noted that this is the highest assessment in the city of Merrill.

He called attention to the fact that this is only on personal property because the city owns the buildings and real estate. He said this assessment would make for a gross tax bill of \$62,100.75, approximately 30 times more than the first tax bill in 1937. According to the mayor, this largest assessment in the city represents about 6 per cent of Merrill's total assessment on a full value basis.

The mayor told the group that these facts and figures translate into these terms of Weinbrenner's actual value to Merrill: 1. The employment of almost 500 people — the largest employer in the city, with its largest pay-

roll; 2, the city gets back from the state a part of what the employees and corporation pay in income taxes; 3, the city gets revenue from the personal property taxes; 4, employees spend money in Merrill which helps local business and helps increase the tax base; 5, it must be a good place to work since many have been employed there for 25 years, and many have built homes and have become real estate taxpayers.

Statistics furnished by the company show an estimated 1963 payroll for the Weinbrenner plant in Merrill of \$1,561,000. Estimated 1963 payrolls for Marshfield and Antigo plants are \$1,750,000 and \$655,000 respectively. The total estimated 1963 production for the Merrill plant is 750,000 pairs of shoes. Estimated 1963 production totals for the Marshfield and Antigo plants are 750,000 and 400,000 pairs respectively. The 1963 sales total for the three plants is estimated at \$14,000,000 plus.

In his remarks, McHenry noted that manufacturing outranks all other economic activity in Merrill and Lincoln county. He said that industrial employment in Merrill provides job opportunities for about 2,000 persons. It produces an annual payroll of about 8 million dollars. In the past ten years, he added, industrial production in the county has increased about 40 per cent and payrolls have gone up about 70 per cent. One of the contributing factors, he explained, is the current city policy which emphasizes all assistance possible to existing industry.

P. Amos Gruett gave the background of original negotiations which brought Weinbrenner to Merrill in a period of transition from the sawmill to the industrial era. Mr. Livingston who was mentioned with Mr. Gruett and Mr. Chilsen as the prime movers in aiding this transition was unable to attend the dinner.

The chairman, Bob Becker, disclosed that through one week's effort the company salesmen have delivered an order to the Merrill plant for 22,000 pairs of shoes representing about \$160,000 in sales.

President Fred Wilmanns said the company had brought its salesmen here because "we are proud of the people of Merrill and want the people of Merrill to be proud of us. I believe we will continue to represent this city as proudly as we have in

(Continued on Page 5, Col. 5)

Weinbrenner

(Continued from Page 1)

the past, and, I believe, with increased productivity. We are going to stay in Merrill."

Edward Ott, vice president in charge of manufacturing, and Lester Schoenke, general office manager, introduced their staffs. Introduced by Ott were Robert Stine, assistant general superintendent; Eugene Schulz Jr., superintendent of dress shoe manufacturing; Leonard Kleinschmidt, superintendent of process shoe manufacturing; and foremen Bud Cotey, Leslie Sukow, Ed Andres, Elroy Van Slate, Ed Kriewald, Walter Briesse, Vince Schaefer, William Barker, Max Heckendorf Jr., William Peters, Roy Nichols, Louis Peeters, Ken Edmonds, and Lester Voigt.

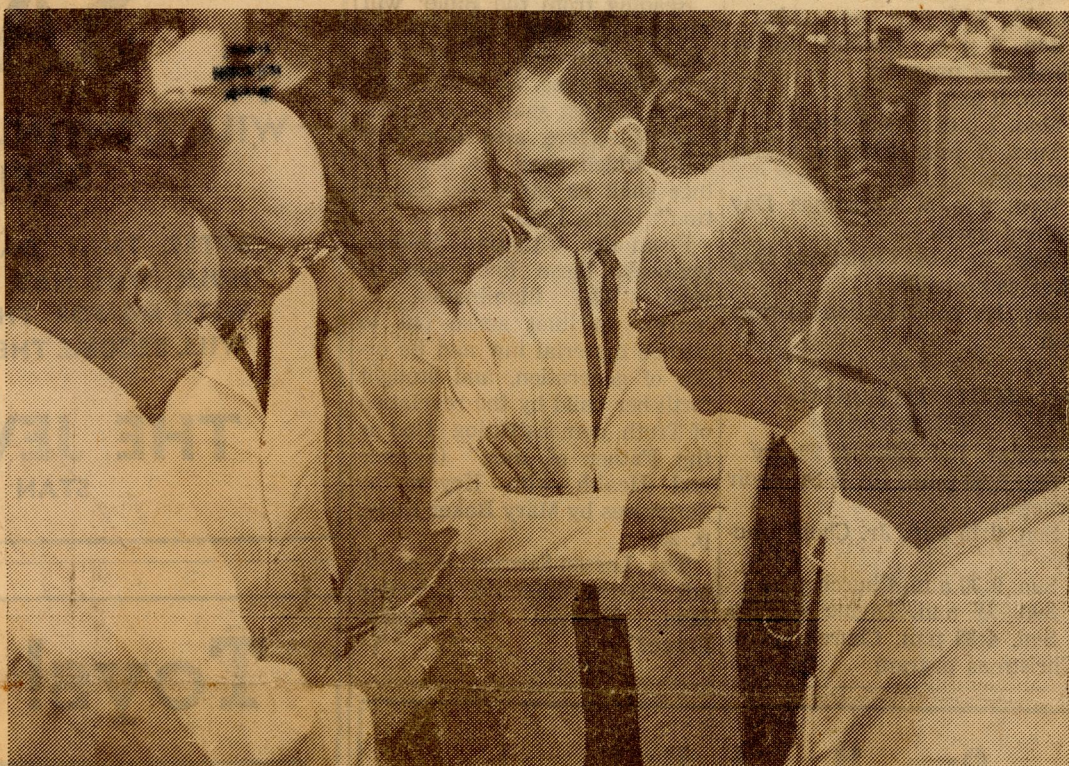
Schoenke introduced Dave Finanger, Merrill office manager; Don Lagerbloom, production manager, and Roger Frisch, supervisor of the shipping department.

Acknowledged were local firms handling Weinbrenner shoes, Associated Co-Op Services, Livingston's and Peterson's Tog Shop.

Besides Mayor Voigt, the city was represented at the dinner by City Clerk Robert Klug, City Attorney George Russell, Fire Chief Arnold Wessel, and Assistant City Attorney George Curtis. Also in attendance was County Judge Donald E. Schnabel.



All areas of the United States were represented at the Weinbrenner's national sales meeting. The cold weather was not to the liking of Marv Payne (left), who covers Southern California and Nevada, but didn't bother Clyde Luidema whose territory is Alaska and the State of Washington. The two are shown with Dave Finanger, Merrill office manager. (Jim Freiberg)



Leonard Kleinschmidt, superintendent of process 82, shows a group through his department during the tour here yesterday by salesmen of the Weinbrenner Division. The impact of Weinbrenner on the local economy was stressed at the evening meeting at the Badger hotel. (Jim Freiberg)