

I wasn't at work when Rexnord made the announcement. I had taken off that day, Oct. 14, 2015, to drive to Hanover College to pick up my daughter for a weekend visit home.

I was sitting at a four-way stop in Madison, Ind., when my local union president, Don Zering, called. He asked, "You got a minute?" I said I did. Then he said, "I've got bad news." I knew what was happening when he said it. He didn't even have to tell me.

I knew that Rexnord was closing its Indianapolis ball bearing plant.

Tom Kress, the new factory manager, called the workers together for a meeting at the plant, then told them their jobs were being shipped to Mexico. Rexnord was building a new factory there.

I heard later that some workers shed tears. A couple got loud and just short of obnoxious, calling Rexnord executives a bunch of greedy SOBs, which was true, really, because they were closing a profitable American plant and reopening in Mexico where they could exploit workers by paying them \$3 an hour and pollute without fear of retribution.

The young workers, who had just started families and bought houses, were a wreck. They were scared because their lives were about to totally change. It absolutely stinks that corporate greed ruins people's lives.

I had worked for Rexnord since I was 21. Now, in my mid-40s and with two teen-age children, I am faced with starting over completely.

In those early days, it was hard for me to sleep sometimes as I tried to figure out how I was going to pay for three more years of tuition for my daughter. It is her dream to be the first from either side of the family to graduate from college. And I am determined to make it happen.

My son is an athlete, and there were times after he knew I would be losing my job that he needed something for sports but would say, "That's alright. I don't need it." I made sure he got it.

FROM RAGE TO REALITY COPING WITH THE CLOSING OF REXNORD

BY BRIAN REED

Former Griever, Steward, Contract Negotiator with USW Local 1999

We had just recently moved to the town of Martinsville, about a 35-minute drive from the Rexnord plant, and my wife, Jenny, was trying to get the new house in order. But she went out and got a job right away. She had run her own small business for eight years in the town where we'd lived before, but she wanted a job now that had good health benefits, just in case. That's why she picked Starbucks.

My dad, Bruce Reed, was crushed by the news. He had retired from Rexnord after 47 years. He had served as the local union president for six years and as a business agent for the union for a dozen years. He'd seen Rexnord close down its Indianapolis chain manufacturing factory, where we'd both started work. And now this.

The thing is, you work with these people every day. They become like family. The plant is like a home. It is a place where we made something together as a team, and did it with pride. Rexnord was taking all of that away to get a few extra bucks for already-wealthy shareholders and CEOs.

Because I had a lot of seniority at Rexnord, just short of 25 years by the end, I was among the last to be laid off. But we started making changes as a family right away because I knew there were not a lot of jobs around that

paid good, family-supporting wages. That's mainly because Indiana lost 235,058 manufacturing jobs, or 31 percent, between 1969 to 2014.

Before this, I would take my family out to dinner once a week. We don't do that anymore. We have a fire pit at our house, and we enjoyed having people over. But you can't invite people and ask them to bring the food.

Generally, we just slowed down. We looked at each potential purchase and decided whether it was something we really needed or something we just wanted.

Four months after Rexnord announced it was turning its back on its 300 workers in Indianapolis, United Technologies (UT) told the 1,400 workers at its Carrier furnace plant just five blocks from Rexnord, as well as the 700 workers at its control panel factory in Huntington, Ind., that Mexican workers would get their jobs too.

This was in February of 2016, and then-candidate Donald Trump began tweeting about how horrible this was. He told rally after rally that companies like Carrier weren't going to offshore on his watch. He said he would place huge tariffs on products imported into the United States from corporations that had moved manufacturing to other countries.

When Trump was elected, he asked for a list of companies that had announced plans to move to Mexico and said he would call the CEOs himself, after which, he said, they wouldn't be leaving the United States.

In December, the President-elect tweeted this: "Rexnord of Indiana is moving to Mexico and rather viciously firing all of its 300 workers. This is happening all over our country. No more!"

This raised hopes, especially after it was announced that Trump actually had called the United Technologies CEO and saved some jobs at the Carrier plant. I admit, I was among those who hoped. Hell yeah, I did. But did I believe he would really do it? No.

And he didn't. Rexnord issued its first layoff notices to workers in March of 2017, just a few months after the tweet. I got it on Sept. 26. And the whole place went dark on Nov. 22.

In the months before the closure, Rexnord asked us to train our Mexican counterparts. Even though I knew I was soon going to be hurting for money, I refused the extra pay Rexnord offered to those who tutored the foreign workers.

Managers were asking us to help the company that ripped the life out from under us. To me, it was a moral issue. I wouldn't do it.

It took me a couple of weeks of searching before I landed a new job. I drove a delivery truck for FedEx for \$450 a week less than I earned at Rexnord. That lasted two weeks before I got a better job driving a fork truck at a warehouse, paying \$360 less a week.

Then, in February this year, I got my current job with Acuren, a company that performs nondestructive testing, inspection and engineering. I am still earning less than I did at Rexnord, but I hope that over the next several years, as I earn certifications, I will catch up.

I think that most people from Rexnord, like me, will start over. Most will move on. But a handful will never recover.

At first when Rexnord announced the move to Mexico, I was angry, of course. Every day when I got up to go to work, it was just miserable. But over time, as I watched the work wind down, as Rexnord moved the machines to Mexico or sold them off, the rage subsided and reality settled in.



Brian Reed and his father, Bruce, protest the Rexnord closing.