

BEL Hall of Fame 2015 Profile

Ardelle Glaze, *Fort Wayne Metals*

DRAFT #1

Ardelle Glaze grew up in a single-parent home, where making ends meet was a constant struggle. In 1922, when 12-year-old Ardelle was confronted about stealing nuts from the corner bakery, he admitted his crime and went to work in the bakery to pay off the debt.

After working, then earning a college degree in Industrial Arts, Ardelle began teaching. It was the early 1930s, in the depths of the Great Depression. After several years as a teacher, he decided to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor.

Ardelle was accepted into the University of Chicago's medical school. However, when he was ultimately convinced medicine wasn't the career for him, Ardelle took a job as a machinist at the university's Armour Research Foundation.

"Dad was intuitive and creative, with a talent for problem-solving. Within a few years, he was a research scientist there and had Ph.D.-degreed engineers working for him," says Scott Glaze, current Chairman and CEO of Fort Wayne Metals.

In his work at the research foundation, Ardelle applied his problem-solving skills to war-related research and wire drawing efforts.

"As he was working to extend the life of the diamond dies used in wire drawing, he began to spend time at die companies," Scott says. "Fort Wayne was the hub for diamond die production at the time, and he was able to help these companies make better dies and improve their processes."

Another of Ardelle's projects was working on the team that developed magnetic wire recording technology.

"With that experience in magnetic wire, in 1946 Dad started his first company, Fort Wayne Metals, Inc., to make magnetic recording wire. Within five years, the company made 80% of the recording wire in the United States," Scott says.

In the late 1950s, the company was making other wire, too, including wire for medical uses. Scott says "Any time he could create something for the medical industry, he jumped at it."

By the mid-1960s Ardelle had grown the company to 80 employees. Yet, even though he was the company's founder and president, Scott says "he had investors and did not control the company he built. When the company was sold a second time, it became a small component of GTE Sylvania. The Fort Wayne plant was subsequently closed, and production was moved to Pennsylvania."

Ardelle did not want to leave his home and the Fort Wayne community. So in 1971, he remortgaged his home, sold his stocks, and put everything into his new company, Fort Wayne Metals Research Products Corp. He was 60 years old.

Ardelle opened Fort Wayne Metals with a dedication to producing wire for the medical industry. By the time he died in 1985, he had built the company's strong reputation as the quality leader in the medical wire industry. He employed 30 people at that time.

Today, Fort Wayne Metals employs more than 750 people, remains the quality leader nationally and internationally, and is still family-owned.

“As he built Fort Wayne Metals, Dad always believed in technical expertise and people,” Scott says. “That commitment to technical expertise has allowed us to be a major producer of wire for medical applications, and our people are leaders in their fields.”

It was Ardelle's unique background in education, research, and innovation that, Scott says, allowed him to build “a working environment at Fort Wayne Metals that is not a traditional manufacturing setting.”

“Dad was not a typical businessman. He didn't believe a company makes things. He believed a company creates solutions that become quality products,” Scott says. “Today, that culture and philosophy is encoded in our mission, our values, and our guiding principles.”