
Mr Robert Fletcher - Man behind American underground coal mines

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Many believe Mr Bob Fletcher, founder of equipment manufacturer JH Fletcher & Co was one of the last great engineers involved in the mechanization of America's underground coal mines.

In 1937 after he had earned his degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Illinois, Mr Bob and his father Mr JH Fletcher formed an engineering and consulting company in Chicago. They worked extensively on new systems, in particular the development of off track supply haulage and mainline belt systems in the Midwest coal fields. Over the course of his long career, it is thought that Bob innovations saved the lives of literally thousands of miners.

In the early years, he collaborated with industry legends Chief Aronson, Art Lee and John Boyd to transform underground safety and productivity. In 1947, Mr Bob and his brother Mr Bill moved to Huntington to expand their reach into the Appalachian coal fields. With the advent of roof bolting in the post war period, they purchased a garage apartment and began manufacturing the first mobile roof control drills in 1950.

Working closely with industry leaders such as Mr Dave Zegeer, Mr Adler Spotte, Mr Buster Roberts and Mr Woods Talman, the company earned a reputation for innovation and custom design flexibility by developing the first internal dust collection systems introducing the first dual head drills and the first machine-mounted ATRS temporary roof support systems.

Of the dozens of manufacturing companies spawned by mine mechanization in the mid-twentieth century, Fletcher is one of the few to survive and thrive as an independent entity. Control of the closely held company remains securely in the hands of the family. With son in law Sam Duncan, son Jim Fletcher and grandsons Rod and Chris Duncan active in the business, JH Fletcher & Co says it will go forward, continuing the legacy of its founder.

(Sourced from www.im-mining.com)

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