

# Dura-Bond Industries

Diverse business supports the piling industry while building an empire made of steel

By Heather Hudson



Far left: Fabrication of Steel piling in any configuration (example).

Left: In addition to the seal welding, Dura-Bond fabricated the templates to maintain spacing on these king piles.



We're a one-stop-shop for piling contractors seeking piles, pile-splicing, pile-tips and protective coating.

-BRAD NORRIS, VICE-PRESIDENT, DURA-BOND INDUSTRIES

The Norris brothers of Pennsylvania have a number of markets covered.

Their company, Dura-Bond Industries is the hub of five thriving businesses: Dura-Bond Steel Corp., Dura-Bond Pipe, LLC, Dura-Bond Coating Inc. and Turtle Creek Industrial Railroad. And let's not forget their pipeline products division.

"We build bridges, docks, piers, retaining walls, catwalks... any type of steel fabrication that would require also a protective coating is our best niche," said Vice-President Brad Norris.

"We also support contractors who drive pile by offering miscellaneous-type fabrication. We're a one-stop-shop for piling contractors seeking piles, pile-splicing, pile-tips and protective coating."

Brad, along with his older brother Wayne and younger brother Jim are the men behind the company that has gradually transformed into a small empire. Though the brothers grew up in and operate out of Export, PA, they also have plants in Duquesne, Steelton and McKeesport Pennsylvania.

#### **Dura-Bond Pipe, LLC**

In Steelton, they manufacture and coat API straight-seam DSAW pipe in diameters ranging from 24" to 42" in grades up to X-80 and lengths up to 80'. They also apply protective coating and fabricate miscellaneous piling components, including caps, wales and connections. Though the focus of this plant is on the pipeline industry, Norris says they've been known to use this mill for oversized spliced pipe piling.

"Once in awhile, we have overruns on our 24, 30, 36 and 42-inch diameter pipe and we'll sell those as pipe piling. We can also manufacture large piling orders. If the pipe pile order is large enough we'll take it on. If it's maybe 50,000 to 100,000 lineal feet of pipe, we'll entertain manufacturing the pipe itself."

#### **Dura-Bond Coating Inc.**

The McKeesport and Duquesne plants apply fusion bond epoxy, X-Tec extruded polyethylene, dual layer fusion bond, Powercrete® abrasion resistant overcoating, tape systems and internal linings to

Background photo: Provided the corrosion coating in addition to fabrication of fendering systems to protect driven piles.

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Dura-Bond supplied the fabrication provided the seal welding on sheet and king piles for Mystic River project.

large and small diameter steel line pipe. Customers include major airports, transmission pipeline companies and gas utilities.

“We also apply protective paint and coating systems to non-fabricated structural steel such as pipe piling, steel piling and H-Beams for the construction market. We offer a complete line of coating options from coal tar epoxy to specialized zinc/epoxy/urethane systems when high gloss and color retention are a requirement,” said Norris.

#### **Dura-Bond Steel Corp.**

Meanwhile, back in their hometown of Export, PA, a 60,000 sq. ft. facility fabricates complex steel structures, piling, wale systems, tie back systems, soundwalls, retaining walls, railing systems and other marine applications. It includes an A.I.S.C. approved paint department that applies most liquid coating systems to customer-specified and customer-provided material.

#### **Turtle Creek Railroad**

Dura-Bond purchased the Turtle Creek Industrial Railroad in Pennsylvania in 1982 when Conrail abandoned it. The decommissioned line runs from Export down to the Turtle Creek Valley until it joins Norfolk Southern Railway at Trafford, PA. Today, the track is used to haul heavy and long steel products to their Export plant.

#### **Humble beginnings**

Success has been a long, steady climb since their father, J.M. Norris established Dura-Bond back in 1960. It started out as a coatings applicator for manufacturers of steel products at customers' facilities. In time, the senior Norris bought his first coating plant and branched out to coating other products, including fabricated steel and internal linings of underground storage tanks, all while nurturing a working relationship with various steel manufacturers and suppliers.

In the 1970s, Dura-Bond opened two satellite facilities in Buffalo, NY and Jacksonville, FL. Neither were runaway successes but their sales did infuse the company with capital for more sustainable growth in Pennsylvania.

“In Florida and then later with a facility in Greensboro, NC, the real estate became more valuable than the plant itself. Buffalo and another facility in Allentown, PA went the same way. They were businesses that were started, sold and we were able to turn for a profit,” explained Norris.

The three junior Norrises learned everything they needed to know on the job and under the tutelage of their father. “We



Application of corrosion coating to existing structurally fabricated steel.

worked with him right out of high school and basically had our work ethic and education all in one spot.”

When their father passed away in 1990, the brothers banded together and continued to grow operations. Today, Wayne handles pipe manufacturing and exterior pipe coating for gas line and oil industry. Brad handles all steel fabrication and liquid coatings. Jim is in charge of plant operations.

“We have enough business where everyone has their own niche,” said Norris.

That doesn't mean that they don't meet daily at their office in Export to discuss the direction of the business and where expansions will be. With more than 425 employees and growing, there's a lot to talk about.

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"We're putting in a new state-of-the-art fusion bond and epoxy pipe mill in Duquesne. We bought 75 acres along the river with river-loading capabilities. It will be our largest expansion to date."

With a flourishing business and growth on the horizon, it's a good thing both Wayne and Brad have three sons who are already actively involved in the company. In fact, according to Norris, Reader's Choice named Dura-Bond Industries the Best Family Run Business in Pennsylvania.

"We have a very strong sense of family here and everybody gets along very well. Everybody is paid fairly and does their job. There are no issues in regards to being uncooperative with each other."

He credits their trouble-free working relationship to the rags to riches growth of their business and the strong vision set out by their father. He remembers many years of "only work and no money" and the struggle that fueled them all. Sitting next to his dad in a broken down Chevrolet Chevelle at 10 years old, he looked on in awe as his dad pointed to the baseball field across from their house, explaining, 'Brad, someday I'm going to buy that land and start a business.'

"We were pretty poor at that time so it was almost unimaginable, but he did it," said Norris. "You develop a closeness in remembering your roots when you start from the ground up. Hard times and financial issues are now gone but we never want to be complacent and we don't want our sons to be either."

With five thriving businesses and counting, there's little chance of that. ▼

Photos courtesy of Dura-Bond Industries



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