

# Ensuring the Transmission of Skills through the Skills Meister Program

## Passing on what we learned from our predecessors to the next generation

"Rubber is a living thing that becomes subtly harder or softer depending on the temperature and humidity on any given day, making it necessary to adjust machinery according to the time and season. Steel cords and fibers also come in a variety of types, and so careful attention must be paid to the compatibility of rubber and other materials.

"It may seem a difficult job, but just one year after joining the firm you will be making rubber sheets, and after two years you will be a full-fledged roller operator. That's when things begin to get difficult, though, and two or three years can pass in the blink of an eye. That's why I always advise younger workers to always have some kind of goal. Unless they aim for the next level up, even just treading water becomes difficult and further growth moves out of reach.

"My modus when teaching people about things is to focus on giving advice to the leaders in the workplace, such as forepersons. Leave them out of the loop and instruct younger workers directly, and they won't have any opportunity themselves to develop as forepersons. It is not enough for them simply to know how to operate machinery; they have to pay attention as leaders to matters such as safety, quality, costs, and their subordinates' development. Nurturing leaders who can think for themselves and lead is also an important function of Skills Meisters.

"I like the term 'mother machine.' I learned all kinds of things from machines when I was young, and now that I am in a position to act as a guide to others, it's my turn to protect and get the most out of the machines that contributed to my own development. My successors will have more opportunities than me to work overseas, and I want to pass on my skills and the knowledge and experience that I acquired from my predecessors to these younger workers. I believe that this is how Yokohama Rubber's tradition of technological excellence will be handed on to the next generation as we continue our journey to be the world's best."



At Yokohama Tire Corporation in the U.S. (far left) in 1995.



**Taisaku Amano**

Skills Meister in Manufacturing Section 1, Shinshiro Plant

Born in January 1949 and now aged 60, Taisaku Amano joined Yokohama Rubber in 1968. He was assigned to the rolling process in the Shinshiro Plant, and in the more than 40 years since then, he has been involved in rolling as foreman, engineer, and overseer. Rolling is the process by which reinforcing materials such as steel cord or fiber are pressure bonded into rubber by giant rollers to make the rubber sheets from which tires are made. These sheets have to be of supremely high quality, and there is not the slightest margin for error in thickness. From the mid-1990s, he provided assistance to overseas plants in the U.S., Philippines, China, and Thailand. He was certified a Skills Meister in April 2006, and was reemployed this January after reaching mandatory retirement age.



Taisaku Amano supervising younger forepersons on the rolling process at the Shinshiro Plant (right).