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Fifty years with TAPPI: A personal and professional perspective

While reflecting on this being my 50th year in TAPPI, it dawned on me that my father Murray must also have been a TAPPI member for a similar length of time and that he probably joined TAPPI for the same reasons—we both had just started our first jobs in the pulp and paper industry and wanted to learn everything we could about the underlying technology. When I was a child in Ottawa, my dad and I would go into the laboratory at E.B. Eddy's after Sunday school to meet his mentor, Wilfred Gallay, and discuss technology that was not of direct commercial interest to the company while I got to play with his daughter Susan in the lab. A result of these discussions was their highly cited publications [1,2] in *TAPPI Journal* (then *Tappi*) on the fundamentals of wet web strength. Another result was my introduction to making handsheets with all sorts of additives, perhaps indicating an early interest in surface chemistry.

Another memory from the 1950s was the TAPPI Annual Meeting in New York City every January. This was a treat for my parents, who also enjoyed the social side, meeting old friends and hitting the dance floors in the Stork Club or Roseland Ballroom and/or going to the jazz clubs on 52nd Street. I can remember my mother pouring over the New York Times before leaving to see what was a must see. Later, as a teenager in Pointe Claire, QC, where my dad worked for Paprican, I can remember him bringing home his white lab coat covered in black ink stains for my mother to wash...while publishing articles on ink interaction with paper by means of radioactive tracers in the ink!

I started work in 1970 at MacMillan Bloedel Research in Vancouver, BC, and my very kind boss, Mike Jackson, asked me to spend the first six months putting together a compendium on everything that was known about fracture and tearing of paper. Among other things, this meant reading several years of *TAPPI Journal*, as well as the Fundamental Research Symposia books. When I later started

my Ph.D. studies at the Royal Institute in Stockholm, my first exam was actually the comprehensive oral because most of the other required exams would be in Swedish (which took me a while to master), and thanks to Mike, I had already read all of the relevant literature, which was in English.

My first technical paper [3] was delivered at the TAPPI Paper Physics Conference in Mont Gabriel, QC, in September 1971. Again, the social side of these meetings had special significance—not just because I received supportive comments in the beginning of my career from people whose work I respected from the literature like Johannes Van den Akker and Heinz Corte—but because I was on my honeymoon. This was a byproduct of my coming East to Quebec to visit my parents in advance of the Paper Physics Conference. I invited Shirley, who was in Quebec to get married to a dentist, to come sailing with me one last time, and I convinced her to marry me instead, and now, while we were both in the East. Talk about mixing business with pleasure!

David Goring came to Grenoble where I was doing a postdoc and hired me to work under Derek Page at Paprican—managing the same section as my father had a decade earlier. While this may have been a startling lack of imagination on my part, it meant that my dad and I attended the TAPPI Printing and Reprography Conferences together and both published several articles on ink/paper interactions in printing. My earliest publication on this topic followed a presentation at the 1975 TAPPI Printing and Reprography Conference in Philadelphia [4] that my father chaired. This ultimately led to my chairing the TAPPI Printing and Graphic Arts Section and then the Coating and Graphic Arts Division while building a great network of TAPPI colleagues. Together, we revamped the TAPPI Coating Conference, introducing the peer review process for all papers to be presented. I was fortunate to

chair the conference in New Orleans in 1988, which was optimistically budgeted for 750 attendees, but thanks to a great program, the economic recovery from the year before, and the location, we had an astounding attendance of 1150. This allowed several extras to be added on the social side, including hiring the Olympia Brass Marching Band to bring in the head table and learning my role as first line for a big dance band at the welcoming reception.

In 1991 while I was working at International Paper's Corporate Research Center, I received an invitation from Professor Bo Norman to come over to The Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm as the Stora Guest Professor. Keith Hall, who coincidentally was the chairman of the board of TAPPI at the time and my boss, thought this was a great opportunity and encouraged me to accept. Shirley and I were divorced the year before, so his generous support may also have been motivated to see me exposed to new ideas and new social contacts, and possibly part of grooming me to be his successor as Director of Research and Chief Scientist at IP.

In retrospect, I owe a lot to TAPPI—both on the technical side and in personal development. The fellowship built up during my years in TAPPI is much valued, and remarkable events on the social side provide great memories that span well more than 50 years.

I had just started the guest professorship in May of 1992 when I attended the Progress in Paper Physics Conference in Helsinki (co-sponsored by TAPPI). There, I met Åsa Laurell, a doctoral student working at STFI with Christer Fellers—an old friend from my days as a doctoral student and fellow jazz enthusiast. This was like springtime coming back into my life. Åsa and I were soon off touring Australia and New Zealand, as I was also the APPITA Guest Speaker that year. After a hectic two weeks of getting up every morning and flying somewhere new, giving a lecture at a mill, and then at a local section in the evening, we decompressed in Honolulu where I proposed, saying “if we could manage this, marriage should be easy.” Another happy conjunction of paper physics and matrimony! My international network was also further expanded later in the 1990s when TAPPI sent me twice

to Brazil and once to Argentina to give courses at sister technical associations.

There were many lessons in leadership that TAPPI provided me through chairing conferences, chairing two divisions, helping to start a new division on nanotechnology and renewable materials, and sitting on the TAPPI Board of Directors and running its Research Management Committee. No doubt, this was useful in my career, which was ultimately about managing research at the corporate level. Also, getting middle school students interested in science and technology by starting the TAPPI Paper Express Campaign was fun and fulfilling, and it probably started me along the path of being an adjunct professor at three universities and in retirement, teaching doctoral students at the Royal Institute about best practices in managing the innovation process (a great way to give back in a land where education is free and alumni are not asked for money).

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