

Glory days

Several longtime members recently consented to a walk down memory lane, giving us a more personal glimpse of the familiar—and not so familiar—names in TAPPI history.

Deborah E. Young

GI Joe was discharged at the end of World War II, trading in his khakis for gray flannel and a lab coat, and returned to work in a paper industry that had grown dramatically during the conflict. Up the organization these company men, and a few women, progressed, taking leadership roles in their companies and in their Association. After a period of unprecedented success with fundamental research in the 1930s, it was time for the industry to get on with the development of practical applications. Backed by their companies, these pioneers devoted numerous hours to making their particular piece of TAPPI the best it could be. As TAPPI celebrates its 75th anniversary, it can look back proudly at the achievements over especially the last 40–50 years. This is a time when the Association moved from an established but perhaps not well organized group to the international provider of services it is today.

Several of TAPPI's divisions evolved during this time. For instance, the Paper Synthetics Division (now Polymers, Laminations and Coatings) was formed in 1945. The Coating and Graphic Arts Division was created in 1955 with the merger of the Coating Committee and the Graphic Arts Committee. The Corrugated Containers Division started up in 1950 and, in the 1980s, the Nonwovens Division came to be.

Local sections have also been a part of TAPPI practically from the beginning. The Ohio Section celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1985, the Empire State Section in 1988. Having started as the Southeastern Pulp and Paper Society in 1951, the Southeastern Local Section became a part of TAPPI in 1952.

While the divisions within TAPPI are very independent bodies, none can match the autonomy of the local sections. TAPPI Director and Local Section Operations Council Chairman Neil G. Vander Linden remembers his first TAPPI Annual Meeting in New York. "I'm not sure of the year," he says, "but it was about '77 or '78. The national organization had a proposal put forth by the Board to force all local section members to be members of the Association. I went as a representative of the Southeastern Section." During the business meeting, Vander Linden rose and spoke to the group. "It was probably the first time in

Helen Schuierer gets a lot of joy out of passing on her knowledge to younger members.



history that anybody's gotten up on the floor at an Annual Meeting and wanted to speak to an issue and," he adds with a grin, "maybe the last time!" Needless to say, he was outvoted at the Annual Meeting. His boldness, however, prompted the Board of Directors to form a committee to look into the situation. In the end, there was a compromise.

Working toward achievement

In discussing the Coating and Graphic Arts Division, former TAPPI Director and Distinguished Service Awardee Robert W. "Bob" Hagemeyer points out that "basically this was a very small segment of the industry. People didn't understand. They almost didn't consider them part of the paper industry. They were more people that bought paper and converted it into other things."

There was a core group, people like Werner Kaufman and TAPPI Fellow and Division Awardee Rosalie "Cobby" Karapetoff Cobb, Bill Willets, Paul Bartholomew, Bill Kirkpatrick, Frank Egan, and John Bullard. Before the division was born, these people and many others worked within committees to further the cause of their industry segment by putting on conferences and by writing monographs. "There was no literature on coating and coating materials," says Hagemeyer, "so they decided to write monographs. Early on, this group was responsible for almost half of the monographs that TAPPI put forth.

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Universally respected for their pioneering work in the industry and for TAPPI, **C. E. "Ed" Brandon** (left), **William R. "Bill" Willets** (center), and **Harris O. Ware** all left their mark on the generations that followed.



Before he became TAPPI president, **William H. "Bill" Aiken** (second from right) worked hard in support of the Ohio Local Section. As TAPPI president one of his more enjoyable duties was to exchange commemorative plaques with ATPC President R. Rojas at the 1968 joint Engineering Conference with ATPC. Conference Chairman H. B. Harris, Jr. and ATPC Vice President J. Reyes were also on hand for the ceremony.



Admired for her work within the Coating and Graphic Arts Division, **R. M. "Cobby" Karapetoff Cobb** became a TAPPI Fellow the same year as **Herbert F. Rance** (left) and former TAPPI Executive Director **Philip E. Nethercut**. (Rance later received the TAPPI Gold Medal.)



Paul J. Thoma made a lasting impression on **Robert W. "Bob" Hagemeyer** (left).

The Finishing and Converting Division had two fathers: **E. H. "Gene" Sowers** (left) and **Paul R. Smith**.



It not only generated real worthwhile information, it also gave these people something to chew on. They came together as a group."

Participation in TAPPI was encouraged and expected by the people that hired young talent. The Empire State Section's Grant G. Cole remembers his first job with Diamond Match: "They had a paper company and a paper mill in Plattsburg, N.Y. There were about half a dozen of us employed at about the same time. When we went to work there, we were told by the technical director that once a month, September through May, we'd come to what was called a TAPPI meeting in Glens Falls, N.Y.—120 miles one way. We would leave at 3:00 p.m., go to the meeting, and be back at work at 8 o'clock the next morning. . . . You couldn't do that with people today. On the other hand, we accepted it. We took it for granted that it was part of the job."

"Most of our companies were obviously behind us," according to *Tappi Journal* Contributing Editor Ray S. Bender. "We had convinced them that this was a good deal,

not only for us personally but for the company. We got a commitment for X number of years, which was great. You knew where you stood. Your company backed you."

Sometimes it took a little coaxing. ". . . You have to be tenacious," says former TAPPI Director Helen R. Schuierer. She believes that upper management still encourages participation. The problem for young members of the industry, she says, is when you get down to the person who actually has to approve and sign your request. "It's almost as if you haven't earned your credits yet," she says. "Work for me for six years and maybe I'll let you go."

"I can remember Dr. (William) Aiken going around saying 'We're having a TAPPI meeting tonight,'" says the Ohio Section's Stanley Trosset. "We had members who were vice presidents, chief engineers, and technical directors who were very active in TAPPI, as well as the people who were working in the group."

People with influence

Who influenced the current crop of senior statesmen at TAPPI?

For Bob Hagemeyer it was TAPPI Gold Medalist Paul J. Thoma, who died in 1988: "Paul was the man that went to Time Springdale Laboratories about 1951 or '52. He was the driving force behind publication papers and lightweight coated. He really opened up the avenue of many of the new advances that we had. . . . The work that the Springdale Laboratories did advanced the printing and publishing area by decades over what would have been otherwise. There hasn't been anything really startling come out since it shut down around 1972."

Former TAPPI President Harris O. Ware also had a big influence on Hagemeyer. "He's a contrary individual, but he makes a lot of sense. . . . He's a character but a character in the complimentary sense of the word. The same could have been said about 'Cobby' and Bill Willets and a few of the others."

"Ed Brandon put his whole effort and life into the pulp and paper program at Miami University after he became director in 1958," says Stanley Trosset. "His whole life was building the school and the TAPPI connections he had."

"I've sort of been following in the footsteps of Dan Adams at Westvaco," says Neil Vander Linden. "I guess he's steered me into so many of the things that I've gotten involved with and really enjoyed doing, too."

For William R. "Bill" Sibbach, it was Pete Goslin of DuPont. "He just about had to tie me up and drag me to my first TAPPI conference about 25 years ago. Once I got there it wasn't hard."

"Over 20 years, Bill Willets missed maybe half a dozen Empire State Executive Committee meetings," says Grant Cole, "and we have six each year. He kept our books, and he kept us in line. He was just a grand old man." Cole also mentions Horace Spencer and Wayne Morrow as progressive thinkers and leaders within the section.

Gene Sowers and Paul Smith were instrumental in getting the Finishing and Converting Division started. "In fact," says Ray Bender, "Gene wine and dined, cajoled and flattered, and begged and promised during the summer of 1971 to convince me that I should accept the job of junior council member of the Finishing Committee. He promised no medals, awards, or rewards—only the joys associated with personal service to the organization."

"I guess I'd have to say the man I think the most of is John Cramsie, the gentleman that hired me" says Helen Schuier. The ad in the paper for the position said "help wanted male," but she applied for the job anyway. "It was one of those things where you have personalities that just seem to blend. I started as a paper tester. It was this gentleman that encouraged me. It was this one that fought for my professional status because there had never been anyone in that particular position that was female."

According to Bill Sibbach, there were three people mainly responsible for promoting the Polymers, Laminations and Coatings Division: Jim Thornton, Pete Goslin, and Bob Van Ness. "Jim Thornton actually took on the assignment of writing CA48, which was the first handbook on extrusion coating ever put out."

Bob Wagner says "the one person that probably impressed me the most for his character, organizational

skills, and fraternalism is Bill Metcalf. He was a very calm person, had good ideas."

Memorable moments

While she downplays the significance, Helen Schuier had to work a little harder than most to gain the acceptance of her peers. After being elected chairman of the Metropolitan Local Section, a man at the meeting publicly intimated that Schuier had been "given" the position as the token woman. "I just sat back and grinned," she remembers, "because the men in the Metro Section were ready to crucify this guy. . . . After the meeting they brought him over and said, 'hey, listen, she got this because she worked hard for it and we feel she's capable. We didn't give it to her.' Well, the poor man was full of apologies. . . . It was a case of my finding out that, if you have something to contribute and you do your job, you can move ahead."

"I was at another meeting, and we were just making conversation. I said something, and two of the men just sat back and stared at me. 'What's wrong?' I asked. 'We're surprised at you, Helen. How could you be so stupid?' At that moment I knew I was being accepted for what I could offer. If I were just a token, they would have just let my stupid comment slip by. But they called me to task."

Ray Bender broke new ground when he was elected to the TAPPI Board of Directors: "I was the first one to be elected from a machinery manufacturer."

Receiving the 1974 Coating and Graphic Arts Division Award was a high point for Bob Hagemeyer, followed closely by being the keynote speaker at the EuCePa meeting at Munich in 1980.

When the Nonwovens Division was officially created, it was a moment of great satisfaction for Bob Wagner. "The fact that we had worked so hard, so many people, and over such a long period of time. Actually," he says, "I guess the awards you get mean something, too. But the thing which really stands out and that I get enjoyment out of is when we became a division."

Friendships

Personal relationships developed during TAPPI work are a recurring theme as you talk to these senior members. Bob Wagner talks about the closeness within the group that became the Nonwovens Division. "We had a nice thing going," he says, "where most of the officers were all in the Philadelphia area. We used to have cookouts at each other's houses. We even brought wives and really made a nice party out of the whole get-together."

Bill Sibbach remembers his four- and five-year-olds eating all the peanuts and candy and crackers in the DuPont suite of the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., during a Paper Synthetics Conference. Grant Cole of the Empire State Section did take his wife on a honeymoon, but the minute they returned they sat down and addressed 750 meeting announcements by hand.

Neil Vander Linden describes his TAPPI experience as a personal growth as well as a technical one: "I think each person you get involved with operates in a little different way. . . . You just go with it. That's the kind of dynamics

that go into this group.”

A man who admittedly “got a little choked up” when he read the speech by Phil Nethercut in the November issue of the journal (p. 171), Ray Bender says the ties among those in the Finishing and Converting Division are very close. He tells the story of a competitor who, despite many years difference in their ages, socialized with him and his wife. At a conference one year, the man greeted his wife with a big hug, which she thought nothing of until later in the week when he approached her at a social function and said “will you be my Mom?” She said “sure,” to which he responded that he’d just lost his mother a couple of months earlier. “Of course,” says Bender, “my wife was

just overwhelmed. He calls her ‘Mom’ to this day.”

Helen Schuierer talks about how she and Consultant Peter Daisley sat up until 2:30 in the morning talking to two young members attending their first Process and Product Quality Conference. “When we finally left,” she says, “and Peter and I were walking down the hall, he says, ‘Do you realize what we just gave away in consulting fees?’ And I said, ‘But doesn’t it make you feel good!’”

And that, it seems, is the essence of what these people get out of their TAPPI membership. The technical advances have been immense, the personal triumphs memorable, but what it boils down to for most is friends—past and future.□