

ROOTS: Celebrate Hosiery

Celebrate Hosiery Remembered....

In an era now past, hosiery companies, their suppliers and hundreds of their personnel looked forward to August and "Celebrate Hosiery."

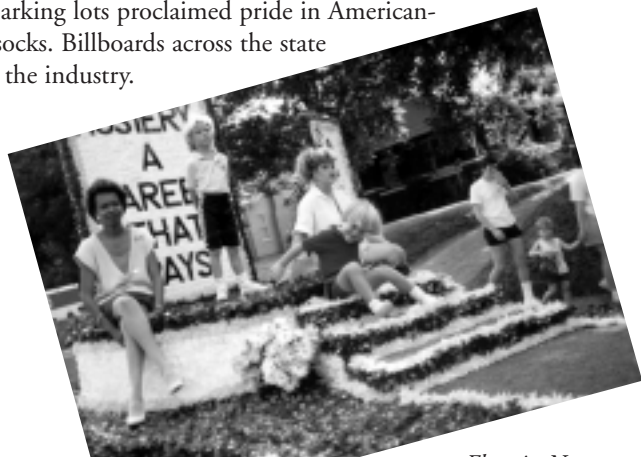
For most of the month, management and production people played golf, ate barbecue, competed in softball and fishing tournaments, and celebrated being part of a close-knit industry.

Originally started to promote retail sales of hosiery, primarily sheers, Celebrate Hosiery was an outgrowth of Hosiery Week promoted by the National Association of Hosiery Manufacturers (now THA). The Catawba Valley Hosiery Assn. (later Carolina Hosiery Assn.) decided to join in the promotion of the industry, but at a grassroots level. Soon NAHM joined the approach as the retailer event fizzled.

In the Fort Payne area, much of the Celebrate Hosiery energy remains. But in North Carolina, a golf tournament is the surviving element of a once-month-long observance.

All events were coordinated by the Carolina Hosiery Association with a budget that approached \$50,000. Most of the funds were generated by registration and tickets income. However, sponsorships provided money for entertainment, door prizes, tournament awards, and marketing.

Thousands of bumper stickers on cars in hosiery mills parking lots proclaimed pride in American-made socks. Billboards across the state touted the industry.



Float in Newton parade touted career opportunities in hosiery manufacturing with emphasis on the fashion and diversity.



Let's go to Hawaii... and some lucky couples did. A raffle during Celebrate Hosiery raised funds for the Scholarship Account and paid for a trip for winners. Milton Good, chair of Celebrate Hosiery Committee, is pictured.



Celebrate Hosiery banner greeted hundreds of hosiery industry participants at events across North Carolina.

In-plant luncheons for employees helped in the bonding. Talent shows, fund-raising raffles for the scholarship fund, art contests for children were in the mix along with industry-promoted outings to motor speedways, baseball games, and entertainment parks. Committees worked almost year-round.



Pitch in...a horseshoes tournament in the Sandhills has serious contenders.



Golf tournaments attracted up to 250 participants, probably the most popular event for management personnel.



Newly-appointed Hosiery Technology Center director Dan St. Louis takes his sons to the Hickory Motor Speedway for Hosiery Night at the Races.

As profit margins continued to shrink, ticket sales and sponsorships diminished.

Employees preferred to find entertainment in shopping, family outings, and personal trips. By 1997, functions were being trimmed from the Celebrate Hosiery agenda.

But many in the hosiery industry today will remember events and the creativity that went into the planning. Some events failed--watermelon outing at the N.C. Zoo, a downtown talent show in Hickory among them. But others were big time attractions, including the softball tournaments in Hickory and Biscoe and races at the Hickory Motor Speedway.

Consolidations and different management philosophies make it unlikely the format for the original "Celebrate Hosiery" will return. The climate in which the observance flourished was dominated by family-owned companies. Owners often were with their personnel on the softball field, pitching horseshoes, and in the barbecue line.

Celebrate Hosiery also leaves its mark on the industry with its culture of bonding. A recent Hosiery Day at the N.C. Legislature brought together scores of manufacturers and their suppliers for a day of lobbying. Perhaps the experiences of the August observance has carried over into a newer priority--governmental partnerships.

Still there are some who think about "Celebrate Hosiery" when the warm days of August arrive. For some, the memories are even warmer.



Food outings...Hickory area people converged on Country Adventure Barbecue Barn while Sandhills gatherings enjoyed outdoor picnics.



John Richardson of Clayson Knitting tries to put a spin on a long put.



Magic show entertains children at the Biscoe picnic 12 years ago.



And the winner is...NAHM President Sid Smith assists with door prizes.



Ellis Hosiery Mills softball captains accept trophy from Kevin Huitt, then CVHA president.



Team pride...Russell-Harvelle Hosiery softball team.



In-plant luncheons brought Celebrate Hosiery closer to home.