

ROOTS: Legacy of "Soaring Sixties"

September in some aspects used to be the start of a new year for the hosiery industry. Back-to-school shipments were coming to an end. Summer vacations were over. It was time to think about fall styles for the year ahead and upgrading the production operations.

It was no coincidence that the Catawba Valley Hosiery Exposition was a biennial September event. Bank balances were reflecting the shipments of fall hosiery products and holiday specialty items. There was money to modernize the plants.

"Faced with new pressures to diversify and increase production at lower cost, manufacturers will be looking at innovations in equipment with unusual interest. Such too is the case with merchandising and sales services." So read the article announcing the upcoming September 1968 exposition.

The 1968 Exposition was the first that excluded exhibits of hosiery manufacturers. Maybe another type format is needed for buyers and agents, the leaders of the Catawba Valley Hosiery Assn. reasoned.

Opening the exposition that year was the legendary Raleigh developer J.W. (Willie) York who created Cameron Village, the state's first planned shopping center. In 1968, York was serving the administration of Gov. Dan K. Moore as chairman of the old State Board of Conservation and Development, a forerunner of the Department of Commerce.

(Later York's youngest son, Philip, would intern with the CVHA and develop a model strategic plan for in-house sales organizations while an



MBA student at Wake Forest University.

Another son, Smedes, is a former mayor of Raleigh).

September was the month of rejuvenation. Suppliers intensified their marketing activities. In 1969, Allied Chemical Company brought S.C. Lt. Gov. John C. West and PGA championship golfer Dave Marr to the Catawba Valley for a major gathering of North Carolina hosiery executives. Even then, Allied was promoting fashion in socks and among the speakers was Jose Martin, director of color and design.

The NAHM was promoting its services. President Sam Berry linked the initials of the association – NAHM – to needs, action, health and marketplace.

Berry also noted that hosiery shipments in 1968 represented a 28 percent increase over 1966. No wonder some remember the decade as "the Soaring Sixties."

The directory of the CVHA 35 years ago included 77 hosiery manufacturers and 64 supplier firms. Many of those names are ghosts of another era: Hollar Hosiery Mills, J.A. Cline and Sons, Gayheart Hosiery, G&H Hosiery, Walton Knitting Mills, Elliott Hosiery...

But many new names have emerged since that time, including Neuville Industries, Ward Hosiery, Edelweiss Hosiery, Nu-Sox

Hosiery, N.C. Socks, Beard Hosiery, and dozens more.

The industry seems to renourish itself as it experiences change. But a trip back in time to 1968 and 1969 reveals that ideas and concepts being promoted today were on the table at that time. Pushing fashion for socks...modernization...shortage of trained labor...even growing imports. All were topics of conversation at those September meetings.

When the computer age arrived 20 years later, those issues were still around. But the pressures had accelerated and future Septembers would include new challenges.

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