

ROOTS

1977 Prophecies Still Pertinent

Today, any hosiery manufacturer will lament there is no margin. Profit seems like a bygone word. Just ask longtime managers.

But has it always been so? How many long for the good old days when profits were easier to obtain ...like in 1977.

But looking back, it appears that over a quarter of a century ago, hosiery executives were complaining about margins. Sam Berry, president of the National Association of Hosiery Manufacturers (now THA), told a gathering in February 1977, "Whenever the hosiery industry gets a fair percentage for a pair of socks, that's when I'll retire."

"Hosiery's margin of profit allows for us to get hurt worse than any other industry in the world," Berry told a Hickory NC audience. "We need to work together to get this hurt corrected. We don't know what the future holds for our industry, but we can be sure that a true hosiery man has great respect for his product and will fight for the survival of the industry."

These were words that rang out before NAFTA ...before fast track trade agreements that promoted foreign relations ...before WTO. The circle, it would seem, still is unbroken.

In 1977, the hosiery industry was diverse. The candidates for the 1977 Catawba Valley Hosiery Association board of directors reflected that diversity. Joining the leadership were Jack Clevenger, president of Clevenger Knitting of Black Mountain, who was a political activist in Buncombe County and owner of a smaller greige mill. Clevenger was a major force in the North Carolina hosiery industry until his death in 1998.

Others going on the board were David Dale, president of Burke Hosiery Mill, A.L. Lutz of Continental Case, and Jim Morrow of Morrow Brothers Hosiery in Catawba. They represented smaller companies and joined board members E.W. (Pic) Walton Jr., Allen Bolick, and Fielding Clark.

Stepping in the role of CVHA President was Marion Roseman, then president of Longview Hosiery Company. Allen Bolick, of Crest Hosiery, was president-elect, and secretary-treasurer was Whiting Shuford, vice president of Whiting Hosiery Mill.

Clark, president of Catawba Sox Inc., received the Member of the Year Award for his leadership, especially for support of the biannual exposition and the CVHA educational programs. The



YE&S --- Principal owners in YE&S Hosiery were among the executives at the February 1977 dinner meeting for CVHA members. From left: Carl Sigmon, Troy Yount and J.E. Yount of Southern Hosiery.



NAHM CHAIR --- Bill Chipman of Chipman-Union Hosiery and chair of the national association introduced NAHM President Sam Berry.



Charles Clevenger, left, and Jack Clevenger, right, of Clevenger Hosiery, Black Mountain, are discussing trends in manufacturing with Pete Mabler, center, founder of PAM Trading Co.

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CVHA DIRECTORS --- From left: Jim Morrow, Catawba Hosiery Mill, Jack Clevenger, Clevenger Sox Inc., A.L. Lutz, Lutz Hosiery, and David Dale, Burke Hosiery Mills.

Associate of the Year was George Graves III, president of Graves Distributing Co. and Groz-Beckert representative. Both were institutions in the hosiery network.

The association continued to focus on the need for fixers and employed Doug Fulbright to train the II students. It would be another 13 years before the Hosiery Technology Center emerged.

Graduates of the 1977 fixer training program included some well-known names who became owners of their operations: William (Bill) Lindsay, Lindsay Hosiery; Wayne Mosteller, Longwear Hosiery; Michael Hoyle, Hoyle Hosiery.

Agents were the conduit to the retailers for most mills in 1977. Outgoing President Carl Sigmon of YR&S Hosiery referred to the challenges that focused mostly on manufacturing success.

“Why do we exist? What do we take for granted? And what must we do to prepare ourselves for what lies ahead?”

Sigmon’s words are timeless. He could be speaking to the industry today.



FUTURE LEADER --- Clarence Wall, then with Rudin and Roth Hosiery, was soon to become president of the CVHA as it launched on its path to become a statewide Carolina Hosiery Association.



GETTING ORGANIZED --- Marion Roseman, then president of Longview Hosiery Mills, left, and Albert Showfety of Jo-Mil Hosiery, right, discuss committee assignments for the 1977-78 board of directors. Roseman now is co-owner of Simmons Hosiery Mills.



WE NEED PROFITS --- Sam Berry, president of NAHM, lamented the low margins in the industry 27 years ago.



WINNERS---Fielding Clark, left, president of Catawba Sox Inc., and past CVHA president, and George Graves, right, president of Graves Distributing, took home the 1977 Member of the Year and Associate of the Year honors.

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