

ROOTS: 1999

In April 1999, the members of the Carolina Hosiery Assn. celebrated the 45th anniversary of the organization. They also celebrated the last birthday as an independent organization. Eight months later the CHA and NAHM (now THA) merged into one association.

The 21st century was 35 weeks away and the program focused on opportunity and the partnerships with the Department of Community Colleges and N.C. State University.

But there was a strong element of nostalgia.

The 278 executives from hosiery and supplier firms enjoyed a social hour with table

displays of events from 1959 forward. A multi-media presentation featured photos taken over the previous 40 years. Some participants dressed in 1950s fashions.

It was the last occasion for all past presidents of the association to be photographed. In the photo were



1999 Annual Meeting Program: From left: Danny McNair, incoming president; Dr. Scott Rawls, then vice president, N.C. Department of Community Colleges; Dr. Blanton Godfrey, dean, College of Textiles Engineering, N.C. State University; Darrell Houston, Member of the Year; Dan St. Louis, director, Hosiery Technology Center.

charter members of the Catawba Valley Hosiery Assn., including Elwood (Pic) Walton Jr. and Linwood Brittain. Also among the 34 living former presidents were second and third generation entrepreneurs – Hugh Gaither, Allen Bolick, John Moretz, Kemp Mauney, Charles Mauney, and Milton Good.

Speakers included Dr. Martin Lancaster, then the new president of the Department of Community Colleges. Danny McNair of Harriss & Covington Hosiery Co. became the 40th president of the association, and Tony Whitener of Footprints International was the Member of the Year. Participants took home a brass letter



PAST PRESIDENTS--The last photograph of the past presidents of the Carolina Hosiery Association, some of whom led the organizations from the 1960s through the 1990s.

opener commemorating the occasion, compliments of sponsor Conover Plastics.

The final weeks of the 20th century were a calm before the storm. Retailers were exerting more control over their hosiery vendors and manufacturers were acquiring new technology to protect margins and their customer base. China was not a member of the WTO and posed no threat in the domestic marketplace.

Gaye Keener, a longtime executive with Moretz Inc. and whose role with CHA covered every committee and every office, said good-bye to the industry. Her career at Moretz had spanned more than 50 years. Simultaneously, Moretz said "no" to a merger with Great American Knitting Mills (now Gold Toe Brands).



PARTY TIME: North Carolina hosiery executives gathered in a festive atmosphere for the 40th anniversary meeting.

In 1999, the culture of the industry in North Carolina was changing. Large mills were focusing inward and the "community of mills" was fragmenting. Relations between mills and their suppliers also was being tested.

At the beginning of the 1990s, special events were bringing 300 and 400 people together. By the end of the decade, functions were attracting 200. Today, far fewer are seen at functions.

But longtime observers see the layering of the hosiery industry—importers, domestic, greige, finishing—as inevitable for our times. But times continue to change and what lies ahead for a global marketplace is uncertain.

How will the European Community react to the flow of apparel and other manufactured goods out of China? And who can predict

the politics of China and the U.S.? Just as the recent election held surprises, so will international commerce.

Hosiery operations that do not lose sight of the continued drive for efficiencies and cost-savings technology should be prepared for a future that offers prospects that are better than ever.

Season Of Hope, Message Of Hope

As the holiday season celebrates hope, four top hosiery executives will promote a hopeful vision for the industry at the annual meeting of the Carolina Hosiery Assn. chapter.

More than one hundred executives are expected to gather Dec. 2 at the Sawtooth Building in downtown Winston-Salem which will feature a luncheon and panel presentation.

Bill Redding, CEO of Acme-McCrary Hosiery Inc., Asheboro, John Freeze, president of Commonwealth Hosiery, Asheboro, Kevin Toomey, president of CEO of Kayser-Roth Hosiery Co. Inc., and Bill Nichols, president of Kentucky-Derby Hosiery Co. will offer their perspectives on where opportunities lie for domestic manufacturers.

Rusty Holt, vice president of Holt Hosiery in Burlington and 2005 president of the chapter, will moderate. Reservations are being accepted on a first-come-first-served basis, said B.J. Frye, president of Conover Plastics and 2004 CHA president.