



Fuller F. Barnes\* (1933-1941)  
(1943-1946) Associated Spring

James W. Campbell\*  
(1941-1943)

Edward J. Byrnes Jr.\*  
(1946-1951)  
Wickwire-Spencer Steel Co.



J.D. Culbertson III\* (1951-1955)  
Duer Spring & Mfg.



Harry C. Faust\* (1955-1960)  
Paragon Spring

## Past Presidents the Driving Force Behind SMI's 70-year History and Beyond

By Rita Schauer  
Springs Editor

\*Deceased



G. Donald Jacobson\* (1960-1962)  
Newcomb Spring Corp.



A.A. Bonde Sr.\* (1962-1964)  
Accurate Spring Mfg. Co.



L. Vaughan Barnes\* (1964-1966)  
The Yost Superior Co.



Fred R. Downs Jr. (1966-1968)  
Industrial Components



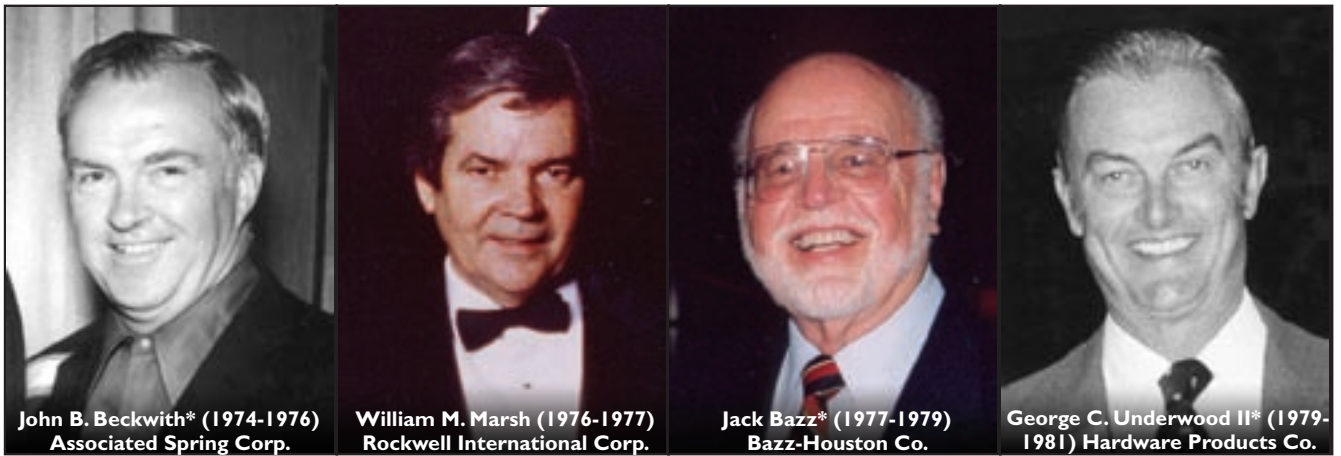
Hugh A. Purnell Jr. (1968-1970)  
Holister, Associated, SEI



A.H. "Bud" Peterson Jr. (1970-  
1972) Peterson Spring



Stanley R. Banas (1972-1974)  
Stanley Spring & Stamping



**John B. Beckwith\* (1974-1976)**  
Associated Spring Corp.

**William M. Marsh (1976-1977)**  
Rockwell International Corp.

**Jack Bazz\* (1977-1979)**  
Bazz-Houston Co.

**George C. Underwood II\* (1979-1981)**  
Hardware Products Co.

**D**uring my eight years at the Spring Manufacturers Institute (SMI) and *Springs* magazine, I have been interested in the rich history of the spring industry. More than that, I have been impressed by the tenacity and innovativeness of its people – a group of competitors, yes, but also families, colleagues and friends. For this article, written to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spring Manufacturers Institute, I was privileged to speak with some of the North American spring industry’s most outstanding contributors, and I’m pleased to share some of the stories and insights stemming from their experiences as president of SMI. Through their energy and foresight, SMI has grown, and members now enjoy the wealth of products, activities and services its former leaders worked so diligently to create. Since you are reading this magazine, and perhaps have used SMI’s design software or attended an SMI event, you have been touched by the work of SMI’s past presidents. As we move forward and look to the future, we must also take the time to learn from the past and those who have traveled our path before us.

### The Early Years

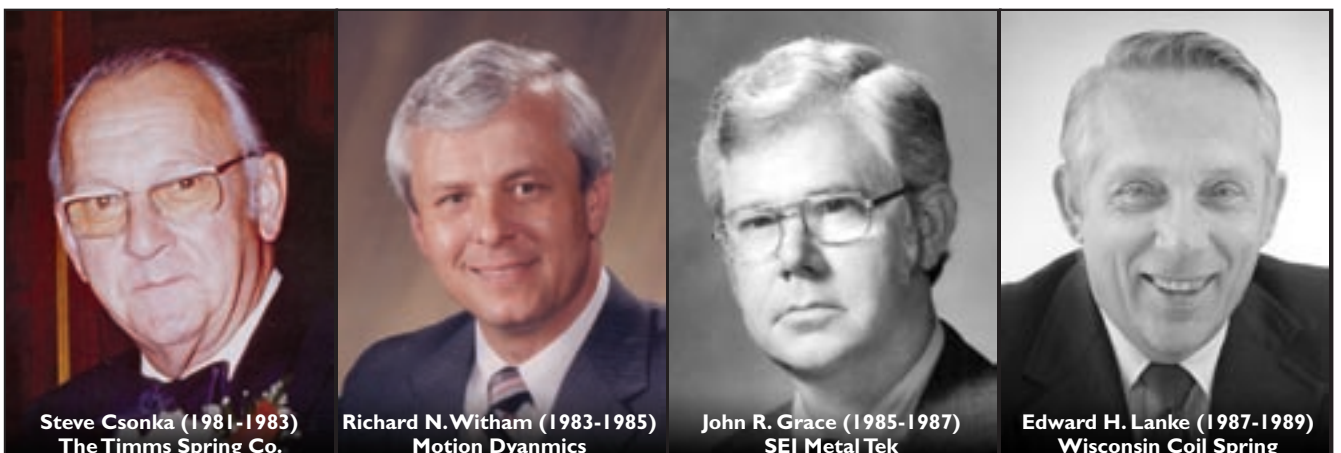
In 1933, Fuller F. Barnes led the formation of the Spring Manufacturers Association (SMA) with 40 charter member spring companies. He served as president from 1933 to 1941 and again from 1944 to 1946. As a tribute to

his leadership, he was elected honorary president for life in 1941.

At that time, the association had no staff, so volunteers organized meetings and kept the books. R.I. Nethercutt served as the first secretary of the association, which was based in Buffalo, NY. When the office was moved to Bristol, CT, in 1934, L.A. Wheeler, executive secretary of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce, was appointed SMA secretary. Following his retirement in 1936, Jeffrey Hamel, his successor at the Chamber, also succeeded him as SMA secretary. He retained the position until George E. Underwood (not to be confused with George C. Underwood II, SMI president from 1979-81) in 1950 became the executive of the Chamber and the secretary of the SMA. Thus, the SMA grew out of Bristol, CT, much as the North American spring industry grew out of the clock and hoop skirt industries in that area.

In the beginning, meetings of the SMA were informal, networking events. Unlike today, no women or suppliers participated in them. “Through the ’50s, we had one meeting a year in New York,” says Fred Downs (1966-68). “We had a luncheon and drinks, then went home. I was a board member at that time. From that simple situation, it grew to be a much more sophisticated association.”

Activities of the young association weren’t entirely social, however. Beginning in 1935, members began devel-



**Steve Csonka (1981-1983)**  
The Timms Spring Co.

**Richard N. Witham (1983-1985)**  
Motion Dyanmics

**John R. Grace (1985-1987)**  
SEI Metal Tek

**Edward H. Lanke (1987-1989)**  
Wisconsin Coil Spring



Alex Rankin (1989-1991)  
Vulcan Spring



M. Parker Blatchford (1991-1993)  
Chestnut Group



A.H. "Pete" Peterson III (1993-1995)  
Peterson Spring

oping an accepted method for figuring spring tolerances, including tolerance charts, specification sheets, design charts and data sheets, and in 1940, SMA published the Standards for Mechanical Springs booklet. In the following years, the publication was revised and expanded several times.

To reflect the growing emphasis on technology, members voted in 1961 to change the association's name to the Spring Manufacturers Institute (SMI).

In that same year, another landmark decision was made – to publish a biannual magazine devoted to spring technology and the industry in general. In May 1962, the first issue of *Springs* was circulated. In his President's Message, G. Donald Jacobson, called it, "another step in the forward march of the spring industry."

### Moving Forward

In response to member requests, meetings became more organized, extending over a two-day period with speakers and agendas, and ultimately expanding to today's three-day multifaceted events.

"What attracted people to becoming involved in SMI were the social aspects of the organization," says Downs. "People joined the association to come to the meetings, and springmakers found that the competition wasn't as bad as they had thought; they were pretty decent people once they got to know one another. They also came for the speakers, if the subject matter was compelling."

"Back in those days, you could get good speakers in the big cities," says Hugh Purnell (1968-70). Indeed, the list of speakers in the '50s and '60s reads like a Who's Who, including Chet Huntley, Gov. Ronald Reagan, Gov. John Lodge, Dr. Joyce Brothers, Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, Kyle Rote and Sen. Richard Nixon. "I'm not sure, but I think we got Richard Nixon for \$500 [\$2,827 in today's dollars]. Now good speakers are quite expensive."

"Our members worked together to get speakers for our meetings," says Stan Banas (1972-74) "The people out West got Ronald Reagan, and members out East got Dr. Joyce Brothers and Richard Nixon. The luncheons and dinners with the special guest speakers are highlights of my times at

SMI. I had bought Nixon's book 'Six Crises' and had him sign it for me. I treasure it today."

"One of my most amusing memories was of Nixon," Purnell says. "He didn't realize he'd gotten his sleeve in the meringue pie, and after dinner when people came up to talk with him and shake hands, he smeared it on a few of us without knowing it. Nobody mentioned that to him, of course."

During G. Donald Jacobson's presidency from 1960-62, the policy of bringing wives to meetings was instituted. "Some considered it sacrilege at the time, but it ultimately made the organization more civilized," says Alex Rankin (1989-1991). "Before that, it was only men; pretty much a drinking, gambling group."

Formerly held in New York, Bristol, Chicago or Detroit, meetings evolved into more family-oriented resort-based events. For many members, they offered the chance to combine business education and networking with vacationing with family and friends in the industry. Members often found themselves so busy establishing and expanding their businesses that SMI meetings were the only time away they had.

"Back then, it was a different time," says Purnell. "We were more or less discussing and developing many different things. We worked with committees in Washington trying to get some improvement in material specs. We also had meetings in Bethesda, MD, with steel companies and wire producers, and we managed to get quite a bit of what we asked for, in terms of material quality. Over the years, it's helped a lot."

In 1968, the entire format of the Standards booklet was reconstructed, becoming the Standards for Compression, Extension, Torsion and Flat Springs. In 1970, a companion publication, the Spring Design Handbook, was prepared by volunteers on the SMI Standards Committee.

In fact, volunteers organized all aspects of SMI activities, from technology to meeting planning. "I worked with some wonderful and dedicated people," says Downs. "Everyone pitched in, including my wife, Mary, who ran the women's program at the meetings while I ran the men's."



The challenge of publishing *Springs* twice a year was the job of members on the Magazine Committee. “We were trying to write articles ourselves, as well as editing the articles that suppliers and others were sending, and that was difficult,” remembers Purnell, who had served on the committee. “I remember making a lot of trips down to Metro-Selliger in New York, who produced the magazine.”

“We struggled with the magazine, and we worried about finances,” Purnell says. “We were worried that there weren’t enough reserves. We also didn’t have staff to sell advertising for the magazine, though members were helping out, doing the best they could to get ads from suppliers.”

Finally, the activity level had increased to a point where a full-time staff member was needed. Thus, in 1969 George E. Underwood assumed the post, establishing an office on Stearns Street in Bristol from which he handled the

association’s day-to-day activities, including managing the budget. In 1971, he was elected the association’s first executive vice president.

In addition to managing internal affairs, fostering relationships among springmakers, disseminating information and providing technical resources, SMI began at that time to look beyond its membership. What were springmakers in other countries doing? What could be learned from them? Bud Peterson (1970-72) led the SMI’s first overseas trip in 1971. The group visited many spring companies in Europe, plus attended the spring machinery show in Milan, Italy.

Mexico was another area of interest during Peterson’s presidency. “A few weeks after our wedding, my lovely new wife, Della, and I planned and led our group for the first time to Mexico,” recalls Peterson. “We stayed at the Acapulco Princess Hotel and filled three buses on our return

**It Started with a Handshake**

To a first-time attendee at a Spring Manufacturers Institute meeting, the president and officers must seem like VIPs, highly influential people who have been in the industry forever and seem to know everyone. But that wasn’t always the case for them.

“My most memorable SMI convention was my first one in Hawaii in 1986 after I bought GR Spring & Wire,” says Jim Zawacki. “It was my first encounter with other spring people, and it was very enjoyable. I was impressed with the openness of people in the industry.”

“John Beckwith befriended me at my first convention at the Greenbrier in West Virginia,” says Dick Witham. “That made a major impression. In fact, it was because of the quality and openness of the people in the spring industry that I decided I wanted to spend my career there. John took me under his wing, taught me a lot and encouraged me to get involved. I remember when he eventually called to ask me if I would consider being second vice president. I was terrified, but how could I say no to him?”

“The first time I went to an SMI meeting, I couldn’t afford to bring my wife, and I felt alone,” says Alex Rankin. “Then Bill Heitz, Jack Bazz and some others invited me to dinner. We made friends and that encouraged me to come back. If I had not felt welcome and just sat by myself in a corner the whole time, I may never have come back. The fact that you put a green dot on someone’s badge to indicate they’re a first-timer doesn’t mean a thing until you really reach out to them.”

“I make a point of always being involved in welcoming, meeting and greeting new members,” says Park Blatchford. “People who attend the conventions drive the organization, and first-timers are its lifeblood. They are our potential future leadership.”

Next time you attend an SMI meeting, take the time to step outside your familiar circle of friends, talk to some of the first-timers and make them feel welcome. Remember that you were a newcomer once, too. Moreover, you never know which one of them will become president someday.



to Mexico City, stopping en route in Taxco with an overnight in Cuernavaca. We visited [Peterson Spring's] first foreign expansion, *Resortes y Productos Metalicos* in Mexico City.

"My personal contribution to our industry was probably an awakening of our interest in foreign springmaking," he says. "We began forging ties with the English spring association, and I encouraged Larry Smith [head of *Resortes y Productos*] to create a Mexican SMI."

Meanwhile, technical activities continued. In 1972, the Standards Committee combined the Standards Manual and Design Handbook, and added a large amount of new information to create the first edition of the Handbook of Spring Design. Since then, volunteers have revised and updated the Handbook a number of times, most recently in 2002. The committee had also developed a round slide rule for calculating springs.

"One thing we worried about was the SME [Society of Manufacturing Engineers] setting all the parameters for designing springs," says Banas. "We fought and finally won in getting all our tolerances acceptable to them."

In 1973, SMI ventured into another new arena by approving the expansion of the membership to include industry suppliers, and 23 companies joined SMI as Technical Members. The culmination of discussions that started around 1969-70, the move was viewed as a natural outgrowth of suppliers' advertising and article contributions to the magazine by some, a solution to the association's budget concerns by others, and with skepticism by still others. "The suppliers felt that they should belong to our organization," says Banas. "At first, we worried about them taking over because they outnumbered us. But they were real gentlemen and handled it very well." Today, SMI has 95 Associate Member companies from which numerous vital contributors to the industry and the association have come.

That same year, George E. Underwood, affectionately known as "Mr. SMI," retired from the executive vice presidency. Fortunately for the membership, Fred Downs had also recently retired from Industrial Components, and he agreed to step into the office on an "interim" basis.

The transition from spring sales manager to association manager "was not difficult," says Downs. "It was all very hands-on. SMI operated from a small office in Bristol with a 'girl Friday' and me. I had been involved with SMI for many years; I knew the people, where the association was going and where it had been."

Modestly, Downs says, "I don't think I added a lot to SMI." In reality, however, that was far from the case. He was instrumental in executing many of the presidents', board of directors' and committees' new plans. These included regional management workshops and participation in the Alliance of Metalworking Industries (AMI), a consortium of metalworking associations involved in lobbying activities. In response to the advent of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a set of recommended spring industry safety codes were developed. In

addition, the quarterly Key Business Survey was introduced and the Market Trend Survey was reactivated. Both remain important strategic planning tools for springmakers today.

A low point in SMI's history occurred when, on February 25, 1975, the SMI office was the victim of a serious fire. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but virtually all records and office machinery were destroyed or damaged by fire, smoke and water. Downs came to the rescue, setting up temporary quarters in his basement and garage. By 1:30 p.m. the day of the fire, Downs' home office was open for business.

When Underwood retired and Downs accepted the executive vice president position, SMI knew that Downs didn't plan to stay forever. Stan Banas, president, and John Beckwith, vice president, began to discuss with the board what direction – and location – the office of executive vice president should take when Downs retired. "The people out East didn't want the office to move," says Banas. "But I reasoned that Chicago would be a good choice, as it was centrally located, giving volunteers an easier time paying expenses. People in Canada liked the idea of moving to Chicago because it was easier to get to than Connecticut."

### SMI in Transition

Eventually, the decision was made to relocate association headquarters to the Chicago area. When Downs retired in 1981, a Transition Committee, chaired by incoming president George C. Underwood II, and composed of past presidents John Beckwith (1974-76), Stan Banas, Bud Peterson and Hugh Purnell, oversaw the move. They decided to hire an association management company to ensure professional management while avoiding the overhead of maintaining an independent SMI home office. They chose Whitchurch Management Corp., and Chuck Whitchurch, with 17 years of association experience, was named executive vice president and secretary treasurer. "Chuck did a good job for many years," says Banas.

From its new headquarters, SMI activities continued moving forward. *Springs* magazine grew in advertising and total pages, and the Annual Market Summary (formerly the Market Trend Survey) was expanded in scope to include nonmember spring company data. In 1982, Alex Rankin and the Technology Committee (formerly the Standards Committee) obtained permission from McGraw Hill to publish A.M. Wahl's comprehensive Mechanical Springs book, which SMI continues to offer today. The association's legislative activity also increased in that same year when member James Monde became chairperson of AMI, and the SMI National and Legal Affairs committee was started.

"OSHA was a concern at that time," says Steve Csonka (1981-83). "OSHA was a bit confusing. Inspectors would visit one plant and cite it for specific things, and then another plant would be visited and not cited for the same things. It seemed like the rule was whatever the guy that audited you decided to do that day. Therefore, we decided we'd better have our own program."

Besides OSHA, formal quality control programs were coming into prominence in the industry, so SMI presented a series of QC seminars for springmakers.

Above all, says Csonka, "SMI was a nice, social group. We got together for three days of enjoyment to talk business, play golf and so forth."

"During the time I was president, we were going through a recession," Csonka continues. "SMI and the spring industry in general were focusing on survival. [Sound familiar?] I remember how hard it was, working at a small plant where you're on a first-name basis with your employees, to tell them to work harder and cut costs. Then we'd tell them, 'See you in a week. Gotta go to Hawaii for the spring meeting.' But the meetings were valuable. You would learn as much from these conventions from individual conversations as you did from the formal speakers. You never knew when you'd pick up something that would help you out along the way."

Dick Witham (1983-85) agrees. "The one-on-one relationships, the willingness to share best practices without revealing trade secrets, all that people were willing to share, made the industry very unique. SMI meetings and activities were an important part of my professional life...How do you put a value on going to a convention, having a cocktail with someone like Bud Peterson and talking about the industry?"

In November 1983, SMI celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the fall meeting in Boca Raton, FL. It also published the History of the Spring Industry in the United States and Canada. Three years in the making, the book was written by W. Peyton Fawcett under the guidance of the SMI History committee, which included Pat Williams, Bill Betts, Bud Peterson, George C. Underwood II, John Beckwith, Fred Downs, L. Vaughan Barnes (1964-66), G. Donald Jacobson and Chuck Whitchurch.

The industry was beginning to change in character, says Witham. "In the '70s, it was more of a social organization. In the mid-'80s, I saw a much different level of general manager coming in. We formed an Education Committee to provide the kinds of educational programs they were looking for."

"My idea was to raise the level of professionalism in the industry through education, and elevate the perception of professionals who make springs," Witham continues. "I am still in awe of the talents of springmakers as I walk through the shop and see what people are doing; they're artists. Unfortunately, I don't think that professional education has progressed enough since 1985. Many people don't realize that there is a good return on investment in people, not just equipment. Because of thin margins, companies are not investing enough in their people, which ultimately is not good for the industry."

"When I was president," says John Grace (1985-87), "it was a time when all of us were dipping our feet into the idea of global competition, and the Japanese were the big concern." In the mid-'80s, 20 percent of North American springmakers were doing business with the automotive

industry in large volume, and Japanese automakers were giving the Big Three a run for their money. "This occurred just before the onset of automotive price-down demands.

"Another emphasis was, and continues to be, good communications with your customers. The things we were concerned with primarily were how to measure energy, and how we and the customer could determine loads at lengths, parts at deflections and so forth.

"The other big thing was defining design. SMI took the first tentative steps toward having spring design software. At the time, we were still using the round slide rule. SMI has done a marvelous job in the last 18 years. The software programs have become quite sophisticated. They consider design in terms of the type of service the spring is going to get. Back then, we were just beginning to explore the possibilities."

After the round slide rule, SMI developed the Coil Spring Analysis Software. "It checked compression, extension and torsion spring designs utilizing the TI 74 programmable hand-held calculator," explains Ed Lanke (1987-89). "It eventually led to the Spring Designer, Graphical Spring Design and now Advanced Spring Design software. The project keeps continuing, and I don't think it will ever end."

The computer age had arrived in the '80s, with Computer Numerical Controlled (CNC) springmaking equipment making its way onto the shop floor and desktop computers in the office. "People were finding they needed more technical knowledge," says Lanke. "At conventions, springmakers and suppliers gave technical talks on machinery, materials and spring manufacture."

Meanwhile, the globalization of manufacturing continued to be a concern of North American springmakers. "I've been privileged to go on five or six post-convention trips to other countries, including Europe, the Far East, Canada and Mexico," says Lanke.

"We wanted to go behind the Iron Curtain when it first opened up," says Rankin. "The Wafios people helped us set it up. It was dismal then, but you should see how far they've come today. Foreign trips are valuable. You learn either that you are better than they are or worse than they are, and you might initiate business there."

Spring technology was a major part of Rankin's involvement in SMI, having led the Technology Committee for 12 years before "going through the chairs." (In SMI, a member is elected secretary/treasurer, then vice president before becoming president.) During those 12 years, the Regulations Compliance, and National and Legal Affairs Committees were spun out of the Technology Committee, and, of course, the initial steps of SMI software development were taken.

Although these activities were, and still are, important member services, "there is more to SMI than the technology part of it," says Rankin. "It may seem surprising coming from a degreed engineer like me, but I don't think technol-



ogy is the purpose of the SMI organization. Sure there have been some very good programs; but face it, any unique technology that a company has they're not going to share with others. It's the social aspect that keeps members involved with the organization.

"As president, I tried to formalize the administration, civilize it and professionalize it. We had formal dinner dances, with invocations before the dinners. I tried to impress people with the quality of the organization. When you have guests for the holidays, you cook an elegant meal and bring out your best china. That's what we tried to do with the SMI. At all the social functions, I had the president, vice presidents and their wives welcome all the guests as they arrived. I felt the officers had a job to do to promote SMI."

Rankin also effected a change in the management of SMI, which was turned over to Patricia Williams in 1990. She had already been handling SMI activities under Whitchurch Management since 1979, including editing *Springs*. "Whitchurch was getting involved with another organization, and we felt we were getting secondary attention," explains Rankin. "So when Pat left Whitchurch to form her own management company, we asked her to take on SMI."

"I had a lot of respect for the gal," says Csonka of Williams. "She did a lot for SMI."

### More Changes

Unfortunately, Williams' career as SMI executive vice president was cut short. In 1992 at the SMI meeting in Puerto Rico, she died suddenly due to complications following a recent surgery. Park Blatchford (1991-93) found himself in the position of not only leading SMI as president but also managing it. "It was a tragic loss; Pat was a wonderful person," says Blatchford. "I spent a lot of time in and out of the SMI office after that. Fortunately, there was a good staff." In addition to Williams, there was one full-time and one part-time staff member, as well as freelancers for the magazine. Furthermore, he says, "there was not one member I talked to that didn't offer to help. I had tremendous support from everyone at SMI."

Blatchford led the search committee for a new executive vice president in the Chicago area, and they selected Ken Boyce, president of Right Directions Consulting, who had over 10 years of association experience with the Professional Golfers Association Illinois section and the Chicago High-Tech Association. The existing SMI staff joined Right Directions, and SMI activities continued to accelerate.

Under the direction of the Technology Committee, SMI published the Spring Testing Guidelines; and Spring Designer software, written by Brian Hamilton, was released.

Meanwhile, the Regulations Compliance Committee developed a strategy to deal with an increasingly demanding OSHA. This included adding a regulations compliance expert to the staff to conduct seminars and preventive safety audits of springmaking facilities.

"Among our paramount concerns was fostering networking among springmakers so we could continue to know each other and learn from one another in a noncompetitive environment," says Blatchford. "We also were in the early throes of liaising with the ESF [European Spring Federation] and met with them on a couple of occasions. Pete Peterson led these activities."

"Over a period of years, I have encouraged SMI to get to know people in spring organizations in other countries, working to facilitate contact both before and after my presidency," says Peterson (1993-95).

"My presidency was the first one under the new executive vice president," he says. "There were many improvements to the internal workings of the organization because of Ken's impetus."

"I was fortunate to be president during the salad days," he continues. "The magazine was doing well, the economy was doing well, and SMI had a huge surplus."

"The officers and the board supported me as president. I was able to build and execute a plan and help carry the organization forward," he says. "But you don't do it alone; you do it with lots of people and the broad-based perspectives they bring to the board and to committee meetings."

With the economy booming, springmakers were feeling the shortage of skilled labor more than ever. "We were trying to focus on the education area, which was an item the membership had said they wanted more help with, specifically in the area of training employees," says Don Jacobson (1995-97). "As a result, we started SMI University and developed in-house training programs for coiler and four-slide setup and operation." At the time this program started, Jacobson was Education Committee chair and vice president of SMI.

"Getting skilled help is not as much of a problem now as it was then," he continues, "mostly because the newer machinery has attracted some younger employees who are more interested in the CNC type equipment. They like working on computers. It's a different type of training for these people and, as a result, you need fewer skilled people for the same number of jobs."

The magazine was another point of focus during Jacobson's presidency, and SMI expanded *Springs* from two to four issues a year in 1996. The magazine had been an area of ongoing interest to Jacobson, who served on the Magazine Committee over the years, and his father initiated SMI's publication of *Springs*.

SMI's increased activity level also led to some changes in governance. "It was felt that the board and committees were getting so large that we were losing focus," he explains. "We changed the structure of SMI so that the committee chairs would also be directors and would report to the board meeting. It brings more meaning to being a director when you are also chair of a committee. And as a committee chair, you have insight into what is going on in a particular area and can help the board become more active and informed."

Under Chuck Pepka's presidency (1997-99), board involvement continued to grow. "I published a series of goals for SMI, which the board approved," says Pepka. "The board then empowered the committee chairs to make decisions."

"The board and committees working on their goals had a positive impact on the growth of SMI," he continues. "We had an executive and finance committee that were more knowledgeable about the financial aspects of SMI. It was also the first time in a number of years that we had a net membership growth."

"Don Jacobson did an excellent job in approaching new ways of training people," says Pepka. "My goal was to get members to take a more technical focus to prepare them to be more competitive for the future. However, it involved the momentum generated from the new focus on training. Above all, it involved appointing enthusiastic committee chairs and empowering them to get their job done."

Pepka's technical emphasis was a natural outgrowth of his previous contributions to SMI. He teaches SMI Basic Spring Design and Intermediate Spring design classes, and has been a Technology Committee member since he was 21 years old. "Some of the best people that have ever been in the industry were on that committee when I was very young," says Pepka. "It was very interesting to be able to call the committee members with technical questions. They didn't mind whether the questions were pretty dumb or pretty astute; they were patient with me and extremely helpful."

SMI's technical activities included a program with Wright State University to support spring design education at the college level. In addition, the Technology Committee replaced the DOS-based Spring Designer software with a new Windows-based version, Graphical Spring Design Software Version 5, written by Darryl Clark. "It is the most successful software, in terms of sales, that SMI has ever had," he says. The committee, with the help of Associated Spring, also began work on the comprehensive four-volume Encyclopedia of Spring Design.

"I inherited many good things from past presidents and staff," says Jim Zawacki (1999-2001). "Pete's focus was international, Don's was education and Chuck's was technical. My goal was to carry on all of that. At the same time, I tried to expose our members to the fact that the world is changing and we have to get involved outside of our association."

"SMI represents a small sector," he continues. "We don't have a big voice. By networking with other organizations, we could have a bigger voice. Whether we are trying to accomplish things in Washington, or with our education system or new technology, associations have to work together and not duplicate things. This could also mean sharing offices or sharing personnel."

In 2001, the magazine expanded to six issues a year, with increased international content and circulation. "Some people would question the wisdom of international expansion of the magazine today," says Zawacki. "But we can't close our eyes to what's going on in the world around us."

At the same time, SMI continued working cooperatively with the European Spring Federation, Institute of Spring Technology, Japan Spring Manufacturers Association and other industry organizations.

Outside the spring industry, SMI began to connect with other metalworking associations to share best practices and discuss legislative concerns.

Inside SMI management, another change occurred when the six full-time and two part-time employees of Right Directions Consulting became direct employees of SMI. "The staff and budget had grown," explains Zawacki. "Most associations the size of SMI are self-managed, so the change was a natural progression in the growth of the organization. The purchase of RDC had actually started with Don's presidency, continued under Chuck's and was completed with mine."

"I hope my most lasting contribution to SMI is the outreach to different organizations," he concludes. "SMI participates in a metals association executive group, and I hope that continues. We have a lot of people that want to exclude everything outside our group, but you can't operate as an island. When I got into business, I thought I could be the master of my own destiny. But when you have customers moving offshore, it's very hard to manage your destiny unless you know what's going on in the world."

Under the present leadership of Roy Vinderine (2001-03) SMI is continuing to network with other spring and metalworking associations, both in the areas of legislation and spring technology. It is considering adding a full-time technical expert to its staff to provide more education, products and assistance in that area. At the same time, its leaders are concerned about the effects of the sluggish economy on member companies and the association itself. Expanding SMI Web-based services and offering seminars online are ways SMI is providing economical alternatives for members, in terms of time and cost involved in participation. Ultimately, if history is any indication of the future, then SMI's membership will pull together through these difficult times to formulate solutions, and the Institute will continue to serve the North American spring industry for at least another 70 years.

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