

J. R. "DICK" DEGNAN

MAY 25, 1910 - NOVEMBER 17, 1988



J.R. "Dick" Degnan

With the recent death of Dick Degnan, NAPA has lost one of its greatest friends and supporters. During his 12-year tenure as NAPA's vice president and general manager, from November 1963 to December 31, 1975, Degnan brought NAPA into the modern marketing age and led the organization to new heights in sales and service.

Joseph Riluf Degnan was born in the early part of this century in a rural New Jersey town called High Bridge.

In 1929, when he was 19 years old, he left High Bridge to begin his career with the Standard Oil Company at their headquarters in New York City. Unfortunately, with the stock market crash following soon after this, his career with Standard Oil was short-lived.

Not one to be easily discouraged, Degnan soon found a position with Beckwith Chandler Company, a paint manufacturer, in Newark, New Jersey. He began as a quality control clerk and in just two years, he was appointed plant manager. In this position, he acted as a one-man sales force canvassing the entire eastern United States until 1937.

In that year, Degnan decided to leave Beckwith Chandler for a position with Martin-Senour Company. In the forties, he was moved to the west coast and assigned the task of developing the market there for Martin-Senour automotive finishes, something the company had not been able to accomplish in the past.

He was so successful in opening up this market that only four years after he was sent to the west coast, he was transferred to Chicago as midwest manager of the Trade Sales Division. Not too many years later he returned to the west coast as regional manager of Automotive Finishes Trade Sales and Industrial Finishes.

He returned to Chicago in 1955 as vice president and general sales manager. During his years with Martin-Senour, he helped pioneer the company's growth that established it as a nationally recognized supplier of quality paint lines.

In his many positions at Martin-Senour, Degnan had daily contact with NAPA. He worked with many NAPA Jobbers throughout the country, as well as with the Distribution Centers. He was active on the NAPA Manufacturer's Council and was thoroughly knowledgeable of NAPA's uniquely successful distribution system.

In 1963, when NAPA was looking for just the right person to fill its top position as vice president, general manager, Degnan was the perfect choice. He accepted the position and moved to NAPA Headquarters, then in Chicago, Illinois.