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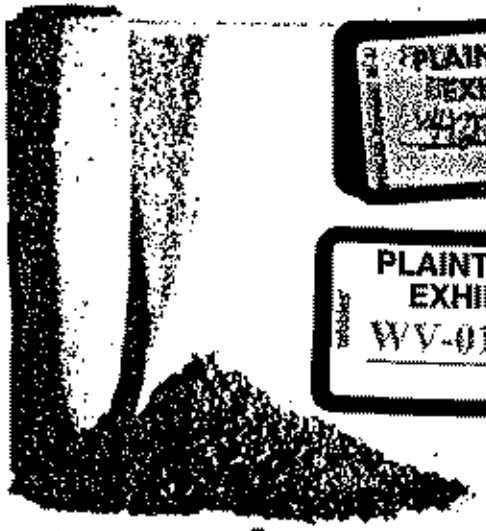
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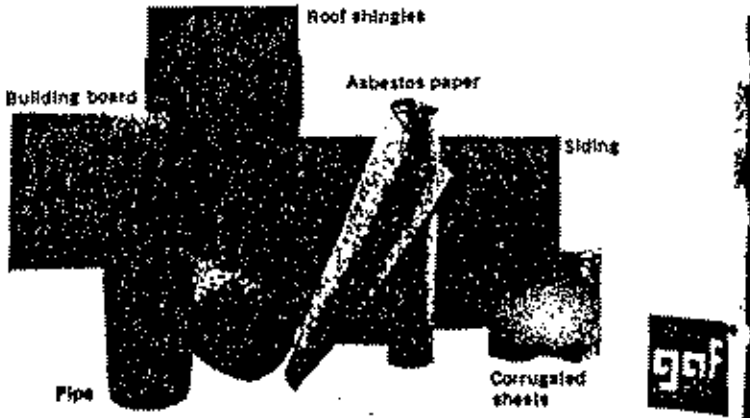
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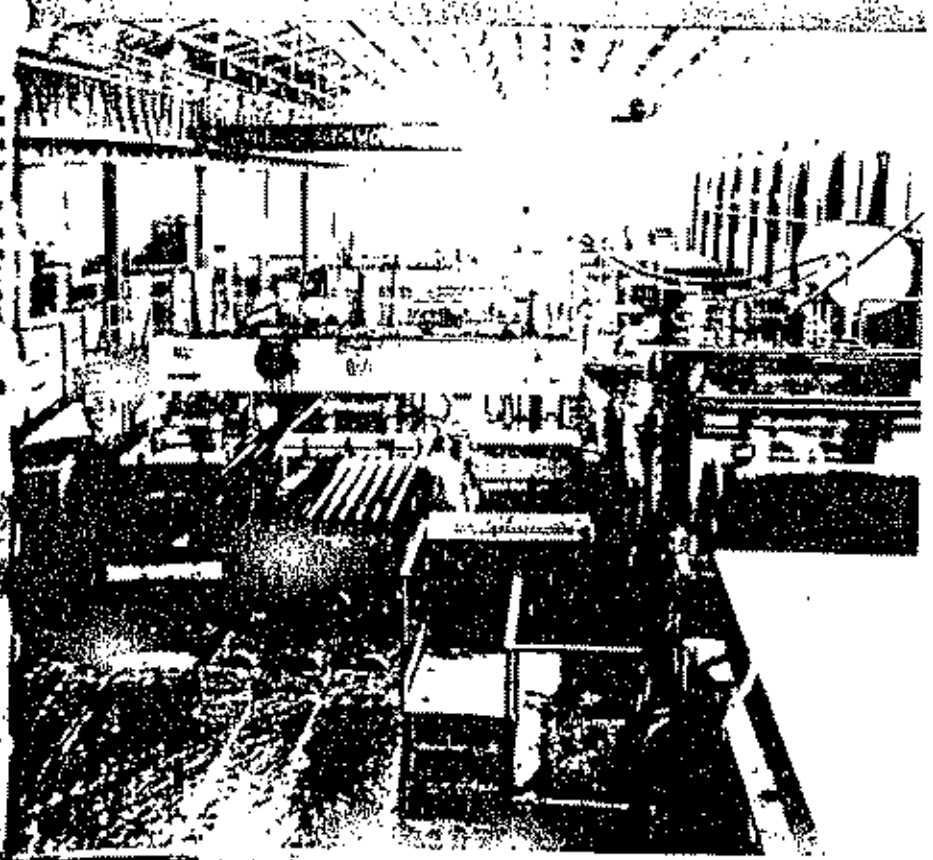
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THE HISTORY OF THE ASBESTOS TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES

By: John A. Bettes, Jr.

As edited by the Staff of ASBESTOS

Chapter XXVI: Highlights in the History of the Asbestos Textile Institute

PART 2

The Fiber Evaluation Committee was established at the ATI conference held June 5, 1958. Clyde R. Hutcheroft, of K&M, was elected first Chairman. In June 1962, under the direction of Clyde Hutcheroft, the Committee published 3400 copies of an authoritative 169-page manual entitled "Testing Procedures for Chrysotile Asbestos Fiber." An up-dated 216-page revision was printed in 1968 under the direction of Chairman Irvin Barnett, Johns-Manville Corporation. The manuals were issued under the joint sponsorship of ATI, QAMA and the Asbestos Cement Products Association (ACPA).

By December 1958, the supply of the first edition of the "Handbook of Asbestos Textiles" had been depleted and it was voted to produce a revised second edition. Howard Bain was engaged to undertake the assignment. He had recently retired as Industrial Advertising Manager for Johns-Manville Corporation. Again, a great many members of the industry contributed to the project. George J. Harris, of Southern Asbestos Co., was especially helpful to Howard Bain. In September 1961, 15,000 copies of the 100-page second edition were distributed. The third and current edition was printed in January 1967.

By June 1963, Dr. Shaw had concluded all of the projects he could profitably undertake with the facilities available to him at the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science. The ATI Board of Governors, therefore, reluctantly decided to conclude the Fellowship.

During an association of more than sixteen years, Dr. Shaw had made many accomplishments that advanced the status of the asbestos textile industry and its trade association, the Asbestos Textile Institute. In his capacity as Research Fellow, Dr. Shaw produced sixty technical reports

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which did much to enhance the prestige of ATI. A good deal of the valuable technical data has been included in the several editions of the "Handbook of Asbestos Textiles."

Dr. Shaw also did an excellent job of representing the industry in its necessary contacts with Federal governmental departments. For example, he assisted in the writing, and in subsequently revising, of the asbestos cloth specifications published by the Bureau of Ships, U.S. Department of the Navy. In his capacity as Executive Secretary of ATI, he arranged for quarterly conferences and made all of the necessary hotel reservations. His businesslike methods did much to promote the success of a long series of industry conferences. The premature death of Dr. Myril Clement Shaw on November 12, 1965, was mourned by all members of the industry.

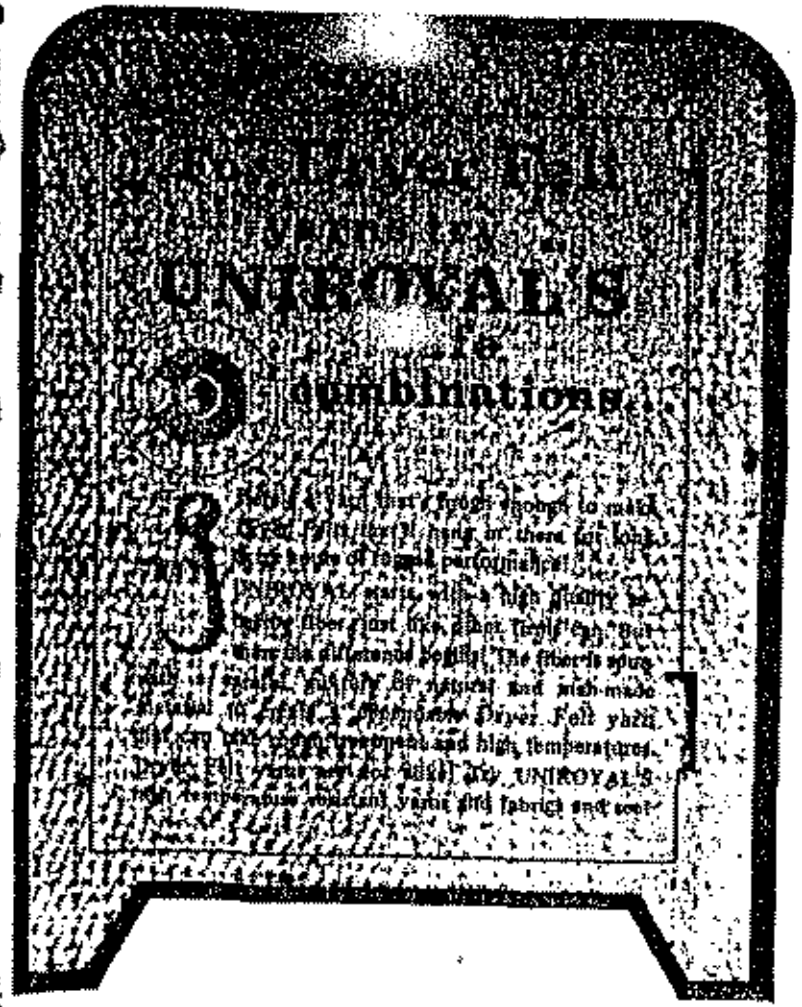
Herbert E. Sunbury retired March 30, 1962, as Sales Development Manager-Asbestos Textiles for U.S. Rubber (now Uniroyal). In July 1963, he was prevailed upon to accept the position of Executive Secretary and Assistant Treasurer of ATI and has to this day carried out the duties of these offices with distinction. The headquarters of the Asbestos Textile Institute were moved in 1963 to the present location: 75 Center Street, Pompton Lakes, New Jersey.

On February 6, 1964, the Air Hygiene & Manufacturing Committee, chaired by L. C. Williams, of Raybestos-Manhattan, Inc., issued a fifteen-page pamphlet titled "Method for Determining Asbestos Dust Concentration." The literature described the best available testing techniques of the then-current state-of-the-art.

The October 1964 conference was a festive affair, held at the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel in New York City, and marked the 20th Anniversary of the Asbestos Textile Institute.

At the February 1965 conference, Dr. L. J. Cralley of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) reported on his findings from a survey of working conditions at various asbestos textile plants. He expressed his appreciation for the fine cooperation afforded him by Management, Employees and Unions. This was the beginning of the Federal Government's concern with possible health hazards at plants that are engaged in the manufacture of all asbestos-based products.

Dr. J. W. Axelson, of Johns-Manville, presented a technical paper on the "Testing of Asbestos Fibers—Discrete and Bulk Properties" at the conference held in October 1965. At



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this same meeting, ATI Technical Committee Chairman J. D. McCluer began the task of up-dating all of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) specifications for asbestos textiles. This was done in cooperation with ASTM Committee D-13, Sub-Committee A-4 (see June 1972 ASBESTOS, page 6).

At the February 1966 conference, Joseph P. Wronski (Raybestos-Manhattan) presented a technical paper on "The Role of Fibers and Whiskers in Reinforcement." This excellent paper was reprinted in the August and September 1968 issues of ASBESTOS.

"The Use of Asbestos Textiles in Industrial Products" was the informative paper presented by G. Ellwood Houghton of Garlock Inc. at the conference held February 10, 1967.

The June 1967 conference was held in Montreal, Quebec, to afford the membership an opportunity to attend "Expo '67"—an international World's Fair. It was at this meeting that the purchase of Bausch & Lomb dust counting equipment was authorized at a cost of $5000. The equipment was to be used to monitor dust counts in plants of member companies.

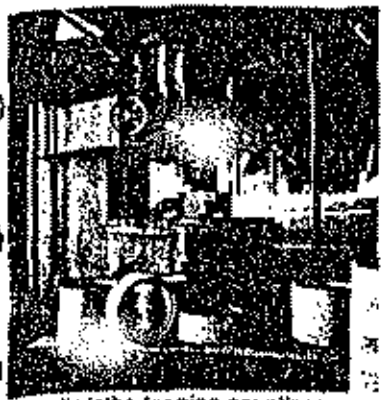
On October 5, 1967, Hilados y Tejidos de Asbesto, S.A., Mexico, became an associate member of ATI.

The highlight of the February 1968 conference was the presentation of an outstanding paper by Paul O. Nicodemus, of General Electric Company, titled "Asbestos Textile Electrical Insulations—Properties, Present and Future Importance" [reprinted in ASBESTOS in the April, May and June 1968 issues].

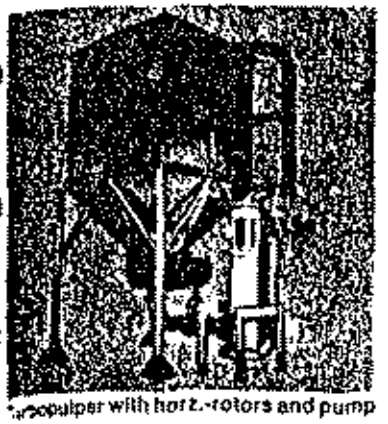
On June 6, 1968, Dr. F. J. Cralley (USPHS) reported on the status of his "In-Plant Health Study." He also discussed his paper concerned with the "Characteristics and Solubility of Metals Associated with Asbestos Fibers." Also at the June 1968 meeting, Dr. G. R. Cuthbertson, Technical Director, Uniroyal Fiber & Textile Division, gave an informative lecture on "The Acceleration of Textile Technology."

An Asbestos Health Seminar was sponsored by ATI on October 2, 1968. Clifford L. Sheckler, Chairman of the ATI Environmental Health Committee was in charge of the well-attended, three-hour program held at Hotel Hershey, Hershey, Pennsylvania. Also in October, the ATI Board of Gov-

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ernors approved the recommendation of the Air Hygiene & Manufacturing Committee that all member companies adopt the wet weaving process to minimize the hazard of dust at their operations. Guest of honor at the October 1968 general meeting was Miss Edith E. Cox, Editor of ASBESTOS for many years, and recently retired.

The application of Nicolet Industries, Inc., for regular membership in ATI was approved at the June 1969 conference. Edward W. Fisher, of Garlock, presented a paper on "The Use of Asbestos Textiles in the Packing Industry" at this conference.

On June 19, 1969, the Environmental Health Committee urged all members to develop dust-free asbestos fabrics, to avoid the loss of U.S. Navy business.

On February 5, 1970, the Board of Governors approved the application for associate membership in ATI of two asbestos textile manufacturers: Nippon Asbestos Co., Tokyo, Japan; and Asbestos Textil, S.A., Mexico.

Brought up for discussion at the June 1970 conference was "The Threshold Limit Value for Airborne Asbestos Dust" and related labeling requirements, proposed by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH). These proposed stringent regulations posed a most serious threat to the entire industry.

In April 1971, the Air Hygiene & Manufacturing Committee, under the Chairmanship of H. M. Willingham, Uniroyal, Inc., issued a sixteen-page instructional pamphlet titled "Measurement of Airborne Asbestos Fiber by the Membrane Filter Method."

On June 9, 1971, the ATI Board of Governors approved the application for associate membership of Manufacturas Multiples, S.A., an asbestos textile manufacturer in Caracas, Venezuela. Also at this conference was the announcement by Milton Q. Scowcroft, Chairman of the ATI Asbestos Advisory Committee, of the availability of 25,000 instructional booklets concerned with the "Recommended Health Safety Practices for Handling and Fabricating Asbestos Textile Products." The new literature is available, without charge, from any member company or from ATI headquarters.

Wendell B. Alcorn, Legal Counsel, gave a comprehensive review, on February 3, 1972, of developments under the Williams-Steiger Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA)

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which became effective April 28, 1971.

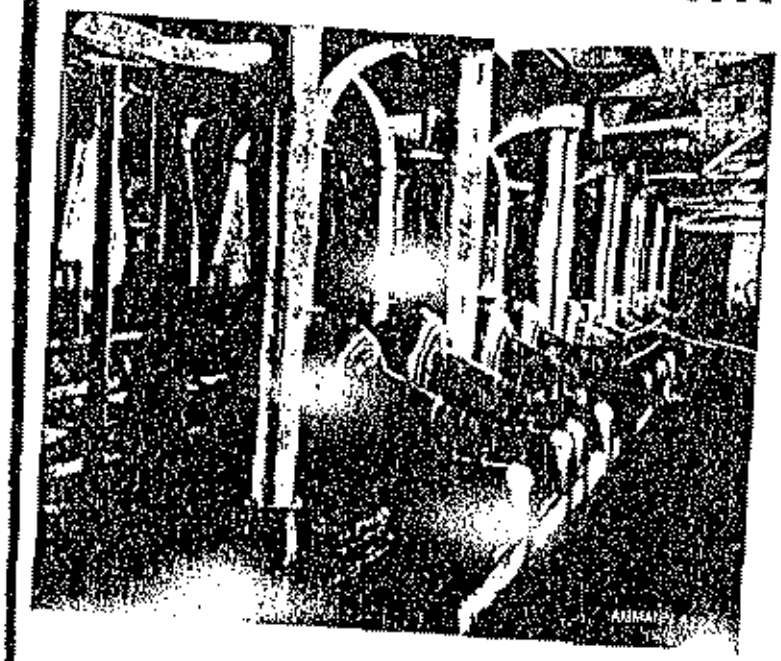
On March 14, 1972, ATI sent Alexander Kuzmik (a member of its Board of Governors) to Washington, D.C., to attend the scheduled Public Hearing and present testimony before Arthur M. Goldberg, Hearing Examiner, U.S. Department of Labor, stating the objections of ATI members of the asbestos textile industry to the proposed asbestos dust standards as published in the Federal Registers of December 7, 1971, and January 12, 1972. He also expressed objections to the recommendations proposed by the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) in its criteria package, and by the U.S. Government's Asbestos Advisory Committee.

In this chapter, due recognition must be given to the ATI Fiber Committee which consists of representatives of each of the principal Canadian asbestos mines. At each ATI conference, a senior officer of a mine gives the members an up-to-date report on the demand and supply situation for the various grades of asbestos spinning fiber. The reports generally cover not only the United States and Canada but also the other major markets throughout the world.

As the reader will readily recognize, it is the standing committees of ATI that carry forward the sundry activities of the Institute. A complete history of ATI would list all the committee chairman and their years of service. In view of space limitations, it is practical to list only those who have occupied the most demanding post, that of president. Those men, and their company affiliations at the time, who have served as President of the Asbestos Textile Institute are listed as follows:

1945 & 1946—Clarence H. Carlough, Carolina Asbestos Co.
1947 & 1948—George W. Marshall, Jr., Raybestos-Manhattan, Inc.
1949 & 1950—George S. Jabel, Southern Asbestos Co.
1951 & 1952—Robert E. Cryer, Union Asbestos & Rubber Co.
1953 & 1954—D. Weber Widmayer, Keasbey & Mattison Co.
1955 & 1956—Francis J. Waken, Johns-Manville Corporation
1957 & 1958—John A. Besten, Jr., Raybestos-Manhattan, Inc.
1959 & 1960—Jesse T. Griffin, Southern Asbestos Co.
1961 & 1962—William S. Hough, Johns-Manville Corporation
1963 & 1964—Staton J. Peele, Jr., U.S. Rubber Co.
1965 & 1966—John A. Brown, Jr., Raybestos Manhattan, Inc.
1967 & 1968—John L. Rainey, American Asbestos Textile Corp.
1969 & 1970—Edward A. Schuman, Johns-Manville Corporation
1971 & 1972—Lawrence E. Moody, H. K. Porter Co., Inc.

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Every industry of any size needs a trade association to provide a common meeting ground and to promote the welfare of the industry. The Asbestos Textile Institute has faithfully served the best interests of its member companies for twenty-seven years. Hopefully the next decade will record even greater levels of accomplishment.

Conclusion

This twenty-sixth chapter of "The History of the Asbestos Textile Industry in the United States" concludes the series. Obviously it has been impossible to give due recognition to each and every individual who, somewhere along the line, has made a substantial contribution to the growth and prosperity of the industry.

However, with the willing and able assistance of Herbert E. Sunbury and with complete freedom of access to the storehouse of information in the files of ASBESTOS, this chronicle has been made as complete and factual as possible insofar as major events and outstanding individuals are concerned.

It is hoped this record of past accomplishments will encourage younger men to lift the industry to an even greater state of usefulness.

The writer's thanks go to ASBESTOS for having undertaken the publication of this "History."

John A. Bettes Jr.

Your Attention, Please!

We are considering reprinting, in booklet form, the entire "History of the Asbestos Textile Industry in the United States" as it has been appearing monthly in ASBESTOS since the August 1970 issue. The booklet would be the same size as ASBESTOS and would run about 100 pages. Price per reprint would be dependent upon the size of the run but would not exceed $2.95 per copy—a modest sum for what we believe is the only written account of the history of the U.S. asbestos textile industry . . . Are you interested? If so, please let us know how many copies you would like. If the number of advance orders is sufficient and you contact us now, we will proceed and the reprints could be available for distribution by or before November of this year.



About The Author

John A. Bettes, Jr.

WRITER OF "THE HISTORY OF THE ASBESTOS TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES"

John A. Bettes, Jr., was born July 7, 1901, in Bayonne, New Jersey. Following graduation from the Philadelphia Textile Institute in 1922, he joined his father's hardware jobbing firm of Bettes & Olsen. He began his asbestos textile career in 1929 when he became a salesman for Southern Asbestos Company. In 1939 he joined Raybestos Manhattan, Inc., as Sales Manager of Asbestos Textiles. During World War II, under War Production Board supervision, he was instrumental in directing the facilities of R/M in providing a major portion of the unprecedented large tonnages of asbestos insulation used as component parts of shipboard cable in the naval construction program. In 1940 he collaborated with Jesse M. Weaver to publish what was at the time the most comprehensive catalog of asbestos textile products ever published. When the Industrial Sales Division was separated into two divisions in 1952, Jack Bettes was named Sales Manager of the Asbestos Textile Division. He became Manager in 1955.

He served as President of the Asbestos Textile Institute in 1957 and 1958 and ably directed one of ATI's most memorable occasions, its 20th Anniversary celebration held during the October 1964 conference. The Certificate of Appreciation, which is the highest commendation awarded by ATI, was presented to Jack Bettes in 1966 for "his many years of devoted and distinguished service to the asbestos textile industry . . ." In 1971, ATI recognized his untiring efforts in compiling and writing the "History" by naming him "Official Historian of the Asbestos Textile Industry, USA."

A dedicated company man and loyal to those who worked for him, Jack Bettes has gained the respect of competitor and business associate alike. Ill health forced an early retirement on July 10, 1966, and he now resides with his wife at Delray Beach, Florida. He keeps busy with bridge, golf and bowling but still maintains an active interest in R/M, ATI and the asbestos industry as a whole.