

SOCIETY of MANUFACTURING ENGINEERS (Manufacturing, the largest contributor to the Wealth of a Country)

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SME Beginning

The year 1932 is remembered as the year of the Great Depression when America reached rock bottom in terms of human misery and suffering. In January of that year, a group of far-sighted engineers and mechanics gathered at the Detroit College of Applied Science to form their own engineering society named the American Society of Tool Engineers. There was a contagious enthusiasm and by April, the original 33-man membership had risen to more than 200. In the short space of four months, January's good idea had caught on and was now developing a momentum of its own.

Hard times were still the order of the day, but new chapters were forming and the membership ranks were swelling. American industry began to take note of this band of self-starters that was hard at work forming what was to become the most dynamic technical society of its day.

The War Years

The word in America was "Defense" and the Society responded with all the vigor that had gone into its own creation. Its members helped convert America's industries into what President Roosevelt called "The Arsenal of Democracy." The themes of educational materials, of the tool show-of all aspects of Society endeavor were geared to the defense program. By 1941 the Society had established the Emergency Defense Training Committee.

The monumental push to develop war-materials firmly established a need for a Tool Engineers Handbook. Meanwhile, the numbers of chapters and members were growing as never before, largely as a result of new plants, new jobs, and the overriding need for engineering information. For the period 1941-45, membership more than doubled, from 8,700 to almost 18,000.

Beginning of Peace

Peace in Europe came with the spring of 1945; peace in the Pacific came with late summer of the same year. The Society now began making its contribution to the incredibly complex job of converting America's wartime industry into a peacetime producer of consumer goods. The Society moved to its first permanent Headquarters in 1948.

Research was the word in 1950 and the Society set aside \$25,000 and appointed a committee to prepare a plan of action for a Research Fund. In 1951 the Society awarded its first scholarships and established a \$50,000 scholarship fund.

By 1956, the concept of handbooks had caught on and the Society approved publication of three new ones in addition to the two already in existence. In 1957 the Society celebrated its Silver Anniversary with a closed circuit radio broadcast, linking all chapters. It was the largest undertaking of its type ever attempted in the history of broadcasting.

Progress Through Change

In 1960, their name was changed to "The American Society of Tool and Manufacturing Engineers" and by 1970 it became the "Society of Manufacturing Engineers."

Publishing, a mainstay of Society educational activities, underwent a number of changes in the second quarter century. In periodicals, the principal publication was supplemented by vertical publications; in books, the *Tool Engineers Handbook* underwent two revisions and work was proceeding on a third.

Toward New Heights

The machine tool show activities of the Society have undergone an enormous transformation. The Annual Tool Exposition and WESTEC have been supplemented with Area shows, bringing modern technology in its many forms to geographical regions formerly considered secondary in importance. Certification of manufacturing engineers became a fact of industrial life in the early 70s; the Society became involved in the development of professional examinations.

In 1982 as the society celebrated its Golden Anniversary the dynamic structure created in 1932 had blossomed into a giant technical society of more than 63,000 members and more than 240 chapters spread throughout the world. With Society membership projected to top 70,000 by the end of the Golden Anniversary year of 1982, SME has experienced a history of steadfast growth during its first 50 years.

In 1960 the Society's Tool Show, now a major industrial attraction, went on an annual schedule. As "offshore" membership reached toward 1,000, new chapters were started in Mexico City, Manila and Adelaide, Australia. Three years later, with the chartering of the Sao Paulo, Brazil chapter, the Society was represented in every continent except Antarctica.

During the 50s and 60s the Society's commitment to continuing education spurred new membership growth. The monthly Honor Awards and the Research and Education Grants program were gaining widespread recognition for the Society among the world's leaders in engineering, science and manufacturing management.

Silver to Golden Anniversary

By 1957, the Silver Anniversary year, the Society had 39,516 members including 1,947 members in Canada and 106 in Australia. In March, the first Australian chapter was chartered in Sydney via direct radio link from the Society's Annual Meeting in Houston, Texas. By year's end, there were 147 chapters.

In May 1979, the Society launched the SME Manufacturing Engineering Education Foundation and that same month Eugene Berczik, of North Canton, Ohio, became the 50,000th SME member. Since then the Society formed associations with most of the leading manufacturing technology associations to keep members current with of new manufacturing developments.

Today, in 2007, the Society is the source of knowledge, networking, and skills development opportunities for half a million manufacturing engineers, executives, and members in more than 72 countries around the globe to help them advance their careers, their companies, and their industries.