

A Recollection or Two – Or Three
The Origin and Early Days of the Chicago
Industrial Water, Waste and Sewage Group (CIWW&SG)
(originally written for the 40 year anniversary of IWWSG)
by Ted Erickson (1902 – 1994)

It was hot in Chicago! It was late in August, 1948 and the American Chemical Society (ACS) was holding its semi-annual (Fall) national meeting at the Stevens Hotel (now the Hilton Towers). It was even hotter in the meeting room in which the ACS members of the Division of Water and Sewage listened to very dull and boring speakers. A speaker would read his paper, sit down to mild, polite applause, and then another speaker would appear and so on—for three days!

As I recollect, some of us ACS members gathered after one of the sessions, wondering why we were exposed to the reading of papers (the selection of which none of us had any control) without any discussion of the issues. We thought the discussions of these papers would be the most interesting part of the meeting! It was through this exchange of such ideas and a desire to correct the deplorable condition that the CIWWSG was born [50] years ago.

As I further recall, the following were present at this informal meeting:

- Frank Hallihan, Wilson & Co. (meat packers)
- Len Vande Bogart, Crane Co. (manufacturers of plumbing supplies)
- Hy Gerstein, Chicago Filtration Plant
- Emanuel Horwitz, MSD, Chief Chemist, Stickney Sewage Treatment Plant
- Ed Kominek and Hilding Gustafson, International Filter Co.-INFILCO
- Ted Erickson, Dearborn Chemical Co.

Somebody in this group must have said with tongue-in-cheek, “Reading papers is no fun—and, therefore, no paper readings—all discussion.” Somebody else must have said, “Let’s try for a meeting on the first Monday of every month (except in Summer). That would be a good time to meet.” I was a member of the (now defunct) Chicago Engineers Club (CEC), centrally located in an 1880+ building at 314 South Federal Street, between Jackson and Van Buren. The first two floors of the building were occupied by a very swank, out-of-this-world English restaurant—St. Hubert’s Grille. The top four floors were occupied by the CEC; a dining room with a full kitchen was on the third floor, offices and facilities on the fourth floor, and large meeting rooms on the fifth and sixth floors.

When I suggested approaching the CEC as a potential meeting place, somebody appointed me Secretary (and Treasurer) to negotiate for the meetings, etc. I stayed in that job for more than 10 years—more or less running the show.

The first meeting was held in the Fall of 1948 at the CEC. Frank Hallinan assumed the job of Chairman, and Hy Gerstein was Vice-Chairman. There was no election. We all stepped into the office and moved to the business at hand. Approximately 35-40 men were in attendance.

I had prepared a set of bylaws for the CIWW&SG, consisting of three short paragraphs. One was the name, the second was the purpose of the Group and who would be welcomed, and the third concerned the dates of the meetings, the fact that there were to be no dues, etc. I don't recollect if this was ever approved by a vote. The name was deliberately intended to be the longest name of any society or association in the city. I don't know why, but that is the way "it worked out!" Incidentally, the name in 1948 was the Chicago Industrial Water, Waste & Sewage Group. Personally, I think some identity was lost when "Chicago" was deleted.

A formal bar was in one corner of the dining room at the CEC use during both dinner and the meeting. For the first, and all subsequent meetings, I had solicited some booze from a water treating company or two. Bottles of bourbon, scotch and gin were set on the bar, together with a tin cup. Everyone poured his own drink and, under an honor system, put \$0.25 into the tin cup. CEC charged me \$1.75 for dinner frequently consisting of roast beef and all the trimmings, including apple pie a la mode, but I charged each attendee \$2.00! The "extra \$0.25" went for postage, and the money left over was converted to booze for the last meeting! We could store booze for the last meeting! We could store booze between meetings, but not over the summer. CEC had no liquor license.

As I also recollect, I typed notices of the meetings on some sort of special copy paper, which I then took to the offices of the International Filter Company on 25th Place in Chicago. While I waited, some 300 notices would be reproduced on some sort of purple-ink machine. My uncle, retired from the Illinois Bell Telephone Company, did all the bookkeeping chores for me for free! This consisted of hand-addressing some 250-300 envelopes for mailing. The postage was 2 cents. At each meeting, all attendees registered in a book. My uncle transferred this information to a card system, thus maintaining a record of attendance for each person. If a chap on the mailing list would not appear for two consecutive meetings, my uncle would write on the fellow's next meeting notice a friendly warning that if he didn't show up at the next meeting—or at least call in—his name would be dropped. Surprisingly, his ploy was effective. It worked! On occasions, who would show up but the Presidents: Herb Kern (Nalco), one of the Carr's (Dearborn), Ev Partridge (Hall Labs, now Calgon), etc. to drink and break bread with their hired help at these meetings.

Back at the time of origin of CIWW&SG, the MSD was in existence, but there was no such thing as a User Charge, Appendix A, B, etc. The USEPA was yet to be born. Back in those early days, the interest of the Group was centered on the use and treatment of boiler, cooling tower and process water for industries such as the steel mills, paper mills, etc. I recollect the second meeting discussed the problem of carbon dioxide in steam. Forty years ago this was a problem! I also recollect at later meetings, Russ Homan and George Rodiger of Commonwealth Edison introduced and demonstrated the “new” hardness powder discovered by Schwarzenbach. This immediately replaced the ago-old soap hardness test. Do you remember shaking the bottle? There are only a few of us left! Still later, I demonstrated my “new” indicator powder for sulfite, and still later, a “new” indicator powder for chromate.

As Secretary of CIWW&SG, I should have maintained a record of Chairmen; however, I did not. I do recall some of the names:

- Frank Hallinan
- Hy Gerstein
- Dr. Floyd Mohlman
- Fred Gurnham
- Fred Wilkes
- Emanuel Horwitz
- Col. Sid Behrman
- Betty Rose

I might say in conclusion, that the CIWW&SG served its members very well. There was no such thing as “prepared” papers. Discussion was animated, and the impromptu questions and answers were spirited and helpful. If, in the course of any discussion anybody made a statement or gave an answer to a question that could be challenged, another person in the Group would interrupt and was liable to say, “Hey, that’s not in agreement with my experience,” or even more bluntly, “I don’t believe you. This is the way it should be done.” I recollect many of the discussions displayed overtones of intoxication! I have no idea how many so-called “trade secrets” were exposed or how many fallacies went down the drain from these discussions, but I do recollect that it was always a fun group and that all of the meetings were fun. I am confident and hopeful that the IWW&SG will continue to be fun for another 40 years—at least!

IWWSG Past Chairmen	
Date	Name
1948-1949	Frank Hallinan (Wilson & Company)
unknown	Hy Gerstein
unknown	Dr. Floyd Mohlman
unknown	Fred Gurnham
unknown	Fred Wilkes
unknown	Emmanuel Horwitz
unknown	Col. Sid Behrman
1958-1959	Richard Dalbke (Admiral Environmental Services)
1968-1970	Al Aswad (Nalco)
1970-1971	Bill (W.S.) Gallagher (Jacobs Engineering)
1971-1972	J.B. Neighbor
1972-1973	Tom Kennedy (Metropolitan Sanitary District)
1973-1974	John Magee
1974-1976	Betty Rose (Fred Gurnham & Associates)
1976-1977	Al Rae
1977-1978	Larry Feder (P&I Consulting)
1978-1979	John Polich (Gabriel Laboratories)
1979-1981	Michael Arnold (United Airlines)
1982-1983	Jeff Fleming (Jewel Food Stores)
1983-1985	Glenn Wentink (Greeley & Hansen)
1985-1987	Hank Klein (R.R. Donnelly & Sons)
1987-1990	Dave Holmberg (Acme Steel)
1990-1993	Jim Harrington (Ross & Hardies)
1993-1996	Kregg Salvino (Motorola)
1996-1998	Lisa Buncic (North Shore Sanitary District)
1998-2000	Alan Jirik (Corn Products)
2000-2002	Jean Hoppert (M&M Mars)
2002-2004	Antoinette Ruggiero (Uniqema)
2004-2006	Jack Kaps (Electro-Motive Diesel, Inc.)
2006 -	Paul Ryan (Avon Products)