

The History of the  
Steel Plate Fabricators Association



1933 – 2003

70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## PAST PRESIDENTS

1993 - 1969

M. J. TREES  
CB&I

J. E. O'LEARY  
PDM

R. J. RYAN  
Nooter Co.

H. D. SKYRM  
Gen. Amer. Trans.

E. E. MICHAELS  
CB&I

W. B. VAN WART  
Wyatt Industries

E. G. COLE, JR.  
R.D. Cole Mfg.

A. L. DAVIS  
Pennsylvania Eng.

E. W. FARLEY, JR.  
RECO Industries

F. E. HUTTON  
Babcock & Wilcox

W. R. JACKSON  
PDM

C. ROOT  
Struthers Wells

1969 - 1988

A. S. SCHWARZ  
CB&I

R. T. CAMPBELL  
PDM

C. D. RAMSDEN  
Nooter Co.

M. G. MITCHELL  
CB&I

P. T. DOWLING  
Nooter

J. BROWN  
Chattanooga Boiler

T. J. UHL, JR  
Wyatt Industries

J. A. STEVER, JR.  
Nat'l Tank & Manuf.

F. A. LASKER  
LaskerBoiler

V. W. CODDINGTON  
Lakeside Bridge & Steel

E. J. CLAY  
Hahn & Clay

R. M. BORST  
Fisher Tank

1988 - 2002

J. S. VAN ALSBURG  
Advance Tank

L. E. AKIN  
PDM

T. RIPICH  
American Tank & Fab.

R. H. DILLARD  
Offenhauser

R. GARY KILKENNY  
Taylor Forge Eng. Sys

B. S. FINEMAN  
Caldwell Tanks

J. P. HOCK  
Enerfab Co.

## **OFFICERS**

**PRESIDENT**  
**CARL STEVENS**  
**TRINITY INDUSTRIES**

**VICE PRESIDENT**  
**J. MIKE BRADEN**  
**CHICAGO BRIDGE & IRON**

**TREASURER**  
**JERRY STETZLER**  
**CHATTANOOGA BOILER & TANK**

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESEIDENT**  
**JEFFERY P. HOCK**  
**BRIGHTON TRU-EDGE HEADS**  
A DIVISION OF ENERFAB

**SECRETARY/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**PAMELA C. MOORE**  
**STEEL PLATE FABRICATORS ASSOCIATION**

## **SPFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**ROBERT DILLARD**  
Offenhauser Co.

**DAVID DUES**  
Caldwell Tanks

**ALBERTO GARCIA**  
Beaird Industries

**MIKE KILKENNY**  
Taylor Forged Eng. Systems

**ROSS OSIEK**  
Nooter Corp.

**MIKE RIPICH**  
American Tank & Fabricating Co.

**RICK TRUDEAU**  
G.O. Carlson

**RON SANDMEYER, JR.**  
Sandmeyer Steel Co.

**JEFF SHORT**  
Phoenix Fabricators & Erectors

**GREG "CHIP" STEIN**  
Tank Industry Consultants

**SCOTT VAN ALSBURG**  
Advance Tank & Construction

The HISTORY of the  
Steel Plate Fabricators Association

1933-2003

70 years and STILL STRONG!

What was happening 70 years ago? A few interesting tidbits for the year 1933:

- 32<sup>nd</sup> US President was Franklin D. Roosevelt  
“the only thing we have to fear is fear itself”
- US population: 125,578,763
- Building of the Golden Gate Bridge began
- The DOW Average was 100
- Ave Income: \$1409/ yr.
- New car: \$550
- Gas: \$0.18/gal
- New home: \$5,759
- First class stamp: \$0.03
- The Yo-Yo, Chinese checkers and “Monopoly” were introduced
- Army Beat Navy 12-7; Southern California whipped Pittsburg 35-0;
- Michigan won the NCAA championship in football
- Brokers Tip won the Kentucky Derby
- The end of prohibition was toasted by consuming 1 million barrels of legal beer

Certainly the birth of the Steel Plate Fabricators Association on June 15 was another date to remember in 1933. The organization was hastily organized on this date to meet the requirement of then President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s National Recovery Administration (NRA), remember the Blue Eagle! The NRA was designed to provide a speedy recovery from the Great Depression of the late 20’s and early 30’s. President Roosevelt felt trade associations were the medium to ensure industrial recovery by developing codes of fair competition for all major industries. These codes of fair competition were to provide for minimum wages for workers, limit workers to 40 hours per week, prohibit piecework, and to establish minimum costs for products or services.

At the time there was no association to sponsor a code for the steel plate fabricating industry, a group of interested plate fabricators held an informal meeting in May 1933 to draft plans to organize an association. On June 15, 1933 the Steel Plate Fabricators Association (SPFA) was formally organized and By-laws adopted at a meeting in Chicago. At this time the Executive Committee was:

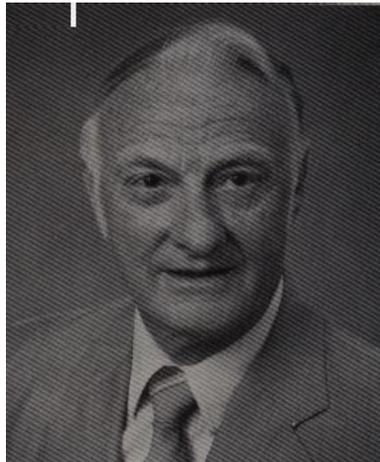
- M.J. Trees – Chicago Bridge & Iron – President
- W.H. Jackson – Pittsburg-Des Moines Steel Co. – Vice President
- A.O. Miller - The Petroleum Iron Works Co – Treasurer

And there were 11 other members of the steel community who made up the newly organized Board of Directors.

It was in 1935, the US Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional and the Blue Eagle died. In anticipation of the action the SPFA Board decided that the organization would continue. We are sure glad they did!

The organization decided to set up its home offices in Chicago where its first Executive Director was Tom R. Wyles in 1934 – he served until 1954. Mr. Dwight Evans became the second Executive Director of the organization and served until 1965 and continued on as a consultant through 1965.

Our longest serving and third Executive Director was Earl A. Bratton – a strapping young man who had assisted the previous Director. His tenure started with the organization in 1963, but he became the Executive Director in 1966. Mr. Bratton’s tenure lasted until just after we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SPFA in 1983. Mr. Bratton is accredited with bringing an image to the Steel Plate Fabricators Association, not previously known in the industry. He made the organization known throughout the country.



Earl Bratton

After Mr. Bratton’s retirement the organization hired Wade Neuman as its fourth Executive Director. Wade was known to have always carried the camera at all SPFA events and certainly is credited for a good part of the SPFA historical pictures currently in the SPFA office.



Wade Neuman



Pamela Moore & Joe Hammor

In 1997 the organization made a stunning decision to relocate the offices from Chicago where it had been since its inception in 1933 to Cincinnati, Ohio. Under the leadership of then President Gary Kilkenny the organization was faced with who will run then organization in Cincinnati. Joe Hammor a long time member, Board of Director of SPFA and recent retiree of Trinity Industries said he would help through this transition. Jeff Hock, a Board member, shared with Joe – “Joe you need to go visit this young lady at the bank.” Now many of you may have heard this story before – but Mr. Hock set up both Joe and Pam on a crash course to meeting one another.

“What on earth were these men thinking, hire a WOMAN to help run our organization? Hmm... this could be interesting”, many said. But between Jeff and Joe they had a plan. In 1997, Joe Hammor assumed the leadership of the organization becoming the organization’s fifth Executive Director with 40 years of industry experience and also to provide as Pamela’s counsel, with the hopes to bring the Steel Plate Fabricators Association back to where it belongs, at the top. In 1999, after the Annual Meeting held at La Costa Resort and Spa, Pamela C. Moore was named the first woman and sixth Executive Director of the Steel Plate Fabricators Association.

The Hammor and Moore show has been together since 1997. Joe affectionately calls his now boss “Dear” and Pamela when she really needs Joe calls him “Joseph”. There is no doubt that the “PLAN” has truly worked with two people who have a profound respect for one another and consider each other family.

But of course, who are we kidding; we cannot forget our brains of the organization – Andrea Griggs. Andrea brings not only a smile; but a creative and imaginative approach to the organization, she is SPFA.



Andrea Griggs

So let's look back at how far we have really come in making 70 years in history. SPFA's early history says many member companies were instrumental with the government in preparation of materials, minimum wage and building of some this country's most prestigious buildings and monuments.

In 1960, SPFA was incorporated in the State of Illinois and a not-for profit organization. Since that time the Board has increased its Board of Directors from the original 11 seats, to 15 seats in 1968 and it now stands at 18 in 1980 in order to continue to grow the membership. It was in 1964 when the Board of Directors decided to open membership to Associate members who could also benefit from the expertise of joint efforts. Membership for the organization has had its ups and downs throughout the years, in 1998-2000 membership had grown to as high as 150 member companies.

After 70 years, why does SPFA continue to exist? As a member company involved daily with the steel plate producers and services you can remain aware of the industry's issues. Few companies are equipped to overcome those challenges single-handedly. But through a collaborative effort with colleagues who face identical operating concerns – together we can develop sensible solutions to the most pressing demands facing businesses and our industry.

The most active committees in the organization at this time are: Pressure Vessel, Marketing, Safety & Health and Human Resources. These conferences hold bi-annual meetings where they meet at the Spring and Fall Management conferences. SPFA has held some excellent conferences which have included US Congressmen as guest speakers, tours of members facilities, new member presentations, and the most up-to date presentations on the issues affecting our industry. The organization still remains dedicated to honoring the best Fabricated Products and Tanks each year and continues to salute those companies with the safest shops each year.

Additionally, SPFA has enjoyed a joint sponsorship with the American Iron & Steel Institute (AISI), which helps to promote activities of both the Pipe and Tank Sections respectively. Both the Pipe and Tank Sections hold annual seminars to promote the use of steel, publish technical bulletins used throughout the industry and actively participate in American Water Works Association (AWWA), National Association of Corrosion Engineers (NACE) and other organizations.

Where is the organization heading?

First and most importantly, your company's continued support is the key. This organization has not reached this milestone alone. Through the years the organization has enjoyed long standing leadership from all of its members, and we are pleased to share that also includes generations of leadership on our Board as well as in our committees. Our members are proud to belong to this fine organization. We have experienced some lean years most recently with the down turn of the economy and the impact of foreign competition on our businesses. Many have experienced the loss of jobs and also closings of businesses as a result. Our hope is that with you and your organization, SPFA can continue to be that resource to its members as we look to retool our thinking, logic and actively tackle the changes we are experiencing in our industry.

Our Board of Directors has instituted a Governmental Affairs Committee which will take on those issues that have greatly affected the steel industry by partnering with other organizations and businesses, merging forces to create economies of scale and look forward to bringing members and issues closer together. With your active participation in this organization and its committees we can continue to promote our industry – TOGETHER.

So the years have come and gone, for some faster than we are willing to admit. For the past 70 years, the Steel Plate Fabricators Association has been a place of never ending friendships, partnerships and business relationships. Each year we enjoy seeing old faces and meeting new to share the latest news of our lives at our Annual Meeting, where we honor the past and salute to the future. SPFA's long standing tradition is represented by its members and service, we all invaluable gain from experiences as shared by its members, we continue to educate on the demands that face our fabricators and businesses today and will strive to continue to be a resource for many more years to come in the future.