

A History of Cleaning Carpet

On the occasion of Our Golden Anniversary

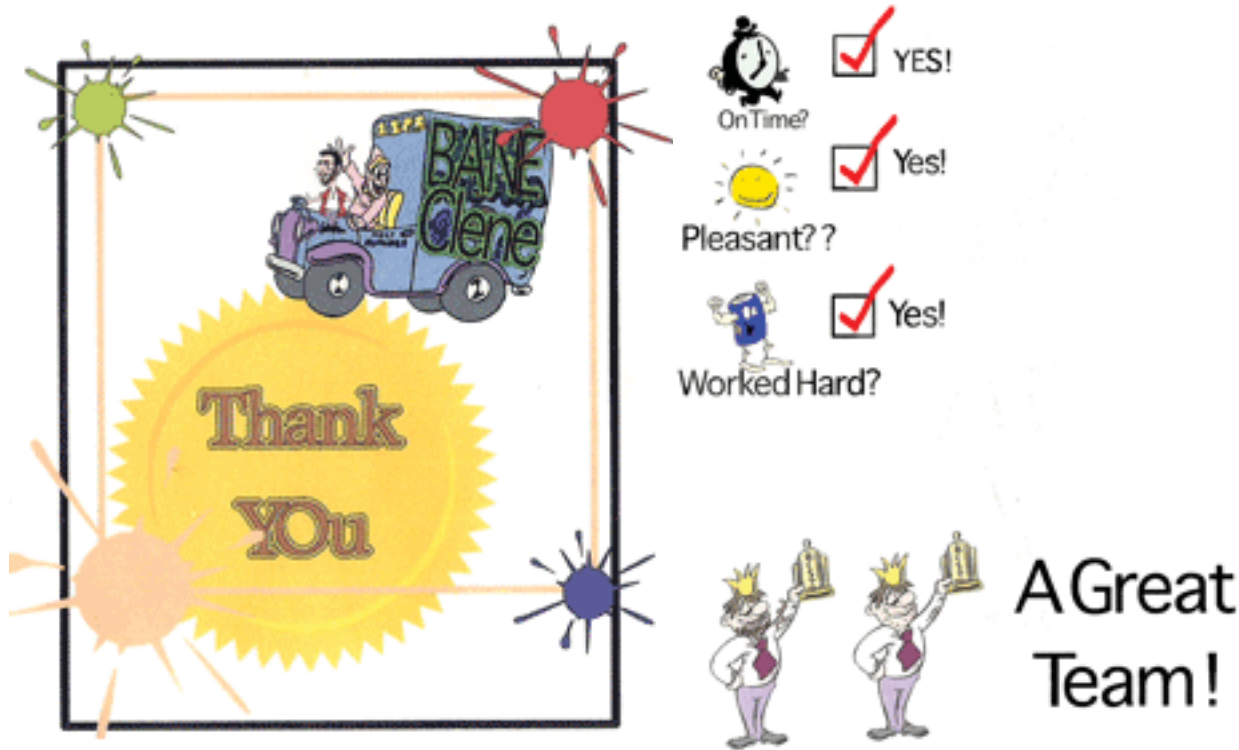
By Bill Bane

Prologue



This “history” is dedicated to all of those who contributed to our longevity. Some consideration has been given to what others in the industry have done and when major developments occurred. But make no mistake, this “history” is about the first 50 years of Bane-Clene. We’ve been blessed with loyal customers and dedicated employees, many of whom have retired or passed away. Current employees have 20, 25, 30 and even 35 years of service. Kevin Stark has been with us for 40 years. These are special people.

Many of our equipment and chemical clients have been with us for more than 35 years. A nice surprise came recently from Chet Jelinski of Bloomfield, New Jersey. Chet sent me a 140 page book he wrote titled, “A Bane-Clene Diary.” The sub-title is, “My 30 years with Bane-Clene as they celebrate 50 years in business.”



Customers of our local service company have always been generous in telling us we did a good job. Over the years, we've had thousands of wonderful cards and letters and we cherish each and every one as if it were golden treasure. Recently we received this home-made card from Mrs. Charles Peer of Indianapolis which is very special.

How many companies are blessed with customers like these?

Cleaning "experts"

Cleaning "experts" have been telling folks how to care for carpets and rugs since these luxuries existed. The merchant who sold carpet was usually considered an "expert," but their expertise didn't always fall within the realm of cleaning. Two hundred years ago advice was spread by word-of-mouth and the "expert" was most likely a relative, neighbor or friend.

"Experts" in the 21st century are known as "Gurus" or "Board Gorillas" and operate on electronic bulletin boards and in the social media. Some are well-meaning and offer practical advice, but some with a hidden agenda will bend the truth to their advantage. The news media ventures into cleaning advice on occasion with warmed-over suggestions they get from calling a few people in the business. It's usually so generic the advice is not very good.

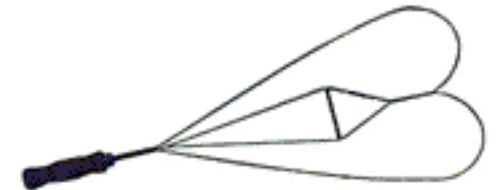
For years, there have been discussions on bulletin boards about who invented what in the cleaning industry, and when they did it. As Sgt. Joe Friday would say on the old Dragnet show, "Just the facts, Ma'am." This "history" is a look at our industry with facts from publications, historical sources, information from friends and colleagues and from my own recollections. It also has some suggestions for the future. If this sounds pretentious, 50 years in the business provides a unique perspective.

We've come a long way

In the early 1800's, lemon juice was used to remove ink spots. Oily ones were rinsed with water followed by the application of a split loaf of hot white bread to blot the spot and absorb the oil. Expensive Wilton carpet with velvet cut pile was popular and hearth rugs were used to protect them against damage from sparks and dirt from fireplaces.

In the 1860s, sweeping carpets with tea leaves was said to be popular. Tea leaves left stains on the carpet so people tried brooms made of fresh-cut grass. Grass brooms supposedly didn't stain as much as the tea leaf brooms and were said to give carpets a brighter look. The prevailing advice in those days was to briskly sweep carpets and be sure to cover all of the furniture to protect it from the dust cloud. Rugs

were covered to prevent sun fading and soiling.



I remember using one of these to help my grandmother in the mid '30s. I've been cleaning carpets a long time.

The best method of cleaning was beating them on a clothesline in the backyard. A good tool for the beating chore was made of rattan with a looped or pretzel-shaped end.



Hand operated vacuum cleaner on display in the Bane-Clene Museum, circa 1860.

In 1870, shaking was the word. Several contraptions were engineered to shake the dirt out of the carpet which was laid face down on grating. A series of levers and shafts operated by hand provided the agitation. Shaking, beating and sweeping were not working very well, so washing became popular in the late 1870's. A typical cleaning agent was one part of ox gall to three parts of soft, cold water. Soft water was collected in cisterns from rain water.

Wall to wall carpet made its appearance in the 1890's, but it would be another seventy years before it would become tremendously popular. The latest spot removal technology was to pour cold water on a spot, apply oxalic acid, rub it in and then wash it off with cold water.

The first “steam” carpet cleaner

Howard's “Steam” Carpet Cleaning Works opened in 1876 on the banks of a canal that was abandoned when the railroads came to town. Rugs were cleaned essentially the way hot water extraction cleaners do it today except it was not a mobile plant. Carpets were collected and delivered in a horse-drawn wagon from an area of four square miles which encompassed all of Indianapolis and its suburbs in those days.

Water was taken from the canal on the north side of the plant, heated in a wood fired boiler to about 130 degrees, mixed with a detergent and sprayed on the carpet. When the canal was muddy they used supplemental water supplies from a cistern and a shallow well. The cleaning solution was extracted by a large positive displacement pump and dumped back into the canal on the south end of the building. The power to generate the necessary RPM's for the vacuum pump was transferred from a huge water wheel via gear-reduction.

Walter (Watt) Anderson was my neighbor from 1952 until he died in 1978. He owned the W. O. Jones rug cleaning plant from 1922 until he retired in 1970. An employee of Watt's in the early '20s had worked at the old Howard plant at the turn of the century and told Watt stories about the business. Watt spent many evenings on the creek bank behind our homes telling me about those early days. He was a fountain of information and had records that provided much of my data about the late 19th and especially the early 20th century.



Bookmark donated to the SCCA by Sue Beamer, an L. S. Ayres & Co., employee. Three-digit phone number places it around the turn of the twentieth century.

When Watt retired, he sold his cleaning plant on contract. In less than two years, the new owner ruined the business, defaulted on the contract, filed for bankruptcy and the building was eventually demolished. I always regretted not being able to buy Watt's building in 1970, but I just couldn't afford it at the time. Ironically, we bought a building just a few blocks south of it on Keystone Avenue in 1978.

Cleaning in the early 20th century

Naphtha was introduced as a cleaning agent at the turn of the 20th century. Benzene was used to exterminate moths in carpets and furniture but the highly flammable liquid couldn't be used near a fire place or in a room where a gas light was burning. Alum was used to kill insects in rugs and electrically powered carpet beating machines were introduced for the first time about 1910. The war years of 1917 and 1918 saw little change in our industry.

The next decade was one of growth and prosperity following a short recession after the war. In the "Roaring Twenties," electric vacuum cleaners with dust bags were introduced to consumers for about \$20.00. They made life a lot easier for the average income homemaker. Permanently mounted vacuums located in the basement, with pipes to upper floors, made their appearance in the late '20s in many well-to-do homes. We call them "central vac systems" today.

Plant cleaning was the alternative to beating rugs on the clothes line. Watt Anderson told me that to his knowledge there were no on-location cleaners in the '20s. Carpets were primarily made of wool and if there was a backing it was most often jute. It was not unusual for him to clean a 9' x 12' rug and have to cut six or eight inches off the pad when he returned it. He used a scrub pit, squeegee and heated dry-room and shrinkage was an accepted by-product of wet cleaning.

The great depression

Carpet fell from popularity in the 1930's, mostly due to the depression. Information on maintaining carpets was sparse, but most recommended regular vacuuming, removing spills immediately and professional cleaning every year or two. Plant cleaning was the accepted "professional" method in those early days of the depression. Watt Anderson emphasized how important it was to be established in the upper income market to survive in tough times.

On-location cleaners began to make their appearance in the mid to late '30s. A new approach was agitating a bucket of soap and water to form suds and then brushing the suds into the carpet. Coconut oil was the basic ingredient of most detergents and toweling with clear water and a touch of ammonia brightened the pile. Duraclean® is an example of a successful franchise built on a variation of the hand scrubbing method.

Cochran Mills, which later became Lees, introduced the first wool frieze in the mid '30s. The wool yarn even "bloomed" on days of high humidity, so wet cleaning was out of the question. Fritz Rench of Racine Industries, says that Harry Rench invented Powderene, the first dry extraction powder, to solve that problem. Bigelow was working on a similar product and the two eventually worked together in a patent pool. Host® powder was also introduced in the mid '30s.

Von Schrader® built a successful network of on-location cleaners and later made a major technical break through with synthetic detergents. Von Schrader was the first, to my knowledge, to use the term "Associates" in the service industry. It is commonly used in many

businesses today, especially in department stores. In 1963, I bought carpet and furniture cleaning machines from Francis U. Von Schrader himself and had the pleasure of speaking with the grand old gentleman on two occasions on the telephone.

World War II

Things stayed pretty much the same through the war years from 1941 to 1945. Shampooing with rotary equipment was the most popular method and coconut oil was replaced with animal tallow based detergents which proves the theory that “what goes around comes around.” Animal tallow was the basic ingredient in cleaning agents in the late 1800’s.

The War Production Board had the authority to tell business what and how much of anything it could produce. Carpet mills for example, made a predetermined amount of textile products for the war effort each month and could only produce about half a month’s supply of carpet. Fritz Rench said carpet stores sold Powderene and anything else they could find to make a living. There were shortages of nearly everything and it’s difficult for consumers today to even imagine such times of deprivation.

Wage and price controls were instituted and strictly enforced. Gasoline and food were rationed. It was nearly impossible to buy a new vehicle without a high priority from the government. Most able bodied males under forty were in military service. Watt Anderson said his business went from “bad” in the great depression to “worse” during those awful war years. On-location carpet cleaning virtually ground to a halt because of a lack of business and transportation.

Post war boom

After the war, DIY (Do-it-yourself) cleaning gained in popularity. Glamorene was propelled to prominence by Reader’s Digest when the magazine first experimented with advertising. Host® powder cleaner and small brush machines were sold and/or rented by most carpet retailers. Blue Lustre carpet shampoo, which was made in Indianapolis, along with a little two-brush rotary machine became the flag ship of the DIY rental industry.



Hamilton Beach rug washer was the forerunner of the Von Schrader machine. This early '30s machine is on display in the Bane-Clene Museum.

The late '40s and early '50s saw a strong increase in janitorial services. Jobs were very scarce and many of the millions of men fresh out of the military saw opportunities in the cleaning business. Unless they had been officers, most ex-GIs had first-hand experience in cleaning while in the service. Even ex-officers had experience in inspecting for cleanliness and made good supervisors for janitorial services.

In the '60s, dry foam machines using synthetic detergents with reel-type brushes were introduced in the janitorial trade. They were a vast improvement over rotary machines that used residue-attracting soaps. But, they didn't gain in popularity until the late '60s and early '70s. There were very few on-location cleaning firms in the '60s and plant cleaners continued to dominate the cleaning industry.

Some large carpet cleaning plants began to experiment with on-location service. Bigelow-Sanford Karpel Kare was prominent and had successful franchises in most major cities. McKelvey Kell had the Indianapolis franchise and to my knowledge were the first on-location cleaning firm in the city. At their peak in the late '60s they ran fourteen trucks. They didn't make the transition to "steam" cleaning and went out of business in the early '80s.

The origin of Bane-Clene®

Our company came into existence on February 4, 1962. It was a cold Sunday morning in Indianapolis with a temperature below zero when thirteen year-old Bill Bane Jr. cleaned the office of Dr. James P. Leeds for the first time. The ten dollars he earned would help with his tuition at an expensive prep school he planned to attend in the fall. Bill's brother Don, my wife Elizabeth and I went along for transportation, support and to help if we could.

During the next few months Bill did such a good job that colleagues of Dr. Leeds asked him to clean their offices and the little part time job grew into a full time business. In December of 1964, I left Brink's Armored Car Service to join the company full-time. Bill Jr. has worked in the business since his return from Army duty and his brother became a full-time employee after graduation. Elizabeth left her job as an optometric assistant to work full-time, too.

The business was incorporated in 1966. Legal and accounting advice suggested that one person should have a controlling interest, but the four of us decided to go against that counsel with each one holding an equal share of the company stock. Our reason was simply that if the company was to succeed, all four of us would have to be in agreement and work together.

Problems

Cleaning carpet in the early days gave us fits. Most equipment came in a box and we had to learn to use it ourselves. Suppliers were no help with our complaints about spots coming back, sticky surfaces, powdery residues and matting. The first time we saw "browning", we paid to replace the carpet and had no idea that a simple chemical treatment could have remedied the problem. That lack of supplier assistance made us staunch supporters of educational programs.

We bought equipment in the '60s that was just a notch above junk. Vacuum cleaners especially were pitiful. When we started thinking about building our own equipment, dependability and longevity became high priorities. Apparently, we accomplished those goals because much of the equipment we built and sold in the '70s is still running.

The premier carpet cleaners' association in those days was AIDS (Association of Interior Decor Specialists). AIDS became ASCR and is called RIA® today. Watt Anderson was a charter member of NIRC (National Institute of Rug Cleaning), a division of AIDS. Bane-Clene became a member of AIDS in 1972 but resigned in 1979 because of the association's obvious antipathy for on-location cleaners. Ed York told me that he started the SCT (Society of Cleaning Technicians) in the mid '70s for the same reason.

The genesis of the cleaning revolution

There was more than a cultural revolution in the '60s. An ugly little carpet cleaning machine that was innovated by Bill Wisdom made its appearance. He used prevailing technology and material to build a machine that had two stainless steel, restaurant style coffee pots sitting on a base that rolled on four tiny casters. I believe the coffee pots were ten gallons each. One held the cleaning solution and the other was for recovered water.

The base unit contained two small electric motors, a tiny solution pump and a small positive displacement sewage pump for vacuum. That little sewage pump would eventually revolutionize water recovery in the cleaning business. Wisdom's concept was duplicated and improved by Steamatic® of Texas and Deep Steam Extraction of Michigan, both of which are still in business. A third company using his concept, Steamtronic of Indianapolis, lasted only one year.

It was 1967 when I really got excited about carpet cleaning. Twenty acres of the fuzzy stuff was installed in the Indiana National Bank tower in downtown Indianapolis. Carpet was covering the hard floors we worked on and cleaning it became part of our maintenance contracts. Ironically, it was INB that turned me down for a loan to build two truck-mounted units in 1968, but twenty years later we cleaned carpet in that tower and fourteen of their branch banks.

The first time I saw Wisdom's concept in action, I wasn't too impressed. My wife and I went to Muskegon, Michigan, where Paul Brondyk demonstrated the Deep Steam Extraction machine for us. All through the demonstration I kept thinking that I could do better with a rotary. The other thing that bothered us was that Paul told us how busy they were, but when Elizabeth peeked at the appointment book on their office desk there was only one job that day.

Dennis and Barbara Stansbury, friends in Lafayette, Indiana, had bought a Deep Steam franchise, and when I asked Dennis about it he said, *"It's OK if you want to spend \$500 in advertising to get \$500 worth of business. We just can't get enough production to make the thing profitable."* The other reason we didn't buy Deep Steam is that it was a franchise.

The development of steam carpet cleaning in the early '60s was fraught with problems. The heavy “portable” machines, with their tiny wheels, were difficult to move on carpet. The standard 14 feet of vacuum hose, solution hose, two electrical cords and the 65 pound “drag-back” cleaning head made meaningful production impossible. Carpet was left much wetter than desired which brought the potential of browning, a dastardly condition that had no cure in those days.

The hypothesis of the heavy floor tool was that it would act as a squeegee. In reality it created a seal against the carpet pile and allowed very little air to pass. Vacuum doesn't move water, it is the air flow generated by the vacuum that moves the water. The squeegee theory was disproved after a few years of actual use and the light-weight cleaning head (some call it a scrub wand) took precedence in most successful future designs.

Roots of an idea

Between active duty tours in the Marine Corps in WWII and the Korean war, I worked for an oil company. Tankers used pumps and long hoses to reach the tanks to be filled. A PTO (power take off) unit from the truck engine powered the pump. The hose was stored on a reel driven by an automotive starter motor that retrieved it. These tanker trucks were my inspiration for truck-mounted carpet cleaning machines that would have hoses stored neatly on reels.

I started thinking about the possibility of truck-mounted carpet cleaning equipment in the mid '60s. Pumps were available that could move the cleaning solution from the truck to the cleaning head, but recovering the dirty water with fan-vacs remained a problem. That little sewage pump introduced by Bill Wisdom was the missing piece of the puzzle. A larger model of that pump would make it possible to create enough vacuum for water recovery beyond 100 feet.

At first, I proposed using a PTO for power, but was discouraged by an automotive engineer. Unlike large truck engines, he feared a PTO would cause piston slap to develop on a small van engine. He said valves might form premature carbon deposits from back pressure caused by not operating the engine under full load. A small, governed gasoline engine was our next choice but cost and maintenance problems caused us to explore electricity as our power source.

An electrical engineer worked out a design that would let a 1½ horsepower electric motor with dual capacitors, drive the large vacuum and solution pumps that we needed on only 12 amps. In the years ahead, as oil prices soared dramatically, that choice made our service company very profitable. I don't know if that automotive engineer was right about engine problems, but I'll always be grateful to him for his discouraging words.

Finally a reality

With an idea inspired by tanker trucks, a loan from American Fletcher Bank (INB still wouldn't lend us any money) and using available technology, we built our first two truck-mounted carpet cleaning systems in January of 1969. They were designed on the Wisdom concept but our pumps, tanks and motors were larger and bolted to the floor of the trucks.



1969 Dodge 1/2 ton van is one of two "Truck mounted" cleaning units built in January of 1969. It is on display in Bane-Clene's museum. The other system was mounted in a 1968 Dodge 1/2 ton van that was later sold to Larry Sparks, an employee who went into his own business.

Cleaning heads were made of light-weight aluminum and 150 feet of vacuum and solution hoses and the electrical cord were mounted on wire reels. I'm not aware of anyone advertising the truck-mounted concept prior to that time. We advertised it in the spring of '69. The first year I remember seeing an ad for a truck-mount in a trade magazine was 1974.

A problem soon developed with the permanently mounted cleaning systems. In high-rise or security jobs where doors had to be closed or locked, we needed a unit that could be quickly detached and taken out of the truck. We didn't want to use traditional fan-vac equipped portable machines because that would mean two standards of service for our customers.

A search for a portable machine that used a positive displacement pump led us to a company that was experimenting with the concept. Gibraltar Mfg. Co., had sold about a dozen portable units before we negotiated an exclusive agreement with them. Our permanently mounted solution and recovery tanks were modified to work in concert with Gibraltar machines. After some minor adjustments, the combination proved satisfactory and we used their units until they went out of business in 1982. Since that time we have manufactured the base units in Indianapolis.

One of the benefits of leaving the machine outside is reduced noise inside. The other is much quicker drying time because moist, muggy air is removed to the outside of the home. We didn't realize how much faster until we started using the new base units on commercial jobs. When the machine was in the same area we were cleaning, it took the carpet longer to dry than on residential jobs where the base unit stayed in the truck. When we stationed the base unit in another part of the building, preferably one that was ventilated, the carpet dried much quicker. To sell this concept we coined the phrase, "External Extraction®."

Supply business

One residential customer liked our new cleaning system so much that he wanted to set his son up in the business. When Morris Ouellette was told that we didn't sell them, he promptly threatened to sue me for restraint of trade if I didn't sell one to his son, Phil. I didn't think he could win, but the last thing we needed in our new business was a legal problem so we capitulated to his demands. We sold Phil a truck-mount, made a profit and decided to sell them to anyone else who might be interested.

There was an obvious void in the supply business in those days and in less than three years we were selling equipment and supplies in five states. Today, we have professional cleaners as customers in fifty states and fifteen foreign countries on five continents. We definitely got in at the right time, thanks to Morrie and Phil Ouellette.

Chemical business

We never intended to be in the chemical business either. But older carpets were full of shampoo, foam and powder from previous cleaning attempts. It was not unusual to shoot water into a carpet and wind up standing in suds with foam chocking our recovery tanks. And the foam was not always in the carpet. I remember trying a new cleaning agent on a new carpet that had never been cleaned. The owner had a furnace puff-back and when we used the new detergent, heavy sudsing appeared immediately.

We never purchased from that supplier again.

The supply industry in the '60s was soap oriented because customers used shampoo. Rug cleaning plants were still the dominant constituents of suppliers who were slow to change especially when there was so much opposition to steam cleaning. I remember talking to one salesman who called on me. I asked why his company didn't make non-sudsing detergent. He sheepishly admitted that it might offend his "good" customers.

Basement and garage chemists began to sell to the trade about 1970, but to say their products were lacking in quality control would be an under statement. It was not uncommon to find carcinogens in spot removers and excessive silicate mixed in with powders to increase the weight. Those sharp little pieces of grit literally ate up our brass components.

One distributor bought anti-foam from a reputable company in five gallon containers. He took one gallon out of each container and replaced it with water. Every four containers gave him an extra five gallons of anti-foam to sell. He was caught by the manufacturer and terminated, but think of the amount of watered-down product he sold to unsuspecting cleaners.

The need for a non-sudsing detergent was our first priority along with an anti-foam agent and some basic stain removal treatments. After a few years of suffering with unscrupulous suppliers, we decided to find our own chemist and Don Terry came to our rescue. He was the top graduate of Butler University's chemistry department and had a background in detergent chemistry with J. I. Holcomb Co. Don developed an entire line of custom products that gave us consistency and good results.

After the stigma of dealing with steam cleaners lessened and our numbers increased, most of the old-line chemical companies got serious about developing products for our trade. Now there are a number of firms making good products that are dependable and safe.

Innovators

Industry icon Murray Cremer was the innovator of good furniture and drapery cleaning systems that were cloned by many in our industry. He recognized the difference between invention and innovation. In fact, he formed a group called the “Innovators” that toured the country in the 1980s. Murray told me he did it to counter Bane-Clene’s Mini-Clinics™ which were successful and well attended. We were always friendly competitors.

Bill Wisdom may not have been first, but I consider him to be the father of modern on-location steam carpet cleaning. He has patents in 1968 and 1971, but other similar offerings were filed as early as 1931. Watt Anderson told me he heard a speech at a convention of plant cleaners that more or less acknowledged Bill Wisdom being first. The speaker said, *“Wisdom’s machine and concept of cleaning are about as welcome here as an illegitimate child at a family reunion.”* While that certainly was not a ringing endorsement of Bill Wisdom’s product, it did recognize him as being the “father.”

Joe Judge was the innovator of the direct drive system and the Judge Sales Co., was the first to advertise it 1976. Cleanco®, White Magic and Butler came sometime after that. The fact that I wanted to use a PTO back in the ‘60s doesn’t count. Ed York didn’t come to market with the electric Workmaster® truck-mount until the late ‘70s.

There have been numerous calls and e mails congratulating us on our 50th business anniversary from customers, vendors and colleagues in the industry. One call came from Lloyd Weaver who was the innovator of air moving equipment. His concept has been duplicated by many but I believe he was the first to make carpet dryers from furnace fans. Lloyd told me he spends most of his time in Billings, Montana figuring out ways to control dust, a worthy cause indeed.

Not many of us old guys who witnessed the rapid expansion of the carpet cleaning industry in the ‘70s and ‘80s are left and it was a thrill to speak with him. The last time I saw Lloyd was at the SCCA convention in 1976 or 1977. After some serious reminiscing over those old times, Lloyd and I finished our conversation with a sincere wish that we will have the opportunity to meet again....here on earth.

Jack Bates, founder of Stanley Steemer®, and his wife took Elizabeth and me to dinner in 1974 and asked us to come in on a new franchise venture. I was flattered but declined because my feelings about franchising would not have made me an ideal partner. I probably missed out on one of the most successful cleaning operations of all time. In the late ‘80s we had dinner with Jack’s son at Pebble Beach during a CRI meeting. Wes Bate’s curly hair was laced with silver and he was a dead ringer for old Jack who’d gone to his reward.

Another old timer I knew was John Downey’s dad. Old John was a pioneer in pricing carpet cleaning by the room and ran operations in Columbus, Toledo, Dayton and Indianapolis. He visited his branch offices in a Cortez motor home that really impressed me. That’s where I got the idea for using a motor home to reach the small towns across the country on our series of Mini-Clinics™. Young John found fame and fortune with Cleanfax® magazine.

Patent and trademark infringement

Two patent applications were filed by Woodard, Weikert Emhardt and Naughton on behalf of Bane-Clene® Corp., one for the process and one for the apparatus. Each one was approved by the U. S. Patent and Trademark office. Many trademarks relating to the process were acquired over the years as a result of us actually being in the service business.

There have been legal challenges, with most infringements being on our trademarks and copyrighted material. In an effort to protect our rights and especially those who use our licensed advertising material, there have been several lawsuits filed for trademark and copyright infringement. Litigation against firms such as L. M. Berry, Bell South and Southwest Bell were all settled in our favor.

The last patent litigation occurred when Hallmark Mfg. Co. published ads showing a machine strikingly similar to ours. Built in Alabama, they were advertised in Indiana by their distributor, Douglas Daniels. A suit was filed in Federal Court in Fort Wayne against Hallmark, Daniels and Ameritech Publishing Co. With the precedents in the court system from previous litigation, a consent decree and final judgment were issued in less than one year. Ameritech paid a cash settlement as did Hallmark's insurance company.

First trade show

In 1973, my son Bill and I were right across the isle from Steamway at a convention in Cleveland. Steamway had modified Bill Wisdom's design into an upright electric portable. I kidded Ralph Bloss about the thing he was selling looking like a big "Juke Box" and he countered with it being better than the "Iron Lung" I was trying to peddle. On the last day Ralph said, "Bill, tell the truth. Have you sold anything?" I admitted I hadn't. He said, "How about I buy one of yours, you buy one of mine and we can go home and say we didn't get skunked?"

Cleveland was a bad experience from our arrival. Bill and I had just started to unload our equipment on the dock at the hotel. A rude person said he was the union shop steward and a union member had to unload for us and it would cost \$40.00. We paid him and he put his hand on the back of our truck in an almost religious gesture and said, "You can take your stuff in now, I blessed it." He turned his back and walked away.

The only good thing to come out of that Cleveland meeting was that I met Ken Hilbert from Akron, Ohio. It took him nearly three years, but in 1976 Ken bought one of our systems and has been one of the best customers anyone could ever hope for. I didn't know about Ken when I told Ralph I got skunked. I think I told him the last time I saw him in Toledo.

Apparently, I sold Ralph Bloss on the truck-mounted concept though, because Steamway came out with a gasoline powered model a year or so later. When he acquired Steamway from Greg Seabloom, Ralph asked me to be his distributor in Indiana. I was flattered but declined his kind offer.

When we got home from Cleveland, Elizabeth tired quickly from hearing our complaints about how bad it was in Cleveland. In her infinite wisdom she said, "Why don't we have our own convention?" And we did from then on.

Accomplishments

Loyal customers are important contributors to longevity. Besides Ken Hilbert, we have a few other 35-year customers. Dave Worl of Cambridge City, Indiana is one who just retired. We have 47 customers who have been with us for 30 years, 91 for 25 years and 123 for 20 years. For a small company I think that's astonishing. This is not to diminish the importance of the majority of clients who have been with us fewer than 20 years, but I believe these old timers demonstrate a loyalty in this day and age that's most unusual.

Among events I'm proud of were the more than 400 Mini-Clinics™ we held in England, Scotland and 47 states including Alaska and Hawaii. In 23 years, with all the travel involved, only one meeting was cancelled and we were not late a single time. The largest was just outside Philadelphia with 103 attending. The smallest was in Hays City, Kansas where three people showed up. We met thousands of cleaners and had many one-on-one conversations. These were invaluable to our planning since we heard directly what was on the minds of the rank and file.



Norman Vincent Peale at a Bane-Clene Convention



1986 convention - Largest crowd ever

We took Elizabeth's advice. National and international conventions for our equipment owners featured great orators and motivational speakers like Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and Earl Nightingale. Workshops on cleaning techniques and practical business talks by lawyers, CPAs and advertising experts helped our equipment owners grow their businesses. Only 52 people came to our first convention in 1974. The best was in 1986 with more than 700.

Bane-Clene Institute was founded in 1978 to train professional cleaners. Students come from around the world to attend our school. Since 1978, thousands have graduated (scored above 70% on the exam). Graduates teach their own staffs, so it's difficult to estimate how many people have been influenced by our techniques and philosophies.

Our service company in central Indiana has thousands of residential and business customers and has been recognized for excellence by the Better Business Bureau, WTHR TV, WISH TV and Angie's List.

Some of the most important events in our company's history occurred in 1982, our twentieth anniversary and a pivotal year. In '80-'81 interest rates were two points above prime and prime was 19%. This was a terrible time in our nation's history and a tough time for our company. In 1982 we terminated an ad agency that was ineffective, replaced three of our major vendors and accomplished one of our most important milestones. We got out of debt.

Pioneers

These recollections are from memory, so there may be some missing and I apologize for that. Besides those I mention in other parts of this "history," some notable innovators in our industry were Arnie Ballwebber, Gene Bates, Dave Bergen, Larry Cobb, Gil Cyphert, Mike Fredrick, Herb Harpham, Jerry Holman, Bob Hughes, Mike Palmer, Lee Pemberton, Jim Roden and John Sales. These men were pioneers in truck-mounts using gasoline engines.

Some gasoline powered truck-mounts that began to advertise in the mid '70s were: Barracuda, Big Red, Certified, Econotron, Frederick Steamer, Fox 6000, Gold Machine, HydraMaster, J. M. Fitzpatrick, Judson, M&M RD 1000, Marlin, Professional Chemical Co., Steam Genie, Steamway, Steamitron, Turbo Tech, Ultra Steam and Vapor Jet.

Portable steam cleaning equipment advertised in the '70s were: Badger, Burnside, Carpet Care, Caroline Chemical, Castex®, Century 400™, Certified, Chemspec®, Chemko, Clarke®, Clausen, Clean Master, Colonial, Domestique, Esteam®, Extractvac, Hatfield System 21, Hydro Demon, ManMark, Mystic Maid, Purex®, RinseNvac, Rug Doctor®, Steamaway™, Steamex, Steri-Steam, Thermax, Vac-O-Steam, White Glove, Windsor® Industries and Zinger.

The '80s and '90s brought a wave of new offerings and in recent years the "bigger is better" mentality blossomed. Cleaning systems are powered by huge diesel engines and monstrous generator-powered dehumidifying units are mounted on trailers.

The great "steam" controversy

It was called "Steam Carpet Cleaning" in the 1960s and survived a political firestorm in the '70s when the Council of Better Business Bureaus issued an edict against using the word "steam" in advertising. The state of Wisconsin actually banned the word "steam" in yellow pages as a result of a petition signed by dry foam cleaners. Some opponents ran negative ads and coined such phrases as, "No Steaming, No Boiling, No Shrinkage." It was indeed a bitter time.



In an effort to reverse this destructive course of events, I organized the SCCA (Steam Carpet Cleaners Association) in 1974. In less than one year the membership in SCCA grew from 0 to 1,003. There never has been, nor probably never will be, such a unifying cause to stir a complacent industry into action. Support, some solicited, some not, came from unexpected sources. An unexplained and perhaps Heavenly sent help came in the summer of 1975.

The St. Louis BBB had summoned me to a meeting at their offices. Julius Hunter of KMOX TV had been doing a negative series on “steam” carpet cleaners and was there replete with lights, camera and much intimidation. The meeting was opened with some very negative remarks about “steam” cleaning and I was asked to state the position of the

SCCA. I had prepared some notes, but God surely intervened by giving me an opening line that I hadn’t planned.

“I noticed a room full of file cabinets as I came in. They must be full of complaints about “steam” cleaners to cause all of this fuss. I won’t ask you to bring all of them in, but could I examine one “consumer-oriented” complaint so I can comment more intelligently on it?”

There was dead silence in that room. They didn’t have one complaint from a consumer. All were from shampoo/dry-foam cleaners and some local franchises. That evening on his television show Mr. Hunter apologized, called off his campaign and treated the SCCA in a very complimentary manner. I think he truly felt bad about being duped as did the BBB.

This strategy worked again in 1976 at the Louisville BBB. But when I visited Kenneth Orr, a lawyer at the council’s headquarters in Washington, he was not so accommodating. Mr. Orr said, *“You’d better get your fragmented industry together, clean up this mess, or I’m going to dump the whole thing in the lap of the FTC.”* With that threat ringing in my ears, I started working on a plan for an SCCA convention that would draw those who felt the way we did and especially bring in the opposition so we could plead our case and find a point of compromise.

“City of Brotherly Love”

Because it was close to home for many whom we wanted to attend and as a sign of peace, Philadelphia was selected for the meeting site. Howard Olansky, editor of ICS magazine, worked to persuade representatives of government, the Council of Better Business Bureaus and associations such as AIDS into attending. A friend of Howard’s, Irv Shaw of the Jute Carpet Backing Council, was a strong ally who lived in Philly. Gury Poletajev of Burlington Industries (Lees Carpet), was a supporter and also lived there. Another reason was that Philly is my wife’s home town and one of the meeting days would be on her birthday.

Sol Petruzzi of L. S. Ayres in Indianapolis, Bob Grate of Lazarus in Columbus and Bob Wagner of Shillito’s in Cincinnati (all are now Macy’s) rallied the department store industry to our side. Dick Maplesden of the California Carpet Cleaners’ Institute was a supporter as was SCT’s Ed York. Janet Atkinson, President of the Central Indiana Better Business Bureau, was a big help by working for our cause from inside the framework of the BBB.

Howard Olansky wrote this blistering editorial in ICS magazine titled, ***“The matter of steam!”*** in 1976. These are a few barbed excerpts:

“We would like to know where the National Council of Better Business Bureaus gets off sitting in judgment on the use of the word “steam” in carpet cleaning advertisements. The National has recommended to its local affiliates that they slap the hands of any cleaner using “steam” in his advertisements, including the use of that word in yellow pages ads.”

“We equally deplore a recent newspaper ad by a manufacturer of a process that is not in the “steam” category. At a time when the carpet cleaning industry is making giant strides upward, when we are spending much money and man hours to raise the levels of our professionalism, when we are painting positive pictures to the consumer on the need for cleaning - we do not need a half truth battle fought in the public press.”

“And most of all we do not need, nor should we stand still for, a local BBB and its national, sitting in judgment in an area that they obviously have neither the expertise nor the knowledge with which to pass intelligent judgment. Further, the BBB should realize that it can no longer sell anyone on the belief that the appearance of the BBB logo automatically puts legitimacy on any company. A quick look at some of the ads in your local paper quickly tells you that.”

“We can show you countless instances when an industry stood quietly by, it had inflicted upon it unrealistic, unfair and costly rules and regulations. There is no need for our industry to stand by. We do have the organizations, we do have the people to step forward and defend our positions. The particular case, the matter of the BBB position, is just such an instance. It demands that we do not knuckle under.”

Howard Olansky asked me to write a “Guest Editorial” that appeared in his magazine a few months later. I was honored that he would allow an amateur to write in his professional publication, especially in his place. Howard’s whole-hearted support was the defining element in settling the great steam controversy. He passed away in 2006 and I really miss him.

“Operation Peace Pipe”

That’s what we named the meeting that was to be held in Philly. In July of 1977, Mr. Olansky wrote this editorial in ICS:

Philadelphia is known as the “City of Brotherly Love.” It could be very well known in our industry as the city where the final chapter was written in the battle of the word steam. The SCCA, which holds its annual convention in Philadelphia October 27-29, has issued invitations to participate in an open discussion on the subject of the use for the word steam to describe that method of carpet cleaning. The association is inviting various segments of the industry to serve on a panel to appear in open forum on October 29.



For his tireless efforts, Howard Olansky received our “Jimmie” award at the next company convention he attended.

individuals as well as some of the organizations. But until the proposed meeting suggested by SCCA on October 29 there has been no full industry representation. We would hope that representatives of the Council of Better Business Bureaus will be in attendance at this meeting.

In our opinion, too much of what has gone on in the past has been counter-productive for the industry. Too much attention has gone to semantics, most of which holds little meaning for the consuming public, but has needlessly torn our industry apart. We continue to hold to the belief that what counts is the selection of the right equipment, with the right chemicals for the job at hand and with that job performed by an operator with the qualifications to achieve the best job possible. We applaud this move by the SCCA and hope that Operation Peace Pipe does indeed put to rest the battle of the word steam.

As is easily imagined, the association has been for several years deeply involved in the subject. It is approaching its October panel with an open, mature mind. The association calls it, “An effort to bring together some of the many fragmented segments of our industry to form a concerted endeavor to once and forever resolve the thorny controversy involving the use of the word steam.” Referring to the various organizations that have been working toward an acceptable solution, the association states, “It would seem that all of us are headed in the same general direction, but we’re on different tracks. If we would all pull together, the problem would soon be back of us. Our invitation to the panel discussion is not a grandstand play. It is a sincere and genuine appeal for industry wide participation in the writing of the final chapter in the battle of the word steam.”

Undoubtedly such discussion holds an important potential: it could get out onto the table the entire subject, where it can be aired with a sense of industry responsibility by all of those so deeply involved in the industry. The position of this publication has been no secret. We support the use of the word steam to describe that particular method of carpet cleaning. We, as do many others, firmly believe that the word has achieved the position of a generic in our industry, that it has been accepted by the consuming public as descriptive of the method of carpet cleaning.

As those who have followed the controversy these past few years are well aware, the biggest problem centers around the position taken by the Council of Better Business Bureaus and to date there has been no open discussion between the CBBB and full representation by our industry. There have been meetings between the CBBB and

October, 1977

More than 400 people attended the SCCA meeting in Philly. There were folks from the government, the Council of Better Business Bureaus, AIDS International, several regional associations, carpet makers, fiber producers and of course rank and file carpet cleaners.

We invited exhibitors to help pay for the meeting. One exhibitor, in order to avoid paying an exhibit fee, set up a display in his hotel room. A good Samaritan reported him and his meeting credentials were taken so he couldn't get into the exhibits to pass out cards with his room number. That was the only negative occurrence reported.

On the second day of the three-day meeting, I presented a scientific definition of the word "Steam" that was given to me by a chemical engineer with DuPont. *"Steam is any discernable water vapor and may exist over an infinite range of pressures and temperatures."* When I read Max Gruetzner's statement to the audience along with some examples of generic use he had submitted, I could almost feel the controversy easing. The remainder of the meeting and panel discussions the next day took on a more congenial tone.

There were many speakers in the two days prior to the big panel discussion. Even though we had invited everyone in the industry not one person openly appeared to talk against "steam." I believe it was this unanimous outpouring of support that convinced the other side to back down.

The clowns

In an effort to loosen up the audience in the heavy political atmosphere that permeated the hotel on that first day, I decided to play a joke on Gury Poletajev. He was a congenial guy, always friendly and the Technical Director of Burlington Industries. Gury was scheduled to give a speech at 11:00 AM that would be in support of our effort in the "steam" controversy.

It was Halloween week and the hotel staff was all in costume. I found twelve who were dressed as clowns and ask them to help me with a prank. Just as Gury was introduced at 11:00, they were to parade in one door of the huge meeting room, go across the stage in back of Gury and then exit through a door on the opposite side.

There was just one problem. They got the time wrong and did their little clown parade at 10:00. Bob Langley from HydraMaster was the scheduled speaker to talk about the advantages of truck-mounted operation. As he was introduced, here came the clowns. Bob's mouth dropped open, he was speechless and obviously didn't think it was funny. I know Bob always thought I did that on purpose.

Now you know Bob!

A contribution

Ed York's SCT had filed a lawsuit against the Council of Better Business Bureaus earlier in 1977 that joined with the success of our meeting in Philly to win the battle. Before the end of the year, the BBB rescinded its directive to yellow pages publishers to ban the word "Steam." The SCCA was dissolved in early 1978 since the common purpose of joining was the battle against the BBB. It was over and in our newsletter, I encouraged the more than 1,000 members of SCCA to join a local, regional or national trade association and stay active in the industry.

Ed York posted this message on the ICS Bulletin Board just before he passed away:

The various posts give me the opportunity to talk briefly on Bill Bane. I have known Bill for years and consider him the best marketer in the business. We both are not shy, which must irritate lots of people. But for you steam cleaners, listen up. Years ago the Better Business Bureau decided to make points by condemning Steam Cleaners.

The Wisconsin Attorney General scared the heck out of the good steam cleaners in that state. It started to spread, and so we steam cleaners decided to fight back; We collectively prepared facts to back up our claims and integrate. Then we hired an attorney from Wisconsin, who had a good history in Washington D.C. to take our case and sue the BBB.

As I remember I put up the cost for the associations sponsoring the fight. They were the NY Rug Cleaners, The CCI (Southern California group) Bane-Clene group of steamers, and the SCT which was mine. Invoices for their part were sent to all the Associations listed above. Bill Bane sent his letter of congratulation and a check within days. The others never paid their part or even questioned the bill. This meant that Bill paid his part and I paid the rest. So when you are bashing Bane, don't forget he cleans his way, and helped make it so wet extractors of today are able to operate without being trashed by the BBB.

Ed York

Mr. York chose not to attend the meeting in Philadelphia. He never told me why, but I always thought that his personality would have caused him to upstage everyone. He very well may have hampered the legitimate effort to solve the problem. I think Ed knew this and deliberately avoided the meeting. Ed York was a pioneer who had a profound influence on our industry and was despised by many. Even though we were at odds on some issues, I had the utmost respect for him.

Professional Cleaners' Association (PCA)

Our industry literally exploded during the next two years and steam carpet cleaning flourished in the land. Can you imagine the surprise when I announced to our convention audience in 1980 that we should not use the word "Steam" in advertising? Charlatans had invaded our industry and nearly all advertised prices like \$5.95 a room to "steam" clean carpet. It was "guilt by association" to advertise "steam."



That was the reason for making the painful decision to drop the word “steam” after nearly four years of fighting for the right to use it.

Founded in June of 1980, the PCA (Professional Cleaners’ Association) was the brainchild of sixty professional cleaners who got together after convention to create an exclusive organization to represent Bane-Clene owners who subscribed to the highest standards. From those sixty, the membership has grown to include companies in all fifty states, Canada, China, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines, South America, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

PCA has been in the forefront of the fight against bait and switch advertising since 1980. The association lobbied Representative Andy Jacobs to introduce a bill in Congress for changes in obsolete labor laws that affect the carpet cleaning industry. Ongoing programs in PCA promote good corporate citizenship and subscribing to BBB standards. PCA fosters customer and employee safety and caring for environmental matters such as proper waste water disposal.

Bane-Clene system owners who have achieved certification through Bane-Clene Institute with a passing grade of at least eighty percentile are awarded complimentary membership in the association. Candidates must sign a “Pledge of Integrity” and subscribe to a uniform code of ethics and conduct.

PCA has not received recognition from the trade press or the industry as a whole simply because it is extremely parochial and outside the influence of other manufacturers and associations. That is exactly the way the founders wanted it.

Florida experiment

In 1977, we decided to open an operation in Florida. Bill Yeadon, who lived in St. Petersburg, had gone to Brebeuf Prep with my son and they stayed in touch after graduation. Tim Condron, a friend of Yeadon’s who also lived in St. Petersburg, seemed interested in the business so we formed a partnership with them. Tim was enthusiastic and Bill was personable and good at public relations, so it seemed ideal.

We bought a house on 49th street for an office and did a direct mail introduction to get the first truck some work until the yellow pages were published. Associated Dry Goods owned L. S. Ayres & Co., whom we worked for in Indianapolis, and also owned Robinson’s of Florida. Through our affiliation we negotiated a license agreement with Robinson’s, one of the major department stores in the area at that time.

Lorraine Broccoli, a delightful lady that Tim hired, came to Indianapolis for training and ran their office. Within two years Tim and Bill were running a six-truck operation. Each was on a truck and another four were sub-contracted. Our advertising expertise and department store contacts had propelled the Florida experiment into an instant success. Maybe too instant!

Then, McGrath and Co., our advertising agency, pulled a major boondoggle. We had budgeted \$35,000.00 for a direct mail program in the Tampa Bay area for the year. Instead of spreading it over monthly mailings as per our instructions, McGrath dropped the entire lot of brochures at one time. Lorraine was covered up on the phones and so were the crews.

Don Bane and I went down to see how bad the damage was and we were appalled. They were turning down high-rise work because it was too much trouble and cherry picking jobs. But the worst part was that Tim and Bill were not even working full time on the trucks. They were sub-contracting most of it. They both loved to play soft ball and Tim reportedly had another business interest. When we found this out, we made the decision to shut it down. We offered Bill a job where he could be supervised and he moved his family to Indianapolis. Bill stayed with us for ten years. Tim became a mortgage broker.

Stainmaster®

In 1986, carpet sales were flat. Then, DuPont® introduced Stainmaster® with little Ricky throwing his plate of food on a carpet in a television commercial. They told consumers how easy it was to clean Stainmaster. Consumers bought it and all other brands of stain resistant carpet by the truck load. Everyone in the carpet industry, including cleaners, profited from DuPont's positive ad campaign which was one of the most successful of all time. It worked for one reason. Stainmaster sold the public on "ease of maintenance."

Recognizing that this new product was going to be popular, I wrote to them about cleaning instructions. Letters and phone calls were ignored by the giant company. To see for ourselves how it cleaned, in January of 1987, Elizabeth went to her favorite department store, L. S. Ayres & Co., and had the new miracle fiber installed in our family room.

The carpet was Carmel Haze, a light color, not a good choice for a room with an entrance off the garage. We chose a plush pile, too, to see how it would stand up to cleaning and abuse by kids, dogs, cats, salad spills, pizza stains and lots of foot traffic. We cleaned it regularly and used some products that were later banned by DuPont in their warranty.

Later that year, DuPont rushed to cover what their marketing department hadn't considered, and appointed Stanley Steemer® as their official warranty service. A roar went up across the land of cleaners that was heard back in Wilmington. Ed York, in his inimitable way, wrote an editorial in his "Tips and Chat" publication that said, "*DuPont has built their relationship with the cleaning industry on the spot where the outhouse once stood.*" During the next two years, Bill Doan and Cy Gantt traveled the country for DuPont soothing the ruffled feelings of the professional cleaning community.

When carpet began losing market share to hard floors a few years ago, the CRI tried to reinvent the magic of Stainmaster with "Carpet, it just feels better." Their Board of Directors, in their infinite wisdom, ended that great program in less than one year and in a complete reversal of strategy, CRI began a campaign that carpet cleaning is akin to "Rocket Science."

In an effort to force consumers to believe this misrepresentation, some mills even put strings on the purchase of new carpet through warranty requirements. Some say only certain products and certain cleaning firms can be used to clean their carpets or the warranty will be void. That message says one thing to the consumer. Carpets are hard to clean. DuPont had the right idea in 1986. Twenty six years later, that Stainmaster carpet is still in our family room. It has no noticeable change in tip definition or color. Good stuff!

The Masterseries™ caper

A challenge to our chemical business came in the late '80s, compliments of DuPont®. A cartel of chemical suppliers tried to control the cleaning industry. Known as the “Magnificent Seven,” they had DuPont’s blessing to manufacture stain blocker products that were offered for sale through professional cleaners. Licensed by DuPont, the “Seven” were given stain resist technology and anointed to train cleaners in the use of the new Masterseries products.

Trade magazines touted the sales potential of this miracle product that would restore stain-resist qualities to fifth generation fibers and could even be used on wool or old nylon fibers. The “Seven” spent a small fortune advertising and we probably would have contributed, but they didn’t invite us to participate until the program was on its way down. Masterseries was the biggest flop of the century and we were fortunate that provincial interests kept us out.

The California licensing fiasco

In June of 1984, California passed legislation that required licensing of on-location cleaners who used the dry cleaning process for furniture and draperies. It required that equipment be inspected by the State Board of Fabricare and that professional cleaners be licensed. The cleaners who instigated this new law volunteered to test their competition, a slick way to control the industry.

The “Board” was made up primarily of people who operated dry cleaning plants, a few carpet cleaners and suppliers who were not sympathetic to on-location cleaners. Equipment had to be inspected and there was a test based on a hurriedly published 228 page booklet. The problem was that in their bureaucratic frenzy to get this into law they forgot that no official test sites existed around the huge state.

Colleen Rhodes, a Bane-Clene operator from Nevada City, spearheaded a letter writing campaign to the Governor and State Legislators. Bob Quinn, my wife’s brother and three-term mayor of Pacific Grove, used his political influence to lobby against the new law, too. The boondoggle ended quietly and mercifully. Governor George Deukmejian signed a bill introduced by Assemblyman Wally Herger that simply eliminated funding for the Fabricare Board.

The Sears debacle



Sears trucks behind our plant in Indy waiting for equipment to be installed in 1980.

In the mid '70s RGM, owned by Bob McCaffrey, acquired a license to provide carpet cleaning service for Sears customers in the states east of the Mississippi River. Chrommaloy, a company based in St. Louis, had a license department with Sears for photo services and wanted to get into the carpet cleaning business. They were granted a Sears license for all the states west of the Mississippi. In 1978, Chrommaloy called us to inquire about our equipment and purchased 15 units from us in 1979.

RGM became interested through contact with Chrommaloy and bought 106 of our cleaning systems. Both companies were very demanding and special training programs were set up for their employees. Harry Stecker, a former corporate employee of Sears, was in charge of purchasing and beat us down on price to a point where transactions were break-even.

My son, Don, made several trips to Philly to work with their crews. He came back from one training sojourn and said, *"Dad, those guys are being trained in hard, up-sell programs and their commissions are based on extra sales. I went to one home yesterday and felt sorry for the poor old lady they badgered into buying Scotchgard®."*

In 1980, we were summoned to their headquarters in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. My son, Bill, and I met with McCaffrey and Stecker and were told we'd have to lower prices and our answer was that we couldn't. Shortly after that, RGM was sold to Keystone Foods, a restaurant supplier that had the ability of manufacturing stainless steel products. Keystone Foods was then sold to Northern Foods, Ltd., of Hull, Yorkshire, England. We think they tried making their own equipment for awhile but manufacturing apparently wasn't as easy as they thought because they began purchasing gasoline powered systems.

Since we hadn't made much, if anything, on the Sears transactions, the loss of sales didn't hurt us. The worst damage was in our "old" customer relations. For example, Mike Wheatley of Virginia Beach was a good customer. He had a contract with Sears which was taken

over by RGM. To say that Mike was upset with us would be putting it mildly. We did business with 10 Sears contractors at that time including RGM and Chrommaloy. We upset a lot of people.

We were relieved when Sears stopped doing business with us, but then the other shoe dropped. For the next two years, RGM dumped our machines on the used equipment market. Naturally, this took new equipment sales away from us. But, living up to our standards, we trained all of the new people who bought the used Sears equipment if they would come to school in Indy.

Going out of business

Just after McCaffrey delivered his ultimatum on cutting price, Stecker informed us that he was opening up a Sears operation in Indianapolis. He said, *“Nothing personal and I hate to put you out of business, but that’s competition.”* That’s not the only time we heard that line.

In the ‘70s, I called on Sid Tuchman, owner of a dry cleaning chain. We’d cleaned Sid’s home in the early ‘70s and he was impressed. I wanted to do the carpet cleaning for his customers and must have sold him on the truck-mounted concept because he bought four HydraMaster units. I didn’t mind that as much as his TV commercials that said his was the first truck-mounted cleaning system in the city. When I called his manager (Sid wouldn’t talk to me) to complain, he said, *“Don’t worry about it. You’ll be out of business when we really take off.”*

In the mid ‘80s, a vice president of Chemlawn came to my office. (I don’t remember his name because I threw his card away when he left.) He said, *“I’m not going to buy your equipment but I like some of your marketing programs. We’re going to build a clone of a direct drive system ourselves. I just wanted to stop by and tell you I appreciate all the help your people have given me about the business and to tell you how sorry I am for you. We’re going to put one of our first cleaning operations right here in Indianapolis and your service company won’t be able to make it. When we get all 200 offices up and running, we’ll put all of your Ma and Pa equipment and chemical customers out of business, too.”*

Sears is still around but I have no idea who holds the license for their franchise and I never see their trucks. Sid Tuchman got out of the business about as quick as he got in and Chemlawn found out that spraying weeds isn’t the same as cleaning carpet. They got out too. We’re still here.

Cleaned by Capture® and Mohawk®

In the mid ‘80s, I started getting calls on our 800 number from a lady named “Pat.” I don’t remember “Pat’s” last name, but she worked for Milliken™ Carpet. “Pat” asked more questions about our service business than she did about the process which should have made me suspicious. But, it was a period when we were seeking recommendations from carpet mills, so I was pleased Milliken was interested and answered all of her questions.

“Pat” called me every week for about three months on our toll free number (free for her, not for me) to ask more detailed questions about running a service company. Much to my chagrin, I found out that “Pat” was just picking my brain. Milliken had bought the rights to the old DuPont™ “Capture” dry powder process and they were preparing to start their own cleaning service which has now morphed into the Millicare® franchise system.

Thanks “Pat!” Do you think I should get a little piece of your franchise fee? Maybe a pittance for all of those toll free phone calls? I’m just kidding of course! Mohawk was worse than you. They cost Kevin Stark and me a two day trip to Dublin, Georgia, besides all of the “toll free” phone calls. They started their own franchise, too. And Dublin, Georgia is not the end of the world, but you can see it from there.

We had been cleaned by professionals.

You’d think we’d learn

We’ve had bad experiences with distributors, too. In the ‘70s, we appointed a distributor in Chicago. Two of the partners were in the carpet cleaning business and one was a dry cleaner from Aurora who put up the money to stock the operation. The two from Chicago sold the stock and kept the money. The guy who lost the money never forgave me. One of the carpet cleaners is still in the industry, and the other guy is probably in jail.

Another wannabe distributor in Pennsylvania was a real loser. I went to assist him with a demonstration and he used Amway powder in the machine. When we did the gum removal part of the program he didn’t have Saf-T-Solv™ and used a freeze product we don’t even recommend. He apologized and said he forgot to order our powder cleaner and gum remover. Here’s the punch line. He called me a few years after he was terminated and asked me to book him as a motivational speaker for one of our conventions.

From our experience in Florida you would think that we would know that long-distance management is not our thing. But we tried it again in Las Vegas in 1992. Don Bane went there to negotiate a five year lease on a warehouse as a distribution center for our west coast customers. A husband and wife team, Joe and Susan Hill, were transferred from Indy to run the operation. Joe was on our sales staff and Susan was a receptionist in our office.

The first three years went pretty well, but then the lack of close supervision took its toll. Joe started doing other things and left Susan to do everything at the warehouse. They were not taking care of business and rather than train new people and renew a lease that was going to be increased considerably, we made the decision to close it. We have a tendency to trust people and take them at their word. This weakness doesn’t work when managing a business from afar.

The folks we have as a distributor in the United Kingdom and at our Service Center in New Jersey are long-time customers who are in their own business. They've done a great job for us. The UK operation has been going for 30 years and New Jersey for 10 years.

Maybe we've learned something after all.

Crossing paths

Many people have helped our company over the years, but no case is more unusual than that of Don Barrett, Jr. He was in school in 1972 when my son Bill and I went to his dad's carpet store to demonstrate our cleaning system. It was below zero the day we drove that 70 miles to Connersville, Indiana in our 1969 Dodge van. The heater quit working and our tank of water froze on the way, not to mention the cleaning tools, hoses and us.

Don Barrett was hospitable and let us warm up in his office which, by the way, had carpet on the walls and ceiling. Even in a carpet store, that was unusual, and I've never met a man more dedicated to the use of carpet. Don suggested we go to his home, which was close by, to demonstrate our system. We thawed out, but our tank of water didn't. This was in the days before we had coils in the tank that were heated from the truck engine.

We took our base unit and hoses inside Don's home to let them thaw out and we finally got the demonstration done. Don Barrett, Jr., came home from school while we were soaking our hoses in hot water in the family bath tub to thaw them out. Even though he looked perplexed, this young man would cross our path in positive ways on other occasions in the future. Needless to say we didn't look very impressive or professional and it was a long, cold ride home that evening.

Dalton, Georgia

The next time we saw Don Barrett, Jr., was at Wellco Carpets in Dalton. It was February of 1987 and he was the manager of technical services for Wellco. Don had invited us to come to Wellco to demonstrate our cleaning method.

These are excerpts from a report Don Barrett, Jr., wrote for his boss, Mike Casey:

“Ken Burton and I met with Bill and Don Bane and discussed steam carpet cleaning. Having been familiar with the Bane-Clene organization since the early '70s, their reputation is well above average. They expressed an interest in obtaining an endorsement similar to that which they received from J & J Industries.”

“We all agreed that overwetting was a hazard of any wet or wet extraction cleaning method. Bill Bane gave us hard facts and figures about the small amount of water they use and their high recovery rate. Then Don Bane made 40 cleaning passes over a carpet sample and the

jute backing was dry. The face fibers were fairly dry considering the amount of water he had pumped into the carpet. I must confess this makes a very favorable impression.”

“Mr. Bane gave us a brief history of his company and the extensive training available to Bane-Clene affiliates. He went on to explain they have a network of affiliates around the country and the ability to disseminate calls from nearly any given area. The national network they have put together offers a unique opportunity for us.”

I'm glad Don didn't mention the family bath tub in his report.

The Amoco experience

The next time we heard from Don Barrett, Jr., was in the fall of 1987. He was in Atlanta on the technical staff at Amoco Fabrics and Fibers, a division of the giant oil company. He called to ask if we could arrange carpet cleaners through our “Network of Excellence” to do demonstrations for a new product roll out. Amoco had found a way of making olefin fiber that overcame the old stigma attached to anything that was polypropylene related.

Don has a favorite expression, *“A presentation without a demonstration is just conversation.”* He gave us a list with the cities, location and dates and our office contacted a local Bane-Clene operator to be there. We provided a professional carpet cleaner in more than two hundred cities around the nation for these demonstrations. Large groups of carpet retailers, architects, carpet specifiers, designers and decorators attended.

I didn't see an actual demonstration until we had been doing them for about six months. They came to the Raddison Plaza in Indianapolis and I must say I was shocked. Dan Cochran, who was in charge for Amoco, invited the audience to pour bowl cleaner,



Kevin Stark at the Radisson®



Amoco Fabrics and Fibers Company

Suite 550
900 Circle 75 Parkway
Atlanta, Georgia 30329
(404) 355-9025 - Telex 54-2903

August 4, 1988

Mr. W. F. Bane
c/o Bane-Clene Systems
3940 N. Keystone Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46205

Dear Bill:

As you are aware, Amoco and Bane-Clene have been very busy lately both together and individually; and when that happens, sometimes we forget to say thanks to the people who help make things work so well.

Our new Permacolor warranty is proving to be a great success story. Frankly, without the Bane-Clene System, we would have been hard pressed to find a national network we could have been comfortable with to provide our customers satisfactory warranty service. While warranty work has thus far been non-existent, the demonstration program has proved to be a substantial business for Amoco and many Bane-Clene Associates.

In talking with the Bane-Clene associates who have done such a great job at our demonstrations, I find that they have been able to help Amoco as well as make some precious contacts for themselves with the major mills, distributors, retailers, and end-users which attend our demonstrations.

You are to be congratulated for the fine organization that you oversee. The people at Bane-Clene have made every effort to accommodate our needs. Please pass our special thanks to all who make Bane-Clene work so well. We at Amoco are greatly appreciative of your cooperation, and we look forward to a long and rewarding relationship.

With sincerest thanks,



Don Barrett, Jr.
DAB/ar

mustard, coffee, bleach, catsup and shoe polish on the carpet samples. Squeamish would not describe how I felt watching this abuse. Maybe worried would be a better word. Then there were the oohs and ahhs when Kevin Stark cleaned it and it cleaned like a champ. Solution dyeing allows almost any abuse.

Audiences were astounded by these demonstrations and sales of the new carpet products soared. Bane-Clene operators who did the demonstrations prospered, too, not just from being paid to clean the sample carpets, but also from the contacts they made there. The products we helped sell were good ones, too. I put Marquesa Lana in a motor home and it proved to be an excellent choice. It was suggested to a friend in Alabama and is still on the floor of his rental properties.

The Hercules Co., maker of Herculon fibers, introduced a new olefin carpet line to compete with Amoco. Obviously they were impressed with the job our people were doing for Amoco, and they asked us to help in the roll out of their new products. These were indeed exhilarating times for our little company, but then both programs came to an abrupt end.

Amoco suddenly decided to get out of the fibers business. Shaw Carpet bought the olefin fibers extrusion plant and DuPont bought the entire year's production of Herculon fibers which effectively took their new products off the market. This put an end to an exciting era of good, easy to clean carpets. The big nylon guys must have been getting nervous.

Besides all of the work and contacts that our affiliates throughout the country realized, we were able to meet a group of young Amoco executives such as Tom Lape, who later would become President of Mohawk Residential Carpet. I was invited to speak at the Amoco Fabrics and Fibers annual meeting at Innisbrook Resort in Florida where I met and played golf with several executives in the company. It was an exciting time and experience for all of us.

The internet

When my office was computerized in 1983, my grandson Matthew was only thirteen years old. I remember calling him one day for help when I had locked up the system at my office on Millersville Road and the entire network at the Keystone Avenue plant. He was able to talk me through the problem and get the system up and running again.



Hercules Incorporated
3168 Holston Bridge Road
Suite 201
Norcross, GA 30071
(404) 447-9120

September 8, 1988

Bane-Clene Corporation
3940 North Keystone
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
Attn: William Bane, President

Dear Bill:

I just had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed being part of your Summer Educational Conference (I learned a lot too) and what a pleasure it was to meet your wonderful staff and family.

It's very obvious, from the person who answers your telephone to your reps around the country who we worked with during the Herculon Road Show, that your company is a caring, efficient, top-quality service organization. It will be my pleasure to recommend you highly. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Marquardt".

Ann Marquardt

After Matt graduated from Indiana University, he proposed building our web site. It seemed like a lot of time, effort and funding for something that was probably a fad. Our board thought it was a good idea though and went ahead with the project in 1995. After a full year of counting accesses to our site the number was only 823.

Guess who said, "I told you so?"

I'm pleased to say I was wrong about the internet and following are some of the reasons:

Recent Monthly Accesses to www.baneclene.com

February 2012	629,516
January 2012	686,696
December 2011	614,684
November 2011	721,255
October 2011	812,103
September 2011	1,014,518
August 2011	775,512
July 2011	590,455
June 2011	631,660
May 2011	646,269
April 2011	591,919
March 2011	609,518
February 2011	522,941

Annual Accesses to www.baneclene.com

2011	8,062,565
2010	7,121,503
2005	6,262,893
2003	3,735,610
2002	1,166,782
2001	417,622
2000	106,328
1999	71,645
1998	23,269
1997	7,914
1996	823

In spite of increased competition, we had dramatic increases in accesses to our web site. The Network of Excellence™, our referral service, offers instant consumer referrals to qualified cleaning firms. Carpet mills, realtors, contractors, insurance companies, carpet retailers and consumers use our toll free telephone and internet locator services.

Equipment and chemicals have been sold on the internet to far-off places like Saudi Arabia, China and Poland.

The internet is no fad!

The “original” CRI/SOA program

“Maintenance is an important part of consumer satisfaction and the cleaner is the last one in the carpet chain to see the customer. If the consumer is not satisfied, the retailer who sold the carpet suffers, the mill that made it suffers and indeed the whole industry suffers if carpet is not their future floor covering choice. Cleaning firms that provide responsible service must be recognized and promoted by the CRI for everyone’s sake.”

Ron VanGelderen, President CRI

That’s the memo he sent in 1995, when he asked me to form a committee of CRI® members to work toward identifying reputable cleaning firms. Duraclean®, Host/Racine®, ServiceMaster®, Von Schrader and Windsor Industries® joined Bane-Clene on the original committee. Chem-Dry® joined the CRI and became part of our committee a few meetings later. This diverse group represented a cross section of the cleaning industry. The Council of Better Business Bureaus, Stanley Steemer® and ASCR were invited but did not participate.

Meetings were candid and transparent by design. We quickly came to a broad agreement on our purpose. But there were more non-members than members at our meetings. Each had their own agenda, and were very outspoken. Surprisingly, the most resistance came from IICRC and ISCT. But, in spite of the opposition, the new CRI President , Werner Braun, inaugurated the Seal Of Approval program for professional cleaners and cleaning industry schools in 2001.

Trade magazines ignored this fine program that had the simple goal of identifying responsible cleaning firms. Even with no publicity, 183 carpet retailers, 177 cleaning firms and 7 industry schools applied for the Seal of Approval in the first three months of the new program. That’s more participation, with no publicity and no support from carpet makers, than the new SOA program accomplished in its first two years in existence.

J&J Industries was the only carpet maker supporting the original program, so it was terminated in 2003 much to the frustration of all those who worked so hard for five years to organize it. The original SOA program was doomed from its inception by apathy and selfish interests. Mr. VanGelderen’s profound statement and simple goal could have profited everyone in the carpet industry had it been promoted and allowed to mature.

The “new” CRI/SOA program

Cleaning carpet is not a particularly difficult chore. But there are those who wish to make it more complicated than it really is. They want to tether carpet cleaners and their suppliers to a never-ending progression of fees. That element, under the pretense of education and approved products, fought the original SOA program and finally had their way.

A survey that CRI® used to justify the new SOA program claims that carpet cleaners are responsible for most consumer dissatisfaction with carpet. That simply is not true! I've monitored complaint sites on the internet since 1995. The irony is that consumer complaints about professional cleaning equipment, chemicals and supplies used by professional cleaners are nonexistent.

Installation leads with peaking seams and rippling caused by not using power stretchers. Faulty pattern matches, dye defects and side match issues are high on the list.

In retailing, defective carpet, late deliveries, broken promises and product substitution are not the worst complaints. Some retailers have even taken deposits while in bankruptcy and didn't deliver the carpet. Complaints against professional cleaners are insignificant by comparison.

Most cleaning related complaints were from consumers trying to clean their own carpets. They gripe about watered down chemical products and cheap, poorly maintained rental equipment. Complaints about professional on-location cleaners were nearly all about bait and switch advertisers, failure to return phone calls, and rude employees.

The score for monitoring complaints about carpet for a full year:	
Installation	314
Sales	253
Cleaning	131

In professional cleaning there was not one single mention of a cleaning chemical or machine in any of the consumer complaints. Apparently CRI must believe the bogus survey that said carpet cleaners are responsible for the decline in carpet sales. They initiated a costly program to test cleaning equipment and chemicals, which are not the problem.

It cost nearly five thousand dollars to have our equipment tested. The only place it can be done is in Dalton. We could have spent more for a "Process test", which would have gotten us a higher rating. For example, the little Rug Doctor® rental machine improved from "Gold" to "Platinum" while some powerful truck-mounted equipment like Steamway rated only "Bronze" and a HydraMaster® unit tested "Silver." It's called "Follow the money!"

In defense of CRI, their commentary that carpet cleaning is analogous to "rocket science" is partly my fault. For more than twenty years, when the red buds and dogwoods bloomed, I would be in Dalton with an 'entourage' to sponsor a luncheon. Always well attended, we would remind carpet executives and technical people that cleaning was important to customer satisfaction and the welfare of their products.

After a few simple rules for cleaning and talking about the importance of technician training, I'd answer questions and close the session with a demonstration of the Bane-Clene system. We met some important people including presidents of dozens of carpet mills. It worked! Many of them recommended us to their customers. These meetings were so popular that competitors began to schedule events in Dalton and true to human nature, cleaning was made to seem more and more complicated. Each group tried to one-up the other and the CRI obviously bought into the rhetoric. Today, there must be hundreds of different courses teaching what really is a very simple process.

Gurus, who made something that was simple sound complicated, became popular in Dalton. Some manufacturers of cleaning equipment abdicated their responsibility for training to schools other than their own to save money. Consequently, many technicians did not learn how to use the equipment and chemicals they had since most of these courses are taught generically. Although important, a cleaning operation is not successful because of the equipment or chemicals employed. Training technicians in simple procedures is the key in those two areas. Success comes from customer relations, targeted advertising and good management.

The blame game

Falling carpet sales in recent years had carpet mills looking for someone to blame and cleaners made an easy target. A bogus and undocumented "survey" claims consumers were unhappy with carpet cleaning, so the CRI® launched the new SOA program which extorts money from professional cleaners and their suppliers for testing and certification. It has turned into a fund raiser for CRI.

Carpet mills had gone one-up on each other for years. One, two, five, ten year and now lifetime warranties are coming home to roost and they need a way to bail out. I believe the purpose of SOA is to create a convenient way to void carpet warranties. They can't do it without calling attention to their ridiculous claims, so they enlisted the "nonprofit" CRI as an accomplice.

Performance of the new SOA®

The new CRI/SOA program has had an abundance of publicity in all of the trade publications and has the complete support of the carpet mills. It took nearly six years to get a significant number of CSPs (Certified Service Providers). CRI proudly announced last year that the 1,000th CSP had joined the program. The last time I checked there were only 945. The program is shrinking.

Out of approximately 40,000 cleaning firms, that's not a very good percentage. About 70% of the CSPs are franchises so it plainly shows that independent cleaners are not interested. Some expressed fear that CRI was attempting to take over the cleaning business and that may have been the ultimate goal of SOA. But 945 firms are not able to service carpet warranties, let alone take care of normal customer requirements.

CRI has fallen on hard times like many in this economic environment. They're moving from their beautiful building on the hill into leased space in downtown Dalton. Member mills are closing plants and laying off employees. CRI has re-organized its board, the technical committees and reduced its management staff.

This rough patch will pass and hopefully CRI will survive and come back strong. When that time comes, I sincerely hope they'll tend to carpet business and leave cleaning to those who know.

The future of carpet cleaning

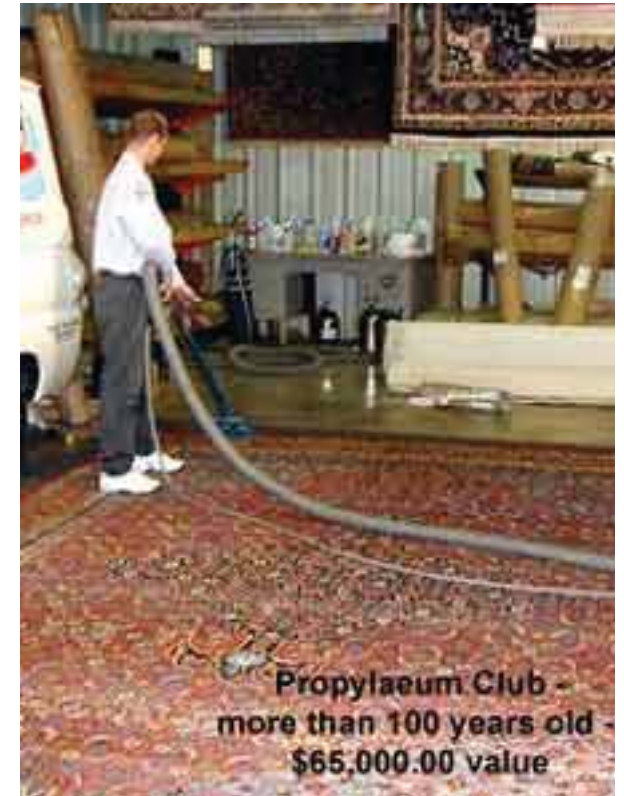
On-location cleaning flourished through the '80s and '90s, but began to decline after the 9/11 disaster. As we entered the 21st century, bank melt-downs, the real estate implosion, the recession of the late 2000's, the popularity of hard floors and changing consumer preferences all worked to claim a part of the carpet market. Cleaners diversified into hard floor maintenance and that's interesting. Just the opposite market gyrations were the driving force that led me into the carpet cleaning business fifty years ago.

There's more stone, wood and tile in the homes we work in today. Carpet is not found in the kitchen, bathroom, hall and entryway as often as it was in the good old days, although there's still a considerable amount because the average home is larger. Carpet is used in areas that don't soil rapidly, so we don't get the frequent repeat business we enjoyed in the past. This could also be the result of CRI's erroneous opinion that carpet cleaning is "Rocket Science."

Affluent consumers are more inclined to hire services than past generations so target marketing has become critical. Watt Anderson said advertising to the high-end market saved his business during the great depression and WWII. Today, furniture, oriental carpets, area rugs, grout, wood, stone and tile floors offer income potential. The truck-mount, which was designed for carpet, will give the professional carpet cleaner easy access to all of those strong profit centers by adding just a few accessories and targeting advertising to the right market.

Special requests always offer high-profit opportunities. An example is the one hundred year old, 12' x 18' oriental carpet shipped to us for cleaning, storage and delivery. The beautiful carpet was valued at \$65,000.00 and purchased by an exclusive club in Indianapolis because it had once belonged to Carole Lombard. The famous actress was originally from Indiana and was on a war bond tour during WWII when she died in a plane crash.

Commercial carpet cleaning has continued to grow. I'm not talking about motels, restaurants, apartments and other cheap work. A case in point is a fourteen story building full of carpet that we clean four times a year for one of the state's largest law firms.



Our commercial customer file is a “Who’s Who” in Indiana business. We’ve cleaned everything from the Indianapolis Colts’ artificial grass to the NCAA’s new headquarters in White River State Park.



NCAA headquarters in Indianapolis



Home of the Indianapolis Colts

The “end is near” syndrome

When I started in this business, nay sayers were forecasting that the carpet cleaning business would get saturated and dry up (no pun intended). I remember talk in the ‘70s that shag carpet would kill the industry because it was so hard to clean. But shag carpets actually encouraged the development and refinement of our cleaning process.

In the ‘80s, the negative word was that competition from bait and switch advertisers would destroy the industry. To nail the lid on the coffin today, the doom’n gloom guys claim that hard floors and area rugs will spell the end of the carpet cleaning business. And then there is always the economy to blame.

Before you buy into any of that rhetoric, here are some facts: In 1962 there were under 7,000 carpet cleaning firms nationwide. Today there are about 40,000, or almost six times as many as there were fifty years ago. Carpet makers produced 300 million square yards in 1962. In 2010, they made more than 2 billion, about seven times the amount produced in 1962.

From a carpet cleaner’s perspective, the sheer numbers are good because carpet mills have been pumping out billions of square feet of product every year for several years. The average life of carpet is eight to twelve years and many of the residential carpets we work on are twice that age. So, the future is indeed bright for those who learn to market their services.

Future protocol

Instead of knocking competitors we need to start talking about the benefits and advantages of carpet and how easy it is to clean. To imply that only certain products can be used to clean carpet or the warranty will be void is bad, but to say a competitor will ruin it is criminal. That talk makes carpet sound complicated, hard to care for, upsets people and turns off sales. The folks who buy carpet are paying attention to what we do and say. So should we!

Everyone should remind consumers that carpet is quiet and offers acoustical comfort in these noisy times. Great insulating qualities are attractive with today's high energy costs and carpet offers a wide range of decor possibilities. It's durable, safe to walk on and prevents slip and fall accidents. It's reasonably priced, too. Factoring in inflation, carpet costs less today than it did 30 years ago and the quality's better. Best of all, carpet costs less to maintain than other floors.

Most of all, we must avoid making business decisions based on negative news, especially in this election year. Concentrate on satisfying customer needs. That will produce third party advocates and referral sources that are better than all the commission salespeople in the world.

The business has changed since 1962 and will change more. Only God knows what changes are in store for us, but with the spirit of entrepreneurship being what it is, I suspect there will be many advancements. May He continue to bless America and this wonderful business.

Epilogue

As we enter this 50th year, I'm overwhelmed with memories and proud of our accomplishments. The surety that I won't be around to celebrate many more anniversaries is probably responsible for what may border on boasting. Please forgive me. But, never in our wildest imagination on that cold Sunday morning could we have dreamed of the vast number of lives that little business venture would touch over the next fifty years.

And it all began with a \$10 job.

Is America great, or what?