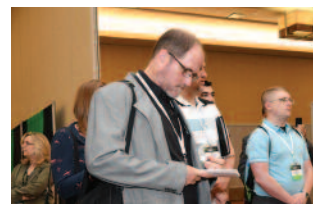
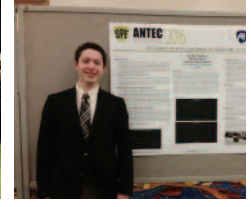




CELEBRATING

the world's largest plastics technical society
1942 -2017 and counting!



Passion, Determination & a Focused Mission Helped Propel SPE on its Path 75 Years Ago

It hasn't been easy, but the world's leading plastics technical society has endured, and remains true to its founders' original goals

By Robert Grace

SPE, you've come a long way, baby. The 60 engineers who banded together in Detroit in January 1942 – in the midst of World War II – to form a nonprofit organization to advance the knowledge of plastics could not have known that we'd be celebrating their initiative 75 years later, or that the result of their efforts would be the largest plastics technical society in the world.

But that is exactly the case. And the group's rocky road in its early years and subsequent development often mirrored the challenges being felt by the country and the broader industry. It's a fascinating story that we are pleased to recap briefly here, with a focus on the group's tumultuous first decade, along with some subsequent milestones.

The 1940s – in the beginning

- 1942 – SPE was formed, and Fred O. Conley was elected president
- 1943 – the first ANTEC (in Detroit) and first RETEC (in Chicago) were held
- 1946 – the second ANTEC was a big success
- 1947 – the third ANTEC flopped and the society nearly went bankrupt
- 1948 – SPE stabilized financially and moved forward



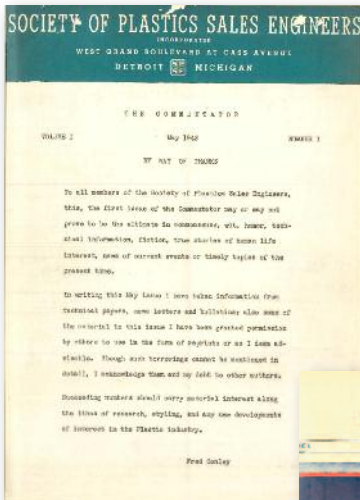
Fred O. Conley, SPE's founder and president. SPE archives photo

Originally named the Society of Plastic Sales Engineers Inc., the group that would become the Society of Plastics Engineers filed its Articles of Incorporation on Jan. 6, 1942, in Michigan, with the stated purpose of “cooperating, aiding, and effecting any commercial or industrial betterment pertaining to the designing, styling, standardizing and promotion of the use of Plastics by the distribution of descriptive matter or personal contact, or in convention in any manner that may be educational.”

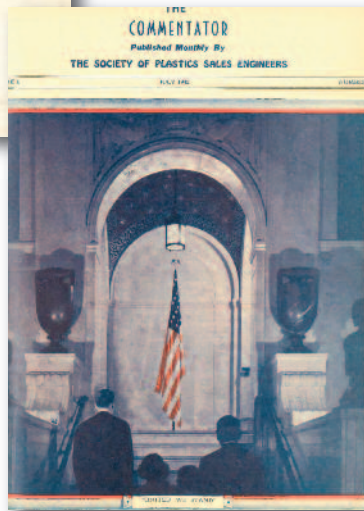
The group – which consisted of individual members, and initially charged \$5 in annual dues – was the brainchild of Fred O. Conley, a mechanical engineer and manufacturers' agent, who was

elected the group's first president.

Conley, born in Michigan on March 28, 1889, formed his own company in 1919 and subsequently gained plastics experience while selling for a Chicago-based molder from roughly 1931-47. During that time, he also designed and developed a small, plastic radio cabinet, as well as a plastic dome light for the automotive industry.



Conley edited and published the society's first publication, *The Commentator*. The very first issue, in May 1942, is above; by July, the issue was sporting a graphic cover. SPE archive images



Engineers Inc. The state of Michigan granted SPE a charter, and SPSE officially became SPE on Aug. 19, 1942.

Conley was again elected president of the newly formed body, proceeded to personally draft SPE's constitution and bylaws, and largely financed the group in its early days from his own funds. After he had organized the Detroit Section, he set about organizing a section in Chicago, followed by one in Cleveland, in 1943. In May 1942, he also founded SPE's first publication, called *The Commentator*, which he edited and published himself as a mimeographed bulletin, with the help of his wife. Soon renamed the *SPE Commentator*, the publication proved to be an early forerunner to *Plastics Engineering* magazine.

Conley – who died in 1981 at age 92 – was clearly a force to be reckoned with. His biography states: "... he was cussed,

condemned and accused of being a dictator by some members; although always respectful of the Board of Directors, he went resolutely forward on his power-directed course. He brought the office of the Presidency of S.P.E. Inc. to a plateau of power and prestige and kept it there as long as he was in office."

World War II dominated virtually all companies' activities at the time that SPE was founded. On May 22, 1942, in Detroit Conley gave a speech in which he noted the "compelling demand" of the war, and said: "We must devote ourselves to the sole task of doing a bang-up selling job and to do our part to convert the plastics industry to full-scale war production to the extent that materials are available, and as soon as new uses are found for plastics in war production."

The very first ANTEC

By the end of 1942, SPE had doubled membership to more than 120. In October 1943, SPE organized its first Annual Technical Conference (ANTEC) in Detroit, attracting 59 exhibitors and 1,775 registered visitors. That same year, the Chicago Section also held SPE's first Regional Technical Conference (RETEC), with 300 attendees hearing six presentations on dielectric preheating. The RETEC's papers were published in a large, 24-page, bound volume and copies were sold worldwide for \$1 a piece.

War-related restrictions on travel meant that SPE held no meetings in 1944 or 1945, but the society did begin publishing its quarterly *SPE News Bulletin* in 1945.

Once the war concluded in September 1945, the society's members were keen to expand into new products and markets. Innovation thrived, with plastics finding use in diverse applications ranging from molded acrylic automotive taillights and polyethylene drinking tumblers to nylon zippers and fiber-reinforced plastic boats.

SPE's second ANTEC meeting, in 1946, was very well-received, drawing 2,000 attendees for three days of technical sessions, and some 11,000 visitors to a five-day exhibition, resulting in more than \$18,000 in net profit. The group hired a full-time executive secretary. By year's end, SPE had 16 sections and 1,500 members, according to then-president George W. Clark.

A disastrous 1947

But that heady success quickly turned sour the next year. Little more than a third of the expected 150 exhibitors booked space at ANTEC 1947 in Chicago, a brutal winter storm kept visitors from attending, and the society was plunged into debt. A historical accounting by J. Harry DuBois – SPE's president in 1948 – declared, "So, the trip from rags to riches to

rag again was made in one year. The national office was cancelled and an economy diet was prescribed.”

SPE in 1947 moved its headquarters from Birmingham, Mich., into a corner of the Cleveland, Ohio, custom molding plant of the incoming president, Thomas E. Orr of Plastics Engineering Inc., who managed the society’s affairs with his own staff. At roughly the same time, and adding to the stress, SPE’s leaders also were clashing with the Society of the Plastics Industry Inc. – a competitive trade association that predated SPE by five years, having been founded in 1937 (see sidebar, Page 26).

Jesse H. Day recalled those challenging times in a colorful account he compiled in 1961. SPE’s Executive Committee had asked Day in 1948 to become the society’s part-time executive secretary while he was earning a post-graduate degree in chemistry at the Case Institute of Technology in Cleveland. Day – who would become chairman of Case’s Department of Chemistry – also was the unpaid editor of *SPE News-Bulletin*.

Day’s wife, Bess R. Day, attended a 1948 SPE council meeting in place of her ill husband, and ended up taking the executive secretary’s duties on herself full time – a key role she played for the next four years. (This also led to SPE headquarters shifting with the Days for a few years to Athens in

southeastern Ohio when Jesse Day took a job as a chemistry professor at Ohio University. He continued to edit the society magazine until 1957, when he became chairman of O.U.’s Chemistry Department.)

A document titled “Report of the National Office” spelled out how dire things had become: “On February 1, 1948, when I went to work for the Society of Plastics Engineers, Inc., the office was located in a part of the plant of Thomas E. Orr and consisted of a desk, two broken typewriters, an Elliott Addressing Machine and two file cabinets. There was no filing system. The bookkeeping records were so complicated that even a professional auditor had trouble keeping the records. The Society owed notes for \$2,500.00 and the back account was \$1,300.00 overdrawn.”

The society needed to get its financial house in order if it hoped to survive. With guidance from Bess Day, the group tackled the accounting system, which took about a year to get down to 40 accounts from about 700, and it took until 1950 to get the filing system fully organized.

Turning the corner as a society

SPE President J.H. DuBois told a gathering of members in January 1949 in Philadelphia, that for the society “1948 was a year of stabilization, consolidation of gains, humble seek-



The SPE convention banquet in Boston in January 1953 was a big draw. SPE archives photo

ing of good will, liquidation of debts and diet of bread and water. Your officers have spent no money this year. Your National Office was moved into the living room of your Executive Secretary, Bess Day, to balance your budget. Your National Directors have made an all-out effort to correct the weaknesses of the past, to establish friendly relations and a working agreement with the other Societies. We believe in plastics and the future of S.P.E.”

With his trademark flamboyant rhetoric, DuBois continued: “The past is a pretty dead duck. We had some lush years – but so did everyone else. When we were rich, we let George do it, had grandiose ideas and lost our shirts. Now that we are poor, our members have gone to work as individuals. Our strength is in individuals – the workers in the sections. We are strong when we serve the local interests well with fine technical programs and a serious effort to help the industry. We are weak when we stoop to petty local politics. Divided responsibility always leads to failure.

“Our existence depends on the quality of the monthly program. Your best man must be your program director,” DuBois exhorted, urging group leaders to aim high and get the best local and national speakers for every meeting. “... Your local Section Officers must get religion, old-time fighting gospel religion – the urge to make a convert of every man on the street to the principles of sound plastics engineering and uniformly good job by all in the industry. The industry needs S.P.E. (Some won’t admit it yet.) S.P.E. can do the big promotional job for industry. ... Let’s all go home and put up a big solid front and relentless drive for better plastics engineering.”

The 1950s

- 1952 – Bess R. Day, aka “Mrs. SPE,” stepped down as executive secretary (and two years later was awarded an honorary lifetime membership)
- 1952 – SPE established new headquarters in rented space in Stamford, Conn.
- 1954 – Lowell (Mass.) Technological Institute launched a four-year undergraduate program in plastics engineering
- 1956 – The 12th ANTEC meeting drew a record 2,500+ attendees
- 1957 – The group awarded its first President’s Cup, to Frank Martin
- 1959 – SPE created its first Professional Activity Groups, a precursor to SPE Divisions

SPE had survived its near-death experience. Or, as one passage in the society’s archives, notes: “SPE had proved



This photo from fall 1949 shows SPE Executive Secretary Bess R. Day (right) – later dubbed “Mrs. SPE” – with stenographer Renee Begam in what was then the national office of SPE, in Athens, Ohio. The office was in southeastern Ohio because Bess’ husband, Jesse H. Day, had taken a job at Ohio University, first as a chemistry professor, then as chairman of O.U.’s Chemistry Department. SPE archives photo

too tough to die. The long climb upward began at an accelerating pace. This was 1950.”

Jesse Day’s report that year stated, “The National Office today consists of two desks, one large table, too [sic] good typewriters, the Elliott Addressing Machine, four large filing cabinets, sundry filing drawers, a well-organized archive file and other miscellaneous equipment. There is a bank balance of \$4,650.48 and no debts. Two people work in the office full-time, with a part-time assistant.” Meantime, over an eight-year period, membership had grown “from the original 350, or so, to 2,024 as of December 31, 1950.”

And so the society forged ahead, sometimes in fits and starts, but steadily forward as it refined and reinforced its overall mission to advance plastics engineering as a profession and plastics as an attractive, viable industry. Following are just a few notable highlights in the ensuing decades:

The 1960s

- 1961 – SPE founds the Plastics Institute of America, with the aim of increasing attention on science and technology
- 1962 – SPE presents its first International Award, to polymer scientist Dr. Herman F. Mark, at the 18th

- ANTEC, in Pittsburgh
- 1963 – Dr. Giulio Natta receives SPE's International Award for his polymer catalyst development work, the year before he wins the Nobel Prize in Chemistry
- 1964 – SPE begins offering limited-registration educational seminars at ANTEC
- 1965 – A total of 3,651 people attended 10 RETECs during the year
- 1966 – With six technical papers presented in French (and simultaneous translation offered in English), ANTEC became an international event.
- 1967 – SPE celebrates its 25th anniversary and ANTEC attendance tops 3,500

The 1970s

- 1970 – SPE forms its first nine Technical Divisions, with the Color & Appearance Division being the first division formally approved
- 1970 – Ralph Noble, a Canadian, becomes the first non-U.S. citizen to become SPE president
- 1970 – SPE and SPI jointly form the Plastics Education

Foundation to develop vocational training courses and materials

- 1972 – The Plastics Hall of Fame was established
- 1973 – The *SPE Journal* was renamed *Plastics Engineering* magazine
- 1976 – The National Plastics Center – the brainchild of SPE's Pioneer Valley Section – was established in Leominster, Mass.
- 1977 – SPE membership hit an all-time high of 19,251
- 1979 – The 37th ANTEC, in New Orleans, drew record attendance of 3,652, and had some 200 papers presented in 56 sessions
- 1979 – The society launched the *Journal of Vinyl Technology*

The 1980s

- 1980 – SPE moves its headquarters to Brookfield, Conn.
- 1980 – The society began publishing the technical journal *Polymer Composites*
- 1982 – On its 40th anniversary, the society initiates the

SPE Presidents: 1942 - 2017

Current President: Raed Al Zubi - 2017

Fred Conley - 1942
 William M. Phillips - 1943
 Charles C. Henry - 1944
 William B. Hoey - 1945
 George Clark - 1946
 Thomas E. Orr - 1947
 J. Harry Dubois - 1948
 Mario J. Petretti - 1949
 C. Todd Clark - 1950
 Islyn Thomas - 1951
 William O. Bracken - 1952
 Walter F. Oelman - 1953
 John W. LaBelle - 1954
 Frank W. Reinhart - 1955
 Jerome M. Formo - 1956
 Peter M. Simmons - 1957
 R. Kenneth Gossett - 1958
 Fred C. Sutro, Jr. - 1959
 George W. Martin - 1960
 Frank W. Reynolds - 1961
 James R. Lampman - 1962
 Jack G. Fuller - 1963
 Guy A. Martinelli - 1964
 George P. Kovach - 1965
 Robert W. Sherman - 1966

Bernard G. Achhammer - 1967
 Gim P. Fong - 1968
 George L. Graf, Jr. - 1969
 Ralph A. Noble - 1970
 Irwin L. Podell - 1971
 Ronald J. Cleveringa - 1972
 Theodore S. Stoughton - 1973
 John H. Myers - 1974
 Harold A. Holz - 1975
 George E. Pickering - 1976
 Lawrence J. Broutman - 1977
 Jack L. Isaacs - 1978
 Joseph Magliolo, Jr. - 1979
 George P. Schmitt - 1980
 James E. "Bo" Chinnners, Jr. - 1981
 Thomas W. Haas - 1982
 Robert J. Schaffhauser - 1983
 William C. Kuhlke - 1984
 Richard G. Johnson - 1985
 Greg R. Thom - 1986
 John R. Kretschmar - 1987
 Bruce A. Petersen - 1988
 Vivian E. Malpass - 1989
 Leonard H. Drexler - 1990
 George W. Thorne - 1991

Henry J. Wojtaszek - 1992
 Lance M. Neward - 1993
 Bonnie J. Bachman - 1994
 David R. Harper - 1995
 Jay L. Gardiner - 1996
 Norman E. Fowler - 1997
 Norman S. Behn - 1998
 William A. Humphrey - 1999
 James H. Brackeen - 2000
 Terence J. Browitt - 2001
 Claudius Feger - 2002
 Donna S. Davis - 2003
 Karen L. Winkler - 2004
 Len Czuba - 2005
 Timothy W. Womer - 2006
 Vicki Flaris - 2007
 William J. J. O'Connell - 2008
 Paul G. Andersen - 2009
 Ken J. Braney - 2010
 Russell C. Broome - 2011
 James S. Griffing - 2012
 Jon D. Ratzlaff - 2013
 Vijay Boolani - 2014
 Dick Cameron - 2015
 Scott Owens - 2016

Fred O. Conley Award, and presents it to Dr. Ioannis V. Yannas

- 1983 – SPE takes over the Plastics Education Foundation;
- 1983 – Jacques de Craene becomes SPE's first VP of International Affairs
- 1984 – SPE introduces the Fellow of the Society member status, to recognize those who have made outstanding industry contributions; through 2017, 325 Fellows have been named
- 1988 – A record number of 25 RETECs were organized

The 1990s

- 1990 – The Plastics Hall of Fame posthumously inducted Fred O. Conley and four others
- 1992 – SPE celebrated its 50th anniversary
- 1992 – The society introduces its Honored Service Members program; as of today, 325 have been so recognized
- 1994 – The Plastics Institute of America moved its headquarters from New Jersey to the campus of the University of Massachusetts Lowell
- 1995 – SPE launches its PlastiVan hands-on, traveling science fair program to help educate students and the public about plastics
- 1996 – SPE Foundation forms as a nonprofit organization to fund student scholarships and help with workforce development

The 2000s

- 2007 – *Plastics Engineering* and *Plastics Engineering Europe* were combined into a single magazine
- 2009 – SPE strikes an agreement with the Society of the Plastics Industry allowing SPE to organize a technical conference at SPI's big, triennial NPE 2009 trade show in Chicago
- 2011 – SPE organizes Eurotec 2011 in Barcelona, its first major event in Spain
- 2012 – With an eye to the future, the society creates its Next Generation Advisory Board (NGAB) to help counsel and cater to students and young professionals
- 2012 – Belgian national Wim de Vos named SPE CEO, and SPE opens its Europe and Middle East office in Ronse, Belgium
- 2012 – ANTEC Mumbai was the largest plastics

technical conference ever held in India, with more than 450 delegates attending 178 technical presentations over two days

- 2013 – SPE headquarters organized its first conference in China, with the Molding & Medical Plastics divisions hosting an event in Shanghai
- 2014 – The first Plastics Race scavenger hunt held at ANTEC in Las Vegas
- 2014 – SPE held ANTEC Dubai, its first annual technical conference in the Middle East
- 2014 – The SPE Beijing Section in China gains official status
- 2015 – SPE launches its online discussion forum, The Chain, at ANTEC 2015



- 2015 – SPE Executive Council approves the group's Middle East and ASEAN sections
- 2017 – SPE revamps its long-standing organizational structure and installs a new governance model, with a smaller Executive Board and several new, functional VP roles
- 2017 – Chicago-based association professional Patrick Farrey succeeds de Vos as CEO
- Aug. 24, 2017 – SPE will celebrate its 75th anniversary with an event called "The Future Is Plastics" in Detroit, which is its birthplace and still home to its largest single chapter.

75 years and counting ...

Today, the Bethel, Conn.-based SPE counts more than 22,500 individuals from 84 countries as members. Despite shrinking from some 37,000 members 25 years ago, it remains the largest, most well-known plastics professional society in the world, and now includes a total of 89 units, in the form of technical divisions, geographical sections and special interest groups.

The society has remained true to its primary mission from the very beginning 75 years ago, to represent all types of professionals involved in the plastics field – from students to retired professionals. Its goal still is today to provide and promote scientific and engineering knowledge related to plastics around the world.

Publications Have Played a Vital Role in SPE's History

SPE's founders clearly understood the importance of communication, and hence placed a high value on the society's journals and magazines

By Robert Grace

Two things in particular struck me when I spent a couple days recently poring through SPE's dog-eared archives at the society's headquarters in western Connecticut:

- One was that back in the 1940s the group's founders acutely understood the importance of creating a historical record, and of documenting their actions, challenges and accomplishments. They went to great pains to do just that. The result is some amazingly detailed, crisply written – and often entertainingly colorful – accounts of various meetings, incidents or decisions that helped to shape the direction and future path of the society.
- The other was the extremely high value that SPE's leaders attached to the society's journals, newsletters and magazines throughout the decades.

As a life-long business journalist, this warms my heart. While the stated function of the society – back then, as it is now – was to support and advance the profession of plastics engineering and the industry as a whole, it was clear the founding fathers understood very well the vital role of clearly communicating the group's mission and efforts to the masses, with great regularity.



Left: Cover of the June 1946 *SPE News* magazine. Right: The name changed in April 1949 to *Plastics Engineering* – for exactly one issue – but was shelved when a competitor complained of a copyright violation. That led to the birth the following month of the *SPE Journal*, which lasted for 24 years.

SPE's founder and first president, Fred O. Conley, wasted no time in May 1942 in launching the society's first publication, *The Commentator*, which he edited and published himself as a mimeographed bulletin.

The society began publishing its quarterly *SPE News-Bulletin* in 1945. The following year, that publication morphed into a magazine called *SPE News*. Its inaugural issue, in June 1946, bore a message from SPE President George W. Clark, dedicating the magazine to the more than 1,300 members, and stressing, "It is *your* magazine, fellow members, and its voice will be *your* voice ... representing the activities and developments of each Section, each Professional Activity Group, and each individual."

One particularly amusing incident occurred a few years later, when the group renamed *SPE News* as *Plastics Engineering*, and splashed the new name on a bright orange, all-text cover of the April 1949 issue. That new name stuck – for exactly one issue.

The next month's May 1949 issue bore a solid green cover with the publication name *SPE Journal* emblazoned across the front. Inside on the contents page, editor Dr. Jesse H. Day, writing from his office at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, offered the following explanation:

"The cover and name on last

month's magazine were liked and appreciated by most members, and your editor wishes they could be kept. But it seems we got our tail caught in the copyright screen door – someone else owns the name we chose. So for the moment we are without a title, but the next issue ought to see us all set.”

The council hastily voted 17-3 in favor of a new publication name and, in mid-1949, the *SPE Journal* was born. It had a good run, for the next 24 years. In that publication's own pages in June 1967 – on the occasion of SPE's 25th anniversary – former SPE President J. Harry DuBois wrote: “SPE history would be remiss if it did not include a word of praise for those who could not let the magazine die or be killed.

“Certainly,” he continued, “the *SPE Journal* has contributed and will continue greatly to the cross-fertilization of our technology and the growth of the industry. The link that it provides as a bond between sections and men has been a stabilizing influence and a leadership challenge. Since the basic goal of any engineering society is the communication of ideas, this is an all-important activity.”

Other writings in the society's archives went into excruciating detail about the publications, such as:

- *SPE Journal* in January 1951 published a new column, by A. Reynolds Morse – who later introduced injection molding to Van Dorn Co. and founded Injection Molding Service Co. in Cleveland. Called “Injection Molderscope,” the column ran in 63 consecutive issues (till January 1957).
- By 1952, SPE had struck agreements with “with every foreign magazine for exchange of publications and for mutual reprint and abstract rights. Immediately, a large number of *SPE Journal* articles began to appear in journals all over the world.”
- *SPE Journal's* single-copy price was 30 cents in January 1957, rose to 50 cents in March, and to 65 cents in June.
- That June 1957 issue was 152 pages – the largest ever to that point.



The *SPE Journal* ruled from mid-1949 till August 1973, when the society was finally able to adopt the name it wanted – *Plastics Engineering*.

- *SPE Journal* hired its first full-time editor, Charles Rhine, in May 1958, and paid him \$750 a month. Two months later, the publication hired its first advertising manager, Lee Noe.
- Other passages note changes in the cover design, the binding style, article index, staffing, and the types of content included in the publication's pages. All is meticulously documented.

Then, in August 1973 – no doubt after consulting with SPE's copyright lawyer – the society changed the name of *SPE Journal* to *Plastics Engineering*. Editor George Smoluk and advertising director H.J. Reid explained the move in a column to readers:

“This renaming is taking place for a very good reason – to better reflect the publication's editorial thrust of highlighting the most significant engineering and technical developments in the plastics field.” Together with a complete graphic redesign, the magazine touted a new monthly injection molding feature, and an every-other-month extrusion feature, plus “more articles of processing, on applications, on the economic and management aspects of plastics.”



And so this month *Plastics Engineering* itself celebrates 44 years under its current name, and in its current mission of keeping members and the industry informed. As with all publications, it has at times been a bumpy road, filled with financial stress and editorial challenges. But SPE's founding fathers would be pleased to see that this magazine perseveres, and continues to carry the torch that they lit 75 years ago.

SPE & SPI Didn't See Eye to Eye Back in the Formative Years

An initial turf war between associations didn't derail SPE's mission to serve the individual engineer and to advance plastics as a profession

By Robert Grace

Politics and turf wars provided just another early challenge to the fledgling Society of Plastics Engineers trade association in the years shortly after its founding in 1942.

The Society of the Plastics Industry Inc. – which last year rebranded itself as the Plastics Industry Association, or simply PLASTICS – was formed in 1937, five years before SPE was born, and some at SPI didn't take too kindly to the new kid on the block. SPI's members were companies, not individuals, and SPE staked its position from the beginning on

its organization being a voice for individual plastics engineers and professionals.

SPI, however, felt that SPE was encroaching on its territory and made it known that they felt there was no need for another plastics association in the United States. SPI felt SPE was detracting from SPI's National Plastics Exposition, which began in April 1946 with a 164-exhibit trade fair in New York City. And SPE felt SPI was treading on its turf when it organized technical plastics meetings.

A series of articles in *SPE News* documented the resulting discussions between the organizations. The two groups first met on the topic on April 25, 1946, in New York City to state their positions. In late 1946, the Plastic Materials Manufacturers Association (PMMA) offered, for the good of the industry, to serve as an intermediary in the negotiations, "with the object of developing a coordinated and unified engineering program between SPI and SPE, and of joining the two organizations into one."

Special committees from both bodies convened again that October in Chicago. SPI urged a merger of the two groups, under which SPE would become an engineering department of SPI, under the latter's control. A key sticking



J. Harry DuBois (left) succeeded Thomas E. Orr as society president in 1948. SPE archive photo

point to SPE's leaders was that individual engineers would have no voting rights under the proposed SPI plan.

SPE President Thomas E. Orr, wrote a lengthy article in the November 1947 issue of *SPE News*, pointedly titled "SPI vs. SPE - The Case for SPE." In it he recapped the discussions between the two groups over the past year, and made an argument for SPE remaining independent. Here were some of the key points he made:

- "SPE is an association of individual engineers. ... Each member votes."
- "SPI is a corporation. The control is not vested in the individual but is retained by approximately 600 company memberships."
- "If SPE and PMMA became departmental functions of SPI, then SPI would dominate the entire plastic field. Is this desirable? There is a friendly competition between SPE and SPI in programs. ... Competition is the mainspring of business life."
- "In no other industry does the Trade Association attempt to dominate the Engineering Society. Experience has deemed that this is unwise."
- And, in summary, Orr wrote: "The National Council and Advisory Board of SPE have the deep feeling that the independence and integrity of the engineer and of SPE should be maintained for the future development and good of Plastics."

And so, the 5-year-old SPE placed its stake in the ground, and proclaimed its intention to carry on as an independent association of individuals.

An unsigned document in SPE's archives, titled "History of SPE - 1947," states, "Exactly what went on is not a matter of public record nor the agreements reached except that it is known that SPE agreed not to have any more exhibits and SPI agreed to stay out of the technical meetings field."

Despite some bumps in the road, the two groups learned to co-exist, and even to partner to some degree. They came to an agreement for SPE to organize its annual technical program at the massive, triennial NPE 2009 trade show in Chicago - an arrangement that continues to this day, with



The first NPE show opened to the public in New York in 1946 and attracted 87,000 people. Above: William T. "Bill" Cruse headed SPI from 1937-67, founded NPE, and engaged in discussions with SPE's Thomas Orr in the late 1940s about how the two groups could best coexist.

SPI (PLASTICS) archive photos

ANTEC Orlando 2018 due to be collocated with NPE 2018 in Orlando, Fla., next May.

The associations' two leaders are keen to point out how the groups collaborate now in a variety of ways, including:

- PLASTICS underwrites the cost of dues for U.S. student-members of SPE;
- SPE underwrites the cost for PLASTICS' brand-owner members' SPE membership dues;
- PLASTICS and SPE support each other's technical conferences, including PLASTICS' recently successful "Re|focus Sustainability & Recycling Summit" and SPE's August 2017 "Injection Molding Innovations Conference," where each provided subject matter expert speakers for the other;
- PLASTICS' CEO William Carteau is a member of the SPE Foundation's board.

The forward-thinking Thomas Orr certainly was right about one thing when he stated in his November 1947 column, "It is a fallacy to think there is room for only one organization in a growing field as large as plastics." The industry's two largest groups have, without a doubt, proven that to be the case.