

## *Representing The Wiping Materials, Recycled Clothing, New Textile By Products and Fiber Industries*

### President's Column



#### **SMART: Nothing to Fear But Fear Itself**

*By SMART President Bill Schapiro*

A few years ago, a list of our greatest fears was published in the national media. At top of the list was the fear of public speaking, right there AHEAD of the fear of death. This led one popular comedian to remark, that most

people would rather be in the coffin than to be the one giving the eulogy for the person IN the coffin!

And that was how I felt (and still do to some degree!) about public speaking, about five years ago when some SMART “old timers” called to convince me to become Vice President and then President of this great organization.

The nominating committee representatives pushed hard even as I threw out every conceivable excuse I could not to take on this responsibility.

Eventually, I decided to face my irrational fears, I joined the well-known public speaking and leadership organization “Toastmasters” and, while I don’t feel like JFK delivering his famous speech at the Berlin wall when I speak, I somehow have given quite a few little talks at the various regional and yearly conventions the past few years and spoken on subjects that I hope made members proud of their industry and what we do.

I am very thankful that I decided to take on the job and overcome my fears because this position has been one of the most rewarding endeavors in my life. And almost from the beginning, I noticed that when issues came up for SMART, my drive to attend to those issues was as strong as or even stronger than the drive to deal with my own company’s day to day challenges. What I came to realize is that I was given a real privilege to serve an industry that I love and

whatever accomplishments came my way over the past four and half years, the ones associated with SMART were the ones that gave me the most pleasure and sense of achievement.

I know when we meet in Chicago on August 3rd, that we will have an organization that is in great financial shape, one that has a terrific “division of labor” with Mary Ann Schilling taking care of members concerns and day to day activities, Dawnee Giammittorio providing administrative support, Jessica Franken heading up our own government relations department, and Peter Mayberry taking hold of the big picture of our industry as our Executive Director.

But leaving the details of what SMART has accomplished aside, I really do feel a sense of gratitude for having had this chance to serve an industry that is so unique. It doesn't lend itself to big conglomerates or multi-nationals because as Pietra Rivoli wrote in her great book, “The Travels of a Tee-shirt in the Global Economy,” this is a business of “personal relationships”, and “here finally is a global industry for the little guy.”

And that is exactly how I feel about this industry and the great organization that represents it. We are a group of 200 small but dynamic business owners, and we all need one another. SMART is all about combining our talent and energies and building the personal relationships that fuel this industry.

Although he doesn’t remember saying this, Sunny Hull of Mid-West Textile once said something to me that still resonates - “If SMART didn’t exist, I’d have to invent it !” As I become an ex-president in August at our Chicago convention, I am thankful to the group that conceived the idea of SMART more than 75 years ago, and as I leave office, I want to sincerely thank all our members for this great privilege to serve this truly amazing industry.