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The Whole World Was Harwood's Workplace

by Jim Curley

Mike Harwood began life as a Tarheel and ended it as a Globetrotter. It's not surprising that many of the tributes that his wife Renie received after Harwood's passing in mid-May were from industry representatives of overseas companies. Mike was truly a global leader.

From the beginning, it seemed fated to happen that way. Harwood started out his career as a box salesman for International Paper in Statesville, North Carolina, but soon enough, he and Renie were off to the U.K. to sell overseas. When Harwood joined Pratt Industries in the mid-1990s, he was Pratt's Director with global responsibility for containerboard. Nearly a half-century after his career began, Harwood was named Chairman of the World Containerboard Organization (WCO). Mike Harwood was truly a man of the corrugated and containerboard industries.

“Mike was a passionate proponent of the corrugated industry and his commitment and dedication didn't stop at the U.S. border,” said International Corrugated Case Association (ICCA) President Carl Bohm. “Mike was enthusiastic about our industry not only in North America but in Latin America, Europe and Asia. His col-

leagues also recognized his ability to deliver an impassioned, informative and entertaining speech. He was comfortable on stage in front of large audiences and as a result, he was often asked to speak at industry forums as a respected presenter with global views and expertise.

Mike's expertise and passion were always on display at each of the five ICCA-WCO Global Summits that he co-hosted since 2007 in Sydney, Australia,” Bohm added. “Mike was most proud of the 2015 Global Summit where it set a record attendance with more than 200 delegates from twenty-five countries representing the major

markets for containerboard and corrugated packaging around the world.”

“Our company lost one of its leaders...but the entire industry shares in this loss, because Mike was so widely respected,” said Pratt Industries' CEO Brian McPheely.

Giving Back

“Mike did so much for the industry at large. He was a terrific educator,” said Dan Brunton, Co-President of *Corrugated Today* magazine, jointly owned by Brunton Publications and N.V. Publications. “He was a

**Mike Harwood (1944-2015)**

regular fixture for us when we held the Torquay Corrugated Conference in the UK during the 1990s and early 2000s.

“Mike’s insight and knowledge, coupled with a wonderful stage presence and an abundant wit, made him the perfect speaker,” Brunton continued. “On several occasions, he was billed on the same speaker list as my father, and the delegates would refer to them as the Mike & Mike double act.”



Renie and Mike Harwood at the Sydney ICCA Conference in 2007.

AICC President Steve Young remembers Harwood’s early contributions to the International Corrugated Packaging Foundation (ICPF), an organization set up to train and educate the next generation of industry professionals. “Back in 1987 we started a ‘lecture series,’ a concentrated, two-day crash course about the containerboard and corrugated business,” Young remembers. “Mike was with IP at the time, and we had a packed lecture hall at Michigan State’s School of Packaging. His hour-long presentation was a history of graphics in our business. Using a series of slides, he showed pictures of every kind of box on the market up to that point.”

Harwood’s thirst for knowledge and information remained unquenched throughout his career. Klaus Speilmann, Director of WCO, noted. “Mike’s contribution to WCO was enormous. He initiated the ‘WCO Containerboard Report,’ the ‘Review of the Chinese Recovered Paper Imports’ and the ‘Outlook for Containerboard Markets.’ Further on, Mike initiated the publication of the ‘WCO Newsletter’ and the ‘WCO Bulletin’ on a periodic base. These publications have become a good source of information in the containerboard industry and are read all over the world. The ‘WCO Brochure’ (for prospective members) is another document that also carries Mike’s signature.”

“He was most at home on the global stage with WCO and ICCA,” AICC’s Young added. “He saw the potential for combining forces to advance the industry globally, and his efforts have created what we now say is a globally connected business – from mills to box plants – through the work of these two organizations.”

Hollywood Harwood

“From the very beginning, Mike had flair,” said Jack O’Connor, who worked with Harwood in the early days with IP. “He would walk into a room, with that big shock of blond hair, blue eyes, dressed to the nines with his customary pocket hankie, and make an impression on everyone he met – an impression that would usually last a lifetime. Mike became ‘Hollywood Harwood’ to everyone who knew him.”

The world was Mike’s stage. Harwood’s ICPF slide presentation on box types almost three decades ago is still fresh in Steve Young’s mind, “I remember he even made sure the lights were dimmed just before his presentation,” Young recalled. “Someone remarked after the day’s events that the sessions, particularly Mike’s, was like a ‘Hollywood production.’ ”

But Harwood was no “song-and-dance” man. He was a serious professional. “Working for Mike was tough,” remembered O’Connor of the IP years. “And I can tell you from personal experience, we were all better people for it. His work ethic was simply unmatched. While he expected a lot from those around him, he never asked anyone to do more than he was willing to do himself.”



Dermot Smurfit, Harwood’s predecessor as Chairman of the WCO, termed Mike an “ambassador” for those in paper packaging.

Hard work remained a constant throughout his career. Harwood was a key factor in the meteoric rise of Pratt Industries’ growth in the U.S. market. During Mike’s tenure with Pratt, the company grew from the 46th biggest box producer in the U.S. to the fifth. “He was one of the driving forces behind Pratt’s many successes over the past 20 years through his unsurpassed work ethic and dedication,” Pratt Industries’ McPheely noted.

All In For The Industry

Like Harwood, FBA President Dennis Colley also had a long career with International Paper. “Mike was not only a colleague in the industry, but also a personal friend,” Colley said. “Mike was also an engaged member of the FBA Board and one of our biggest advocates. He will be missed.”

“He was a great enthusiast for the work not only of WCO but also of the other institutions of our industry

such as ICCA and the AF&PA and used these organizations to forward the cause of paper packaging whenever and wherever he could," remembered Dermot Smurfit, Mike's predecessor as Chairman of WCO. "He was true ambassador for all of us whose living depends on containerboard and corrugated containers."

Harwood knew an industry had to recruit and train talent. "Mike was a long-time supporter of ICPF and its work to bring young new graduates into the corrugated industry," ICPF President Richard Flaherty said. "His support of ICPF's annual Holiday Weekend in New York fundraiser and its opening reception helped ICPF build the weekend into the event it is today. On a personal level, Mike also was a very special friend."



Mike Harwood, during one of his many industry presentations.

"Mike was a wonderful friend to AICC and inde-

pendents," Steve Young said. "He was a frequent speaker at our national and regional meetings, and last year, at our first Emerging Leaders' field trip. His message was always the same: We have a wonderful industry, a wonderful product serving our customers and making life better for everyone."

A Friend To Many

Throughout his career, Harwood was a true team builder, O'Connor noted in his eulogy last week, "Mike mentored his people, he pushed them, he encouraged them, he opened career doors for them when they needed help...he supported them. He valued his friends like no one I have ever seen."

"I think I'll remember Mike most as someone who really nurtured friendships," added O'Connor. "Mike left International Paper in 1995. But he never wanted to forget the good times and the great friendships that he made in those 28 years. And so Mike created the XIP Society...a group of old friends...business associates, with the sole purpose of staying in touch. We still meet every year, and people fly in to Atlanta from all over the country to spend a day re-living old stories and renewing old friendships. We miss him already."

Remembering Mike Harwood

by Jim Curley

The older I get, the more I believe that there are no coincidences in life. The day I learned of Mike Harwood's death, I started reading a book titled *Curiosity*. Written by Ian Leslie, the book argues that true curiosity, the sustained quest for understanding that begets insight and innovations to advance our world, is endangered by the digital age. The Internet provides easy answers, but does it promote a process that leads to investigation, data gathering, experimentation and finally answers? In other words, the hard stuff.

As I continued to read, my mind kept jumping between thoughts of Mike and the ideas expressed in *Curiosity*. I think the book helped me to crystalize my thoughts about Mike, and I began to think about Mike as "a curious man." Not in the pejorative of "curious" as a synonym for "weird," though Mike had some quirks - he'd dress "to the nines" for an event, then complete his wardrobe with loafers and no socks. Or he'd talk in a mixture of High Point, North Carolina (his hometown) and Highgate, London, as when he'd tell me, "I think there's a good *chaunce* that might happen, *Jimbo*."

Through the years I knew Mike, I admired his curious mind. That quality made him an outstanding salesman, a brilliant strategist, a terrific "hunter and gatherer" of industry information, and a wonderful friend. He cared about people and their opinions, and who wouldn't want to be friends with such an upbeat guy!

Mike Harwood had a generous heart as well. He was sought after as an industry speaker at association meetings and seminars, both in North America and overseas, because he was so willing to share both data he had compiled and his valuable observations on the industry he loved. Personally, I was able to see some of the most advanced containerboard and corrugated machinery in action because Mike paved the way for me to enter Pratt Industries' facilities.

Mike had fabulous years with International Paper and Pratt Industries, but I maintain that the pinnacle of his career was his recent, if all-too-brief work with the World Containerboard Organization. This post enabled him to share the fruits of his curiosity with industry leaders from around the globe. His energy seemed renewed even as he began to battle the final stages of his illness. In the athletic sense of the word, Mike Harwood was a "gamer" to the end. Earlier this year, scant weeks after he suffered a fractured hip, Harwood was off to Taiwan to help convene the most recent ICCA/WCO Global Summit. Duty called, and, as always, Mike answered.

In the obituary that Mike Harwood's family released, it was noted that one of his pleasures was "spending memorable beach time with his grandchildren." I'd say to them, "The ocean is a place that can excite great curiosity. I'm sure you spent many happy hours on the Kiawah beaches with a wonderful grandfather and a curious human being. Treasure those memories."



OUR FRIEND
MIKE HARWOOD
1944-2015

