

***“Did You Know!”*** is a series of interesting events and changes to the ISBT and the beverage industry. If you have an ISBT insight or a “Fun Fact”, send it in to [tom@isbt.com](mailto:tom@isbt.com)

## **Society of Soft Drink Technologist (SSDT)**

**1953 - 1997**

**“Bringing Order to the Industry”**



As we look forward to celebrating the Society’s 70<sup>th</sup> “Platinum Anniversary” year in 2023, it is appropriate to reflect on why the Society of Soft Drink Technologist (SSDT) was initially created, and how it continues today in its current form, the International Society of Beverage Technologist (ISBT).

By the late 1940s, the carbonated beverage industry in the U.S. had shown rapid growth from a century earlier. In 1850, there were 64 bottling plants. Ten years later, the number was 123, which grew to 387 in 1870, 512 in 1880, 1337 in 1890, finally reaching a peak in 1930 when 8,000 plants were producing. By 1953, the industry was reduced to 5,905 plants with sales of \$1.1 billion, and a per capita of 177.5 @ 8 oz servings. There were no canned soft drinks, no one-trip bottles and no pre-mix tanks. Coca-Cola was sold only in 6.5 oz returnable bottles and beverage production companies were called “bottlers” as they only produced bottled products.

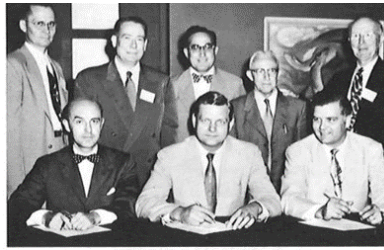
The carbonated beverage industry, known as “soft drinks”, was a Tower of Babel. A sugar conference in San Francisco left attendees even more confused after definitions, specs, etc., were contradicted by various presentations. Beverage production, sales, and direct store deliveries were primarily controlled by franchise companies known as “bottlers” (using glass returnable bottles as their main packaging), and many were family owned. Franchise companies had their own financial, marketing, and technology needs, which did not necessarily match those of the brand companies. Brand companies were numerous, and many bottlers had franchises from several brand companies, which led to competing specifications, corporate language differences, equipment capability needs, and multiple brand visits and inspections. Many brands were regional; Dr Pepper was dominated by Texas, Oklahoma, and Rome, GA. These competing specs and languages were a nightmare to the supplier base, which was also sometimes regional.

Brand companies of the 1950s era included:

- **Colas:** Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Royal Crown (RC), Double Cola, Mr. Cola, Chero-Cola, and Sun Drop (a cola with no caramel coloring).
- **Unique:** Dr Pepper and Yoo-Hoo Chocolate
- **Root Beer:** Hires, A&W, Barq’s, IBC, Frostie, and Dad’s.
- **Citrus / Lemon Lime:** 7-Up, Bubble Up, Upper 10, and Squirt
- **Ginger Ale:** Buffalo Rock Ginger Ale, Canada Dry, Verners, America Dry, and Schweppes
- **Flavors:** Crush, Nehi, Big Red, Grapette, NuGrape, Cheerwine, Sunspot, Squeeze, and Royal Palm
- **Multi-Flavor:** Shasta and Faygo

In the late 1940s, several attempts had been made to start an organization that could provide common guidelines and approaches to the industry. In 1953, Harry Korab of the American Bottlers of Carbonated Beverages (ABCD) sent out a letter to industry leaders, hoping to create an organization for the mutual discussion of technical problems and projects. 47 people answered to commit. The group was comprised of 12 beverage brand producers and leading equipment

suppliers such as Meyer, Crown, and Ladewig, along with a diverse group of suppliers such as Virginia Dare, Diversity, Werner Jenkinson, Liquid Carbonic, and Pfizer.



**HEAD TRADE'S NEW TECHNOLOGISTS' SOCIETY . . .**  
Officers and Directors of the newly formed Society of Soft Drink Technologists are shown above. Seated, left to right: John M. Sharf, Armstrong Cork Co., First Vice President; J. F. Hale, Nohi Corp., President, and Harry E. Korab, Technical Service Director of A.B.C.B., Secretary-Treasurer. Absent at photo-time was Stephen J. Gullo, Pepsi-Cola Co., Second Vice-President. Standing: Directors J. T. Skinner, The Grapette Co.; W. E. Dimmeck, National NutGrape Co.; A. J. Granata, Pure Carbonic Co.; W. S. Cooper, Geo. J. Meyer Mfg. Co.; and Pannill Martin, Cloverdale Spring Co.  
August, 1953 National Bottlers' Gazette

### The Initial Officers and Directors of the SSDT in 1953

The first meeting of the SSDT took place in Washington, D.C. on June 30, 1953. This group set the objectives of the Society:

- A. To promote development and dissemination of the knowledge of the art, science, and technology of soft drink production and utilization, on a nonprofit, professional basis.
- B. To afford opportunity for the discussion of matters of interest, and to establish organized, special study of problems.
- C. To promote, assist, and encourage research in any current technological problems.
- D. The Society shall not endorse or approve any brand product or the product of a specific manufacturer.
- E. Membership in the new Society was described and limited as follows: Membership shall be open to any person actively engaged in the scientific or technical phases of production, research, or quality control in the soft drink industry.

They also set up safeguards in the constitution / bylaws:

- 1) To keep your Society active and alive, your Program Committee is always the current officers of the Society.
- 2) Papers are screened each year to keep them on a technical level. Selling and promotion of products is not a part of this convention.
- 3) Company donations are neither solicited nor accepted by the Society for research, cocktail parties, luncheons or similar activities. From the very beginning, it has been requested that no company hold open house at the SSDT convention.
- 4) No trade secrets are ever requested or expected. In fact, your Society was so careful on this point that in 1954, as papers were being presented on "Bottle Washing Compounds," as each speaker explained his particular the products, his competitors were asked to leave the meeting room. Perhaps this was being overly-cautious!

These requirements are still in place today, 70 years later. Harry Korab became the first Executive Director (ED) and was the only paid employee of the SSDT.



After the 1953 inception meeting, the Society began having meetings each year, dubbed simply "The Annual Meeting" of the Society.

At the time, a 1 million case plant would cost around \$500,000 to operate, a Direct Store Delivery (DSD) truck would be small with shelves to allow access to the product, and the SKU mix was tiny. Beverages in vending machines sold for a nickel each.



Membership grew rapidly from those 47 in 1953; in 5 years it had grown to 192; in 10 years to 360; and in 15 years to almost 550 members. It reached a high of 1,000 members in the early 2000s.

By the 1970s, the 3-day format used today of morning general sessions and afternoon technical committee meetings was standard practice.

Technical Committee meetings were considered to be the backbone of the Society, where the work of the Society was conducted. The SSDT (and the ISBT) would add new committees as needed to support the industry, and would combine committees when necessary. Committee meetings could be exciting, as the technical experts of the industry debated guidelines, specifications, and best practices. Recognized world-wide industry experts on water, Harry DeLong of Pepsi and Brannon Wilder of Coca-Cola would have lively debates and disagreements on water processes and requirements.

Committees performed a valuable service to the industry, creating guidelines / best practices for the changing technology. The Can and End Committee was fundamental in creating guidelines and best practices in the late 1950s and early 1960s as cans became a major package. The Water Committee tackled the trihalomethanes (THM) and began the movement from flocculation systems to ion exchange to RO. In the late 1970s, HFCS 42 became widely used, and HFCS 55 was common by the mid-1980s, completely replacing invert sugar in the CSD industry. The Sweetener Committee began developing specifications for HFCS, and in 5 years of coordination, discussion, and influencing with the supplier base, the committee's specs became the industry standard.

In 1980 in Puerto Rico, President Tony Meushaw gave a sugar presentation at a technical conference. This led Tony and Harry Korab to meet with Carmen Gonzalez of Caribbean Refrescos (a subsidiary of Coca-Cola) and form a Puerto Rico Chapter of the SSDT in 1982, which became the SSDT's first regional meeting.

In 1992, after serving for 30 years, Harry Korab retired as SSDT's Executive Director. Tony Meushaw, who had worked for Harry earlier in his career and was currently a VP of Operations for a "bottler", became the new Executive Director. Tony began work to modernize the SSDT to reflect the growing manufacturing technology, the rapid change of IT / laptops, the consolidation of many independent bottlers (Coca-Cola Enterprise / Pepsi Bottling Group), and the practices of the SSDT.



By 1997, the SSDT had published 650 papers (presentations at the Annual Meeting of the SSDT were referred to as "papers").

Also in 1997, the Circle of Honor (COH) Award was created and presented to Harry Korab and Charles Scruggs. Charles was like an assistant to all ED's, especially at BevTech and InterBev (NSDA Annual Meeting trade expo) shows. He was the very first officer to work a conference registration desk and helped get this process started. He was also the historian of the Society. Charles was always there, always available, and always willing to help. He was a huge supporter of SSDT/ISBT and all of its policies. He is a Past President and was Chair of the Can and End Technical Committee.

The SSDT was formed primarily as a carbonated beverage, U.S. based organization, but began to expand internationally. On Monday morning, prior to the business meeting, an international forum session was held to discuss and present non-U.S. technology. Hosted by long time members Harry DeLong (President & COH Awardee) and Bob D'Amato (President & COH Awardee), it featured guest speakers, such as the President of Coca-Cola for Japan. 1998 was the last session of the International Forum.

In the 44 years of the SSDT, the Annual Meeting was held in 26 cities, with Ft. Lauderdale, Hollywood, Orlando, and Phoenix having hosted the most times.

Next Month in "Did You Know": Why the change to International Society of Beverage Technologist?

- **Interested in the beverage industry?**
  - Join the [ISBT!](#)
  - Interest in learning more about beverage technology, take a course at the [Beverage Institute](#).