



NAED Annual Meeting Award Recipients

ROBERT LEMMAN BUILT A SMALL, FAMILY-OWNED COMPANY INTO A MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR FAMILY-OWNED EMPIRE, LOBBIED WASHINGTON ON BEHALF OF ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTORS EVERYWHERE, AND SPENT YEARS WORKING TO BETTER NAED. THIS YEAR, THE ASSOCIATION GIVES BACK BY AWARDING LEMMAN ITS MOST DISTINGUISHED HONOR, THE ARTHUR W. HOOPER AWARD.

BY AMY ZIMMERMAN

PHOTO BY PAUL BODY



WHEN YOU ASK his colleagues about Robert Lemman, chairman of the board of North Coast Electric in Bellevue, Wash., one thing becomes clear: This is a businessman who understands how his industry works. “Bob has a great vision about the trends affecting our business and has always been open and willing to discuss issues that face our industry.

A lifetime of

ACHIEVEMENT.



NAED Annual Meeting Award Recipients

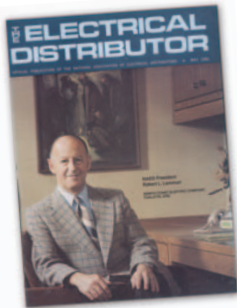
Continued from page 33

His understanding of how our industry works is second to none," said Fran Piscitelli, senior vice president of sales and service for Osram Sylvania. "I enjoy working with Bob because he has a great feel for the industry and the ability to articulate his insights. Plus, he's fun to be with."

tribution, from the people at the sales counter to delivering the products to running a successful distributorship," said Jim Newton, former president of Sales Tech, a marketing services company. "He understands the real world as well as anyone I've known."

For his outstanding service to the

with its highest honor, the Arthur W. Hooper Award. This award is given to an individual who has served the industry in an outstanding and unselfish way during a long and illustrious career in the distribution of electrical goods. The award will be presented at NAED's Annual Meeting in Orlando, Fla., during the Opening General Session on Monday, April 24.



"WHEN HE WAS THE CHAIRMAN OF NAED IN 1980, HE CHANGED THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE CONFERENCES. WE KNEW WE WERE THERE TO WORK, FOCUS ON PROFITABILITY, AND MOVE THE BALL FORWARD."

—Bob Murphy, senior group vice president, Hubbell Wiring Systems

"He just seems to have such a connection to the real world, the big picture—not only financials, but also all of the steps involved with electrical distri-

industry and to NAED—serving as president of the association and as chairman of the NAED Education & Research Foundation—NAED is honoring Lemman

A history of success

Lemman's career began as a manufacturer rep. In 1964 he moved to electrical distribution when he went to work for Consolidated Electrical Distributors (CED). He joined CED as a vice president and division manager of its then-new Pacific Northwest division and launched the company's first presence in the Pacific Northwest with the purchase of Stubbs Electric in Portland, Ore.

During his tenure with CED, Lemman worked his way up to president/CEO and led the company through the acquisition of more than 50 independent electrical distributors, as well as moving it into the Southwestern and Southeastern regions of the United States.

In 1974, Lemman was presented an

Continued on page 36

NAED Honorary Life Award recipients

NAED's Honorary Life Awards, which recognizes retiring distributors who have made exceptional contributions to the channel during their careers, will be presented during NAED's Annual Meeting at the Chairman's Ball on April 25.



• **William Curley** is the retired vice president of sales and strategic alliances for Republic Conduit. With nearly 50 years of industry experience, he held positions with various companies—including Republic Steel, LTV Steel Tubular Products, and Maverick Tube. He was awarded Manufacturer of the Year by NEMRA in 1997.



• **Donald March** is the retired president, chairman, and owner of Seaman's Supply, Manchester, N.H., one of the largest independent electrical distributorships in the state. During his 40-year career, March served on

the NAED Board of Directors for eight years. He served as vice president of the NAED Eastern Region and participated in the planning committee for the New England Regional Meeting. March also participated in recruiting new members to NAED through the Marketing Committee and served on several manufacturer-distributor councils. Additionally, March was active in the Rotary Club of Manchester, N.H., and the Shrine of North America.



• **William Trotman**, retired president and CEO of Ferraz Shawmut, is a 38-year veteran of the industry. He served on the NAED Manufacturers' Advisory Committee from 1992-1993 and again from 2003-2005 and was involved with the IMARK Advisory Council and the A-D Advisory Council. In 1996, he received the NAED Award of Merit for his outstanding service to the organization.



NAED Annual Meeting Award Recipients

Continued from page 34

opportunity he couldn't pass up: the chance to own his own company. Lemman acquired North Coast Electric (NCE), which at the time had service centers in Portland and Seattle, with annual sales of \$5 million. Today, NCE has 32 locations in six states and annual sales of \$280 million. It is now one of the largest independent electrical distributors in the Northwest.

"My dad is very aggressive," said Pete Lemman, Bob's son and president of NCE. "He likes to work hard and play hard. He's smart, he understands our industry, and he works diligently on the numbers."

In the 1970s and 1980s, Lemman was very active in NAED, serving on its executive committee for eight years. He oversaw *TEDE Magazine* for the executive committee during two of those years and served as chairman of NAED from 1980 to 1981. He also chaired the search committee to find a replacement when director Arthur Hooper retired. During the early 1970s, as price controls were running rampant, Lemman lobbied Washington on behalf of NAED and electrical distributors everywhere.

"Bob worked hard for NAED," said John Walter, CEO of Walters Wholesale Electric in Signal Hill, Calif. "He was very active, attending meetings and serving on committees. He thought it was a marvelous organization. Bob is a highly intense, motivated person with a dynamic personality. He really got things done. I've never seen anyone on the move as much as Bob."

"Bob had a tremendous impact on NAED, especially on the relationship between distributors and suppliers," added Bob Murphy, senior group vice president, Hubbell Wiring Systems. "When he was the chairman of NAED, he changed the atmosphere of the conferences. We knew we were there to work, focus on profitability, and move the ball forward. The thing I remember most is how he increased communication among distributors and suppliers."

One of Lemman's most notable contributions to NAED was a result of his passion for education. While serving as



WORDS FROM LEMMAN'S COLLEAGUES

"Bob is selfless in his willingness to share his knowledge and insights of our industry. I think Bob epitomizes the qualities of an ideal executive. This industry is so strong because we have quality entrepreneurs like Bob who are driven to succeed."

—**Fran Piscitelli, senior vice president of sales and service for Osram Sylvania**

"From my father, I learned to recognize the value of our people as the most important aspect we have to our business and recognizing the value of our vendors. He came out of the manufacturing business and always recognized the value of having a good relationship with our manufacturers."

—**Pete Lemman, president, North Coast Electric Company**

"Bob is a personable guy, tough but very likeable. People take to him right away because of his dynamic personality. Yet he is a tough, demanding businessman. He made North Coast Electric what it is today—a great company."

—**Bob Murphy, senior group vice president, Hubbell Wiring Systems**

chairman of the NAED Foundation, Lemman was instrumental in the development of the Electrical Products Education Course (EPEC). This training program, which became NAED's flagship course, is known throughout the electrical industry as a symbol of quality and a gauge of professional competency. Since its inception, the course has trained more than 6,000 graduates.

"I served as chair of the Education Foundation and found at the time they had a lot of good speakers and programs, but didn't have any real educational programs for how to run a business and expose new people to the business," said Bob Lemman. "The board I served with decided that more needed to be done. We needed a formalized program."

Lemman teamed with Jim Newton and Sales Tech to develop and write the program, which became EPEC.

"To try to put your arms around all of the products a distributor sells is challenging. Trying to learn about them through the occasional sales meeting or

with a rep demonstrating a single product isn't enough. We wanted to put a program together to demonstrate the interrelation of products," said Newton.

Newton spent several years working with NAED to develop EPEC. He was impressed with Lemman's dedication to the project.

"Bob immediately understood this and thought it was a great concept. He recognized the need for training people and realized what an overpowering challenge it would be because of the thousands of products and technical aspects involved. He endorsed it immediately and helped us get the project up and running. He became the CEO of the whole project," said Newton.

Once the program was completed, the board faced the challenge of selling it to NAED membership.

"It became evident that this was a big, monumental program cost-wise. If it didn't fly, NAED couldn't afford it. So the board and I decided to take on the re-

Continued on page 38



NAED Annual Meeting Award Recipients

Continued from page 36

sponsibility. If it wasn't a success, somehow the six of us would make sure NAED didn't go under. We bet the farm on EPEC, and luckily it was a winner," said Bob Lemman. "As soon as we got the initial units, I went to the regional and national meetings myself and got commitments from people to order the program. Once people saw it, they were so impressed that it was amazing how easy it was to sell. We had orders for more than 500 units right away."

Throughout his career, Lemman has adhered to the belief that people are a company's most important asset. "We built North Coast Electric from two branches to 32. None of that could

have happened unless we had good people," he said. "I spend a lot of time with our people, explaining the philosophy of what we do. Two years ago I

"HE LIKES TO WORK HARD AND PLAY HARD. HE'S SMART, HE UNDERSTANDS OUR INDUSTRY, AND HE WORKS DILIGENTLY ON THE NUMBERS."

—Pete Lemman, president, NCE

visited every branch to speak to the employees, call on customers, and take the employees out to dinner. It was one of the

most fun things I've done in my career."

The Arthur W. Hooper award is especially meaningful to Lemman because of its namesake, the former NAED executive director.

"I am totally thrilled and very honored, particularly because Arthur is a close friend," said Lemman. "We worked together on a lot of projects. When he decided to retire, I chaired the search committee to find his replacement. The award itself is very touching. The fact that it is given in Arthur's honor makes it even more meaningful to me." ■■■

Zimmerman can be reached at 314-647-1728 or amyzim@swbell.net.

NAED Annual Award recipients

The NAED Annual Awards will be presented at the Opening Session of NAED's Annual Meeting on April 24.



• **Richard Angel**, senior vice president of Lutron Electronics, will receive the 2006 NAED Associate Award. The award is given to an individual associated with an electrical manufacturing company who has made outstanding contributions to NAED and the electrical industry.

During his 27 years in the industry, Angel has held a variety of leadership roles in the industry: He has served on the NAED Manufacturers' Committee, worked with the NAED Education & Research Foundation, and participated as a manufacturer's representative on NAED's Your Emerging Talent (YET) Committee. Throughout his many efforts, Angel's sage advice, good humor, and forward thinking have been appreciated by his peers.



• **Kathleen Ellison**, president/CEO of B&K Electric Wholesale, City of Industry, Calif., will receive the 2006 NAED Distinguished Service Award. The award is given to an individual in recognition of outstanding and dedicated service to NAED and the electrical industry.

Throughout her 26 years in the industry, Ellison's contributions to the industry include her service as Western

Region Vice President and Council member, NAED Education & Research Foundation Chair, and a member of the NAED Board of Directors. Currently, she is chairperson of the NAED Women in Industry group and participates on the association's Membership Recruitment Committee and Channel Advantage Partnership. Additionally, Ellison's company received the A-D Marketing Award in 2003, and she was named Christian Businessperson of the Year in 2004 by Azusa Pacific University's School of Business and Management.



• **Timothy Powers**, chairman, CEO, and president of Hubbell Incorporated, will receive the 2006 NAED Award of Merit. The award is given to an individual in the electrical manufacturing business who has been exceptionally active in promoting and supporting the wholesale electrical distribution industry.

Powers has more than 30 years of experience in manufacturing. He has dedicated much time and effort as the chairman of IDEA, is active with the NAED Education & Research Foundation, and has served as a member of the Foundation's Blue Ribbon Panel. He is also the chairman of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Manufacturer's Alliance/MAPI, an executive development and business research organization.