



The Soapbox is a communication forum for AATCC members to discuss, from their own perspectives, matters of interest and importance in the textile industry.

## SOAPBOX: Phil Brown, Science Fact Fan and Science Fiction Fan, is in The Outer Limits...

**Do not adjust your monitor (or magazine) we are controlling the vertical and the horizontal....**

### Myths, Legends, Textiles and Life

The myth about bald men being bald is incorrect. I have plenty of hair, I just don't have as many fibers on my *head* as I used to.

The myth about textiles is that they are disappearing. But are they? The truth about the textile industry is that it has always moved toward those parts of the world where it could operate for the least cost. Whether the textile industry will survive as people know it is not an issue.

IT WILL.

One should ask, "What can textiles become in an economy with the strongest collection of innovators, scientists, and academics backed by \$\$\$?" Think big, think fast, move on, but do not lie down and *die*.

### Wisdom from the Stars

**On Dying:** Life is too short to figure everything out. Enjoy it while you can.

**On Dyeing:** Talk to God. God only knows what happens most of the time.

**On Research:** If you can start it and finish it in six months, it's not worth doing. On the other hand, if you think you might have something solid in say five to 10 years, go for it.

TAKE RISKS!

### The Twilight Zone

**On Size and Scale:** These days everyone seems obsessed with how big or how small things really are. But you know the saying....

...Wait! I hear something. Hang on—I thought this was the Outer Limits, who opened the door to The Twilight Zone?

*Quantum Mechanics* whispers, "Pass me the very small wrench please."

"Where is it?" I reply.

"I'm uncertain," comes the answer.

*Nanotechnology* squeaks, "Pass me the small, adjustable wrench please."

"Which one?" I reply.

"The one that goes from 10 to 1,000nm," it replies. "Here," says Nano, "I'll draw a cartoon of it for you so you will know what to look for."

*Microfiber* says, "Touch me and look at me," and I am impressed.

*Fiber* shouts, "What do you want me to be?"

I say, "What can you do?"

"Almost anything, but you need to talk to my friend, *Textiles*."

*Textiles* proclaims, "You finally found your solution."

"What are you?" I ask.

"I am here. I can be anything. Dream it and together we can build it. You can dream, can't you?"

"What about the other guys?"

"Oh they are important, but I can be all of those and so much more."

"Talk to me. I'm ready to listen."

### Beam me up Scotty!

Back on planet Earth....

### Perception is not reality

So there I am at a formal dinner with professors from different departments and a largish number of high school teachers—around 30 or so. I had been working with the teachers on developing fiber science experiments that they could do in a classroom. They had been around to other departments, doing similar things. The ensuing conversation went something like this:

**Pompous Professor (PP):** "So what do you work on Phil?"

**Me:** "I work with synthetic fibers mainly."

**PP:** "You mean textiles."

**Me:** "Yes, I do some of that."

**PP:** "Well, that's just weaving isn't it, been around for thousand of years. (blah, blah, blah) Can't be anything new in that."

**Me, trying to change the subject:** "So, what department are you in?"

**PP:** "Materials."

**Me:** "Materials have been around even longer than textiles. Surely there is nothing new in that!" From that point onward we sword fight with words for 10 minutes.... What a waste of time!

It seems to me that because many people see fibers and textiles every day they assume that they must be very basic, or an easy topic, or they present nothing new, or that the field is not at all scientific. If only they knew.

With a little education, I think these skeptics would see that what we do is more akin to rocket science than the scathing "socks washing" perception of the misinformed, arrogant, and ignorant.

As always, improving education, conducting research, and creating new textiles are important missions.

I walk this route for one reason—to help another man think for himself.

The "music of our art" is roots based. We keep it real, but we revolutionize the world with our inventions.

I urge industrialists, technologists, technicians, students, professors, and clerics in our field to take great pride in the work that we all do and to take the time to explain to those around (and to those who will listen) exactly what it is we do.

Together we can do this—and we need to, in order to do the word "textiles" the justice it deserves.

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