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## AATCC: A Unique Role in Textile Wet Processing

By E. JAMES STAVRAKAS

**T**EXTILE executives concerned with the vitality of the wet processing industry are beset by a myriad of forces that impinge on the health and welfare of this business. Neutralizing the negative forces and enhancing the positive forces is one of the important responsibilities of the executive who deals with issues beyond today's crisis.

One of the positive forces that contributes to the vitality of the wet processing business is the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists. It is over 60 years old and virtually everyone in the business is familiar with it. But oftentimes we don't see the value, or we take for granted, the things we are familiar with. I would like, therefore, to focus attention for a moment on the unique role of AATCC with respect to the impact of its test methods on cost and profitability, its contribution to professional growth of the technical sector of the business, and its ability to serve the future needs of the industry.

### Test Methods

Perhaps the key activity which most people associate with AATCC is the development of test methods. Most executives would agree that it is nice that someone in the industry is concerned with test methods, but few would consider it a subject of great concern to them. And yet, the suitability, accuracy and reproducibility of these test methods has a significant impact on their business by virtue of the types of decisions that are made as a result of tests run in accordance with procedures provided by AATCC test methods.

Following are four potential decision making uses of these methods which illustrate the impact that these tests have on the profitability of the wet processing business:

(1) To a very large extent these test methods are the lubricants which help move goods into commerce. Increasingly, purchase contracts are specifying in detail the performance requirements that the manufacturer is expected to meet to satisfy the terms of the contract.

In both the domestic and international markets the acceptance or rejection of literally millions of dozens of finished textile products (apparel and soft home furnishings), as well as the associated

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volume of piecegoods, is determined by the results of AATCC test methods.

(2) AATCC tests are used as quality control tools to measure the lot-to-lot uniformity of the dyeing and finishing processes. Decisions to ship or rework are often based on results of these test methods.

(3) As analytical tools the tests are used in product development work, trouble shooting, evaluation of raw materials and in assessing the adequacy of production processes.

(4) Cost reduction studies associated with changes in chemicals and/or production systems are influenced by data developed by AATCC test methods.

One of the most dramatic examples of the impact of AATCC on the piecegoods and garment industry was the development of test methods for evaluation of permanent press garments. It is no exaggeration to state that this enormously profitable product concept could have been crippled by the lack of a uniform



E. JAMES STAVRAKAS, who is director of quality assurance for the J. C. Penney Co. in New York, this month begins his second term as AATCC president.

industry wide, accepted means of communicating and verifying the performance requirements of the piecegoods and garments sold under the banner of permanent press.

Clearly, the work of this association in developing and maintaining the best possible test methods has a pervasive and significant influence on the profitability of the wet processing industry.

Currently, the AATCC TECHNICAL MANUAL contains 119 test methods. There are about 1,000 people working in 51 committees in the development and updating of test methods. The costs related to the development of a typical test method by a committee of 20 people has been estimated to be \$350,000. Some test methods—such as colorfastness to xenon light—would approach \$1 million in terms of the time and people engaged in this activity.

This enormous voluntary effort, supported by the staff at the AATCC Technical Center, represents a significant return on investment for all corporate members.

### State-Of-The-Art-Technology

Another important activity of the association is the dissemination of technical information. No individual or organization has a monopoly on knowledge. Keeping abreast of the state-of-the-art is a serious responsibility of all professionals operating in the technical end of the business.

The association fulfills this important service, in part, through the distribution of a variety of publications including the monthly magazine TEXTILE CHEMIST AND COLORIST, books, reference works, monographs, reprints and proceedings of conferences and symposia.

The development and distribution of this important body of technical information is achieved through the efforts of some 500 people working through the publication and technology committees. This group of volunteers, supported by the AATCC staff, represents many sectors of the industry, and a broad range of disciplines and experience.

The technology committees and headquarters staff develop, promote and conduct workshops and symposia on topics of timely interest to various sectors of the industry. For the past several years their

programs have averaged about 12 workshops and symposia per year. About 700 people participated in these programs over the past 12 months.

Add to workshops and symposia the section and regional meetings, and the annual national technical conference, and it becomes very evident that the association provides abundant opportunities for professional enrichment of people in the technical areas of wet processing and related support industries.

#### Interaction Of Professionals

A not inconsequential dividend of participation in the activities of the association is the opportunity to interact and establish personal relationships with professionals from a variety of disciplines. This cross-fertilization of knowledge benefits the individuals and the industry.

In the final analysis, the past is history. The future is our concern. I believe the association is well positioned to serve the industry needs of the future. During the past year, in my travels to section meetings in various regions of the country, and in the meetings of the various research, administrative and council committees, I have been exposed to a level of progressive and dynamic thinking and activity that I have not experienced heretofore.

There is a tremendous awareness of the need to address substantive industry and association issues. The association has always had dedicated members serving in many capacities. But there is a new sense of urgency and willingness to exhibit reach in defining goals and action plans.

The physical facilities of the association's Technical Center in Research Triangle Park, N. C., are impressive. The 20,000 square foot building on a ten-acre lot houses outstanding laboratories,

offices and meeting rooms. From the executive director on down, the 22 employees of the association represent a significant asset to our industry.

A wet processing industry without this association is, in my view, unthinkable. AATCC serves the industry in a variety of important roles for which there are no practical or effective alternatives.

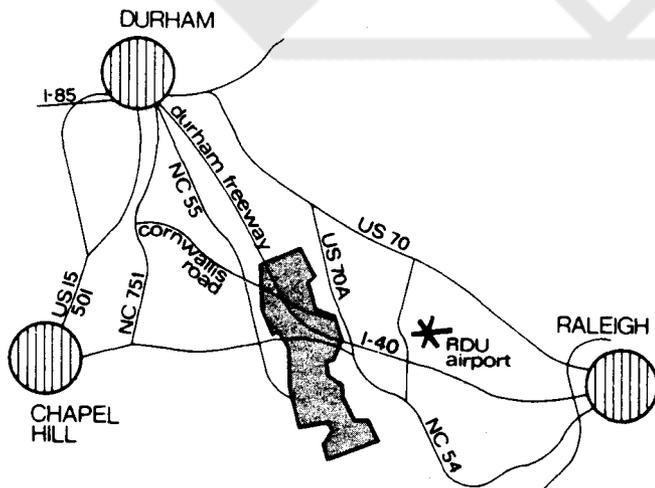
In a very real, bottom line sense, every corporate entity involved in the production and utilization of finished goods has a stake in the activities of AATCC. A short sighted, "Let The Other Guy Do It" approach simply does not serve anyone well.

#### Participation Is The Key

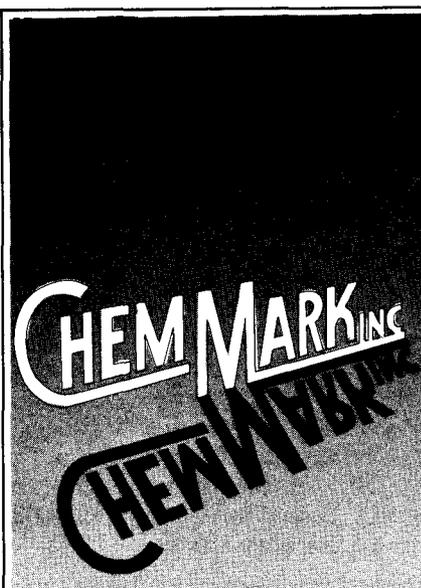
Obviously, we need the continued support of our current corporate and individual members. And we urge other corporate entities and individuals to join and participate. Participation is the key. AATCC exists by virtue of the income it derives from dues and other sources, but it lives through the participation of its membership.

The extent and intensity of that participation is only partially a result of the programs and activities sponsored by the association. A very significant factor, indeed the most compelling factor, is the active support and encouragement provided by the corporate executives and plant managers concerned with the health of our industry.

AATCC through its national and sectional officers, its research and technology committees, its headquarters facilities and staff is positioned to serve you, your company and the industry. The degree to which the association fulfills its mission to serve depends on you. Join. Participate. It is the best bargain in town.



AATCC is headquartered at Research Triangle Park, N. C., which is equidistant from three major universities: North Carolina State University at Raleigh, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University in Durham.



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