



## Advice & Counsel

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## A Tribute to "Mr. G"

In the March issue of *Plating and Surface Finishing*, you will find an extremely well written "In Memoriam" notice for one Mr. Simon Peter Gary, authored by Ms. Evelyne Hallberg of the Chicago Metal Finishers Institute. This notice goes a long way towards describing the kind of person and business man Mr. Gary was.

However, I feel the need to add to that notice my own personal account of my life with this man.

I first met Mr. Gary on a hot July day in an employment agency office in downtown Chicago in 1966. I was 18 years old and had recently graduated from Lane Technical High School. Without wandering too deep into my own life story, let's just say that at 18 I was a bit "lost." My mother could no longer survive as the sole support of my younger sister and I, so I was gently asked to go find a job (college was out of the question altogether).

Mr. Gary interviewed a number of candidates for a laboratory technician trainee job opening at Scientific Control Laboratories. I was told by the employment agency that there was little hope of getting this job because I was draft eligible and basically unqualified, but when Mr. Gary interviewed me, we made an immediate connection and I had the good fortune to be hired. Over the next few months, Mr. Gary would have short conversations with me, always gently nudging me to go to college (night school). My usual reply was that I did not have the money and I was going to be a "rock star," as I had formed a band that was going to compete with The Beatles.

He never gave up on me, but in 1968 he did threaten to end my employment if I did not get my butt into a school. He offered to pay the bulk of my tuition and book fees at Illinois Institute of Technology (80% as long as I got an A or a B, 50% for a C and Lord help me if I got worse than a C).

From 1968 to 1974, I worked full time and went to school until 9:00 PM at night



doing homework until 2:00 AM. Mr. Gary lent me his ear whenever I had problems at school or at work. We became close friends and I looked upon him as my father figure (my dad was in a mental institution). He attended my graduation, attended my wedding, promoted me to laboratory manager, "forced" me through grad school and attended that graduation as well. He was always "there" for me.

In the years I served as laboratory manager, I became keenly aware of Mr. Gary's charitable business practices. Whenever a job opening came up, Mr. Gary would interview dozens of applicants, always looking for the "lost lamb" that he could back onto its feet. He and I would argue over whom should be hired. I wanted the person I felt was more competent, while he wanted the person that desperately needed the job (in one case even though the person was color blind and was required to do titrations!). Guess who won those arguments!

While Scientific Control Labs was only a twelve-person company in 1969, Mr. Gary decided to start a profit sharing plan for his employees. The trigger to this was an older employee who had to retire from her position with the company for age related health reasons. A year later, Mr. Gary found

out that this employee was destitute, as her husband had no retirement funds and social security was not covering their expenses. Until she and her husband passed on, Mr. Gary personally sent a check every month to make sure she was OK.

In 1970 Mr. Gary introduced me to the American Electroplaters Society (now AESF Foundation). At meetings he would make sure I was introduced to everyone he knew (which was everyone). Mr. Gary, Paul Glab, Mr. Weldon (Bill) Crawford, Mr. R. Scott Modjeska and a few previous other officers of the AES Chicago Branch had made the Chicago branch one of the largest in the society and the most financially secure.

In the early 70s, Chicago platers were faced with new wastewater discharge regulations imposed by the local sewage treatment works. While the standards were "luxurious" by today's standards (think 10 ppm cyanide and 25 ppm total chromium), platers had no real idea how to comply with these new regulations. Mr. Gary, Dr. Clarence Roy and Dr. Leslie Lancy pioneered wastewater treatment methods for metal finishers.

I saw Mr. Gary forgive debts owed by metal finishers that could not afford technical help. One particular case was a three person (the 70-year old owner and his two employees) decorative chromium plating shop in Chicago. Mr. Gary and I spent two weeks with this man showing him how wastewater containing chromium could be economically treated in order to stay in business. Mr. Gary never sent the man an invoice.

In 1975, Scientific Control Labs was probably the smallest company in Chicago offering a comprehensive health insurance plan (80% coverage). The premiums cost Mr. Gary about 50% of his profits.

In 1980, Mr. Gary gave me the opportunity to buy into his company. We had become successful business partners and good friends over the previous 14 years. He would take my wife and me to dinner and

a show at the Goodman Theater regularly. He didn't "have to." He wanted to. When I had a daughter she could count on birthday and Christmas presents from "Mr. & Mrs. Gary."

I continued to be struck with his compassion for his fellow man, not realizing (because he kept it to himself) that he was a deeply religious person. I fondly remember a car trip he and I took from LA to San Diego one weekend before SUR/FIN. On the way, we stayed overnight in a modest motel outside San Diego. The next morning (Sunday) he asked if I wanted to go to the local church with him (he did not care what the denomination was). We went to the local church near the hotel and sat down in the empty church for the early service. Soon the church filled up with about 100 Korean children. We had stumbled into a Sunday school! Mr. Gary decided to stay throughout the service and even had a few laughs with the kids who thought we were quite a sight.

By 1986, I had bought 40% of Mr. Gary's company. The money for the purchase of stock came from the profits of the company which Mr. Gary could have kept

for himself, of course. Mr. Gary sold me all of the remaining shares while also holding my note, as no banker was going to lend me that kind of money. From 1986 until Mr. Gary retired at age 72 (1992), I had the (weird) pleasure of having my former employer be my employee!

After he retired, we continued to have lunch at one of his favorite "Bohemian" restaurants, and my family and I were frequently invited over to his house to be included with his own family gatherings, especially at Christmas time.

Mr. Gary was a leader in the metal finishing industry for 50 years, but more important he was a leader in life for over 90 years. Without his example and his determination to make something out of me, I would certainly have not had the life I have enjoyed and enjoy to this day.

Mr. Simon Peter Gary preferred that he be called "Si" by those knew him. Somehow, with all that history between us, I could not get "Si" out of my mouth easily. I would most often call him "Mr. G."

I hope he knew that when I called him "Mr. G," it was out of a combination of love and respect. **P&SF**

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## Test Your Plating I.Q. #460

By Dr. James H. Lindsay

### Surface finishing hodgepodge

1. In many plating processes, surface tension is reduced to increase wetting and thereby reducing deposit pitting. In hexavalent chromium plating, reducing surface tension is also critical to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. True or false. A stalagmometer is used to measure the internal stress of electrodeposits.
3. Anodizing in a standard sulfuric acid bath above the normal temperature range will produce a coating with what properties.
4. True or false. A list of metallic potentials in sea water is known as the Electromotive Series.
5. True or false. Glass bead blasting of steel results in virtually no metal loss.

**Answers on page 45.**

