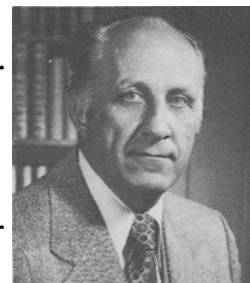


# Profile

KARL ZILCH



The first voice heard at the World Conference on Soaps and Detergents later this month in Montreux will be that of General Chairman Karl Zilch, calling the meeting to order. That seems only fitting as Zilch has patiently shepherded the program and steering committee through countless hours of meetings, telephone calls, and letter writing to produce a program that has attracted attention around the globe.

Registrations and inquiries have come from most of the major developed nations as well as from Surinam in South America, Rhodesia, and the Ivory Coast in Africa, Finland near the Arctic Circle, Iraq and Iran in the oil-rich Arab sphere, and from Japan and Australia in the Pacific. Total attendance is expected to be somewhere between 500 and 1,000, with registrations still flowing in steadily as of the August deadline for this issue of *JAOCs*.

Being general chairman for such a meeting means you start with an idea to hold a meeting and then build from there: when and where will the meeting be held, what's the purpose, who can help plan it, how should the program be structured, what topics should be covered and why, who are the experts on those topics, how much time should be allotted for each topic, how do you fit all the talks into the time available, and then, once the program is agreed upon, making sure final details are ironed out.

Why accept the task?

"Oh, I thought about it when I was asked," says Dr. Zilch. "There are a lot of people in that industry right here in Cincinnati (Procter & Gamble sits right across a railroad track from Emery), and the people in AOCS are nice to work with. Then, of course, you have to get permission from your firm."

Actually, Karl Zilch's involvement in soaps and detergents is almost accidental. As a youth in St. Louis, MO, he had thought about becoming a medical doctor. His father was an independent automobile serviceman, but an uncle was a dentist. When Karl Zilch enrolled at the University of Missouri in the late 1930s, it was with the idea of entering medicine.

But about halfway through his college career, the initial stages of World War II erupted. An ROTC student also, he decided it would be best to get some sort of degree as quickly as possible. He received his B.S. in chemistry in 1942, and soon found himself, as did many four-year ROTC graduates, enrolled at Officers Candidate School.

After completing OCS and several other Army Schools — "Sometimes I think I had more schooling in the Army than elsewhere" — Zilch was asked by his commanding officer if he would like to attend yet one more — pilot's training.

Lt. Zilch became a light plane pilot, flying "liaison" missions over enemy lines. He was in the famed Fourth Armored Division of General Patton's Third Army. His first combat experience was during the Battle of the Bulge. Twice the young pilot was shot down when his Piper Cub aircraft was jumped by enemy planes; both times he reached safe territory, but still carries some metal fragments in one hip from a shrapnel shell.

After hostilities ceased, being a pilot had some advantages, Zilch notes, as there were often higher-level brass needed to be flown to Paris or to other attractions.

In 1946, the young veteran decided to return to school. He wasn't the only one. He was admitted at the University of Missouri where he received his doctorate in organic chemistry in 1949, then took a job as a research chemist at the USDA's Northern Regional Research Center in Peoria.

He had accepted the post partially because it was close enough to St. Louis to permit him to return weekends to visit his ill mother. A co-worker at NRRC, Dolores Raleigh of Springfield, also traveled home frequently to see her parents. Karl would often give her a ride home. They discovered each other and many mutual interests. He and Dolores were married November 11, 1950, in Springfield, Illinois. Armistice Day marked the beginning of a happy marriage. Karl attributes much of his success to the help of Dolores and the inspiration of his close-knit family.

At NRRC, Dr. Zilch did basic studies in autoxidation of unsaturated fats, oils, and fatty acids; the fractionation of fats, oils, fatty acids, and fatty acid derivatives; and on by-products from these studies. Thus he sidled into one aspect of the soaps and detergents industry. He also became a member of AOCS at this time.

In 1955, he accepted a post at Emery Industries as a research chemist and group leader. "I've always wanted to be involved in research management and this looked like a good opportunity," he says.

Zilch has a deliberative, low-key approach to his undertakings. During planning sessions for the World Conference he seldom spoke except to introduce topics for discussion, but took careful notes on each person's comments.

"That's always been the way I work," he says. "I've always delegated as much as I could. The worst thing you can do is control someone too closely, not let him use his mind. I'll define what I want done, and then wait for the response, perhaps offering advice or suggestions after listening."

With regard to the World Conference, Zilch says he really didn't need to take an active role in planning discussions since "we had many of the top people in the industry there."

Dr. Zilch is now technical director of the fatty and dibasic acids groups at Emery. The proximity to Procter & Gamble, a major customer and also a competitor, is somewhat coincidental. "Both firms were founded back around 1840 as candle manufacturers, but as time passed, P&G decided to produce consumer products (soaps), while Emery took the route of being a supplier of chemicals to the industry."

As technical director, Dr. Zilch supervises work both on production and utilization of natural fatty acids. The uses are almost limitless — from surfactants in detergents to use in synthetic lubricants and cosmetics, as texturizers, emulsifiers, and on and on. Recently Emery entered an agreement with Liquichimica of Italy to market that firm's synthetic fatty acids from petrochemical stocks.

Dr. Zilch always appears unflappable, never seeming to be upset or angered. Not so, he says. He claims a long-standing tendency to being a perfectionist and being quick to anger when he felt something was not done as well as it could have been. He says he's mellowed somewhat, partially due to raising a family of five boys and two girls, ranging in

age from a high school sophomore to a 26-year-old son who is an architect. At one point, he notes, there have been four young Zilches in college at one time.

During the children's formative years, Father and Mother became quite involved in various school groups such as PTA, band and athletic boosters, Zilch says. A retired Little League manager, Karl now says he wishes he had jotted down some of the comments made by team members. Nothing, he says, can much surpass the youngster who wound up jumping up and down on second base after getting his first base hit of the season in the final game.

"I went out to congratulate him and calm him down," Zilch recalls. "I told him that he had come through like I knew he would, and he replied, 'Yeah, Coach, but I just wet my pants.'"

For relaxation, Zilch plays "a fair amount" of tennis and enjoys working in his yard. For more than a dozen years now, Zilch family vacation trips have been to northern Wisconsin near the Michigan border where some in-laws live. In recent years, however, as much time or more is spent visiting with other vacationing regulars as is spent fishing. He and his wife also find time to play tennis and golf. However, in golf he generally comes in second since his wife is a former woman's champion of Peoria, IL.

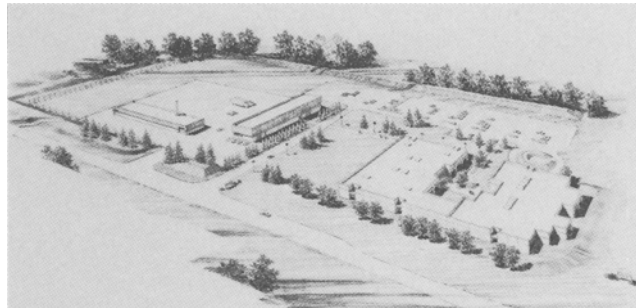
Zilch is a former member of the AOCS Governing Board, serves as chairman of the advertising committee, has been general chairman for a national meeting and held other assignments. He is also a member of Sigma Xi, Alpha Chi Sigma, and The American Chemical Society, playing key roles in the past relative to the development of local chapter activities.

Zilch's broad smile and hearty greetings are well known at AOCS meetings. "Well, AOCS really is a great group of people," he says, explaining why he has become so involved. He's one of them. ●

## ASTM panel formed

Organizational meeting for a new Committee on Chemical Protective Clothing of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) will be held at 10 a.m. Oct. 12 at ASTM headquarters, 1916 Race St., Philadelphia, PA 19103.

Persons interested in working with the committee should contact: Robert D. Bauer, ASTM, 1916 Race St., Philadelphia, PA 19103 (tele: 215-299-5481). ●



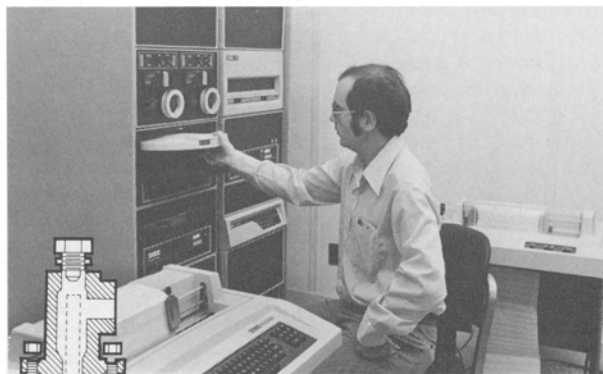
Central Soya has begun construction of a new multi-million dollar, 35,000 square foot, food research laboratory at its new Research and Engineering Center in Fort Wayne, IN. The new lab is depicted above as the left half of the large structure to the right. The lab will have a staff of more than 75 persons including chemists, food scientists, biochemists, bacteriologists, and sensory evaluation workers. There were three structures on the 22.5-acre site when it was purchased by Central Soya last fall. Total floor space, including the lab, will be about 86,000 square feet for food research and corporate engineering. Central Soya's Food Research staff will move from Chicago to Fort Wayne sometime next fall after the building is completed. ●

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