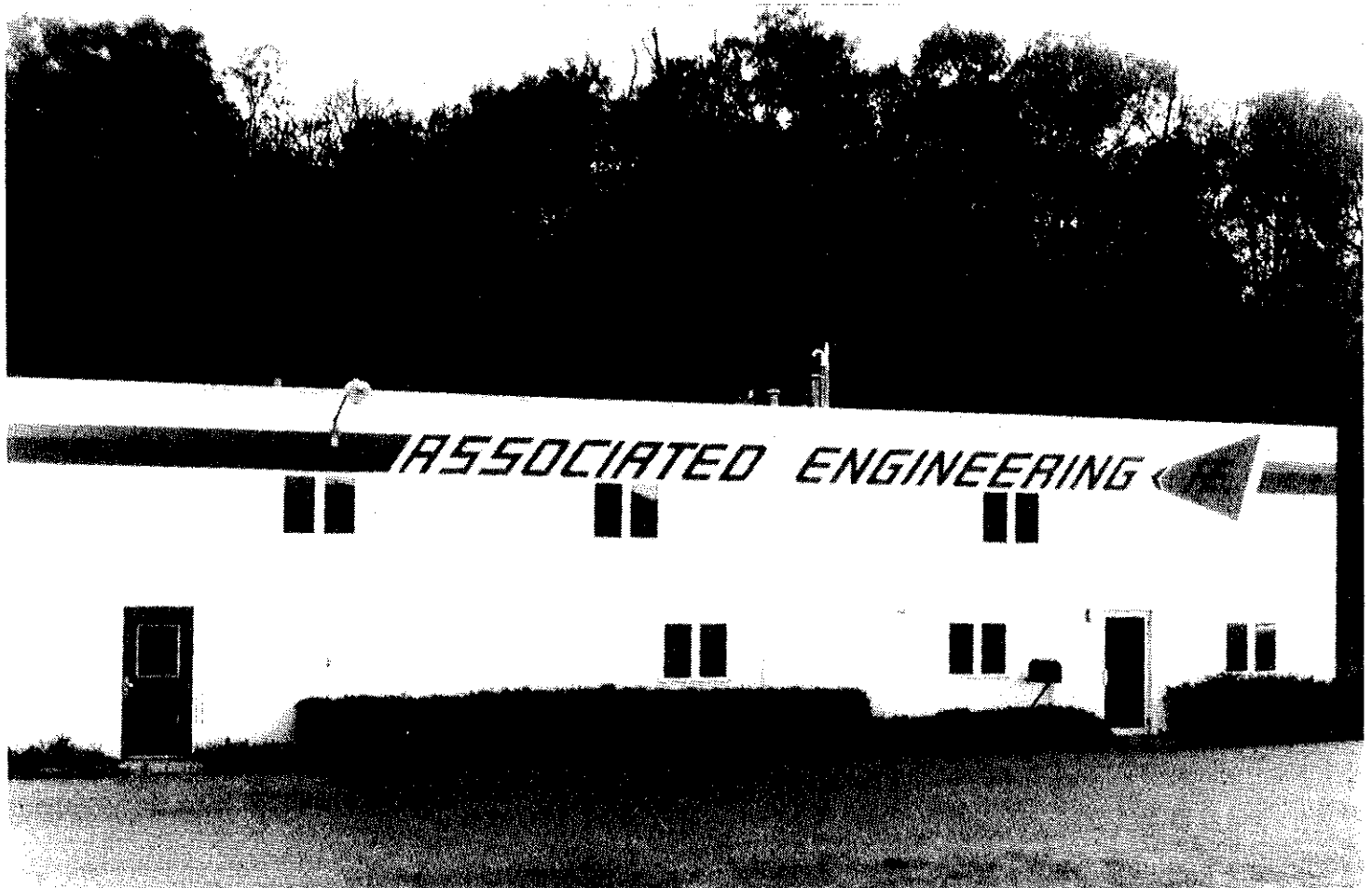




The Associated Express

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Off and Running

by Jack Madsen

Welcome to *The Associated Express*! In this first issue, we attempt to focus on what **Associated Engineering** is to its management and employees, how it began, what we are now, and what we intend to become. In future issues we will tell our customers about our various departments in more detail and show what they do.

We are proud of what we do here at **Associated**, and we want everyone to know about our diversity. Most of us know that we do powder coating (painting with powder), liquid (spray) painting, and metal stripping, but there may be some who don't know that we also do fancy glass etching, pad printing, and silk screening. A list of our customers reads like a *Who's Who* in business within a radius of 200 miles and more. We paint parts for major garden and farm equipment, medical equipment, computer equipment, and Christmas tree stands by the thousands. We pad print and silk screen logos and designs on everything from electronic gear to golf balls. We have probably painted more fishing reel handles than there are fish in some major lakes. People all over the United States have opened and closed and locked windows and doors with parts that were painted right here by us. They have also tooled down the road listening to radios and tape decks held in place by brackets painted here. The list goes on and on,

And we intend to do more! We are in the process right now of expanding our production. In the near future we will have an even greater capacity for volume and a faster turn-around time on job orders for our customers. Items once painted manually will be painted on line.

Our goal has always been to provide our customers with the best possible service at the best possible price, with the special effort to minimize any adverse environmental impact, and treat both our personnel and customers as people. This issue gives recognition to the people at **Associated Engineering** who make that possible.

In the Beginning

An Interview with Irene Klammer
by Jack Madsen

"You'd better sit down, Dear. I have something important to tell you."

With words to this effect, Mrs. Irene Klammer prepared her husband, William, for the news that she had just purchased **Associated Engineering**. That was in the early spring of 1965. Bill had just returned for the weekend from his job in the Twin Cities. Irene had been working at the American Bank in Mankato when the opportunity presented itself and she was able to make an offer. History does not record how long it took Bill to get over the shock, but Irene's offer was accepted. She took possession on April 1, 1965. "Eight days later Lehillier was flooded, and **Associated Engineering** was ankle deep in water," she says.

Thus began the history of our company. Things were much different back then. There was only liquid painting and a limited amount of silkscreening; no powder coating, no Kolene, and no stripping . . . except for our own rework. Our hottest item was "Johnson Green and Black," used for the Johnson spin-casting reel. Reel covers and cases, crank arms and spools were the most common sights in this first production facility. We also did tone arms and a swivel part for RCA and Iridite for **Hartzel Mfg.** of St. Paul.

The original location of **Associated Engineering** was 310 McKenzie Street, which is two blocks to the east of our present location. Today that building is called the Kato Labor Temple. At one point in time, we also operated part of our business out of another building in that same area fondly referred to as "the MidTex Building." Initially this space was rented and finally purchased in 1982 from a Mr. Schulz, a South Dakota businessman.

In June of 1971, **Associated Engineering** purchased the prop-

erty upon which our present facility is located. It was a home site with a very large metal quonset building adjacent to it. The house was rented out, and the quonset space was used to expand the liquid painting department. Our present building at 320 State Rd. was erected in 1980. This structure has been enlarged twice since that time, to accommodate the growing number of services the company now provides. Both the house and metal quonset building were eventually removed to accommodate various construction phases connected with our present facility.

Chuck Klammer was with the company in the beginning, but left for a while to pursue his education and a career of his own. He returned in 1976 and became the Chief Executive Officer in 1986.

Dave Alexander has the distinction of being the only employee still with us who was a part of the original AE team when Klammer took over in 1965. Dolores Lindsoe joined us shortly thereafter, along with Ralph Leonard, Herb Hodapp, and Diane Prom. All are still with us today. Ted Schreyer and Jeff Dauer joined us in the mid 70's when both were still in high school.

Associated Engineering is the culmination of a long and exciting career for Irene Klammer. Mankato Commercial College originally drew her to Mankato from Rake, Iowa, during the Great Depression. After graduation, she was assigned to work in a bank in Bemidji, MN. In 1937, she returned to Mankato and helped Lynard Produce establish its accounting system. She married William Klammer and continued to work for Lynard's up until the birth of the first of four children. You would have to say Irene was a woman ahead of her time. In addition to managing a home and family, she continued to pursue careers of her own. In 1949, she purchased and operated the 400 Cafe in downtown Mankato. Later, she became the Mother's March Chairwoman for the Minnesota

Chapter of the March of Dimes. In this capacity, she coordinated fund-raising activities for 52 counties in southern Minnesota. When her older children reached high school age, Irene chose to work for the J. C. Penney Company in Mankato as both a cashier and in their business office. Eventually, she accepted a position with the Mankato Branch of the American bank where she was working when first approached with the offer to purchase **Associated Engineering**.

I asked Irene if there were tough times. "Yes, when we lost the RCA account . . . but, we moved on to other things," she states. On a personal level, Irene recounts surviving a car accident which resulted in injuries requiring years to completely overcome, and her husband's open heart surgery (1976), as particularly stressful events in her life. The toughest time of all, she states, was the death of her husband, Bill, in 1984. At that time, Bill was the President of **Associated Engineering**.

As in any successful business, there were many years of just plain hard work. Irene did all the estimating as well as other office work in the early years. "After a full day in the office, it was out to the work area to help with whatever we were doing," she says. Masking, hanging, silkscreening **Kato Engineering** labels . . . Irene has done it all. After work, it was home to tend to the needs of her family. "It wasn't easy," she admits, "but **Associated Engineering** has succeeded beyond my wildest dreams."

Irene played a vital role in the company until 1986 when she took herself off the payroll and began serving in an advisory capacity.



Here's to Your Health

by Kait Klammer, Rn

I bet you didn't know AE had its very own Occupational Health Nurse, did you? Well, we do. However, she's not the kind that holes up in the plant, handing out band aides and cold compresses. She's one of those new fangled "mobile units" who operates out of her car and the employee lunch room, when necessary.

Primarily, she will work with our existing Health and Safety Committee, identifying the problems/needs within the organization and working to solve, correct, or meet those needs. Her job requires that she not only use her own "gray matter," but tap into any one else's she thinks can be of assistance! Therefore, every-one in-plant - or, in the entire country, for that matter - is a potential resource.

Who is this mystery woman? Me, of course! This comes as no surprise to anyone, I am sure. After all, when one's husband spends a goodly part of his wages for 7 years getting his wife through college, he usually wants proof that she actually LEARNED something! [Rats - Foiled again! Here I was plannin' to stay home, lounge in my PJ's all day, and eat chocolate-covered cherries while I caught upon all the soaps!!]

So . . . even if my job isn't highly visible right away, over this next year, you will begin to reap the benefits of my networking. Each month, I'll use this Newsletter to keep you informed of upcoming Health & Safety related issues, as well as scheduled in-service programs.

Until next time - SMILE. (It's the best way to let everyone know you brushed and flossed this morning.)

Kait

Boss's Corner

by Chuck Klammer

Welcome to our first newsletter, which has been a wish for a number of years. It is finally coming about through the hard efforts of both Jack Madsen and Kait Klammer. Our hope is to eventually produce a letter that will be distributed to the employees of **Associated Engineering** once a month, hopefully around the first pay period of that month.

As our second newsletter, we would like to produce a quarterly newsletter that we will send out to customers that will include some of the stories of the different employees of **Associated Engineering**, and also the different processes and services that we offer.

I would like to take a moment and cover some of the things that have happened around **Associated Engineering** within the last three months.

Purchase of 4 1/2 acres of land to the south of the building (hillside behind the building).

This will tie the current location and the warehouse based on the west side of the trucking company together with common boundary lines. This was necessary so that if we want to expand on the Carney property, we will have a contingent property line which will allow us to operate under one EPA number. This additional property purchase will allow us to continue to look at the possibility of expanding operations at the present location. We will continue to look at the different building options throughout the next two to three months, and hopefully come up with a plan that we will commit to by the early spring of 1995

New powder coating oven and conveyor line

We have started the installation, and hopefully by Thanksgiving time or the end of the month we will have the new powder coating oven and conveyor line up and running. We moved about 1500 cu. yards. of fill from behind the building so we could set the oven down, and we built an enclosure around the oven. This work was all done by Norm and his crew. This new powder-coating line should greatly increase our production capacity. I'm sure Ted is as excited as anyone is to get this system up and running. There are a great number of jobs where it would be more cost effective to use the larger system. We also have a number of orders coming in where we certainly could use the capacity.

Equipment bought from the Chamberlain Corp. in Waterloo, Iowa

We actually purchased three different rooms of equipment and numerous small items. We probably won't use the equipment as it was originally installed in Chamberlain, but it will give us the ability to put together a treatment system for both our water and residue coming from our stripping systems. The additional large tanks give us the opportunity to expand both our stripping and phosphate operations for the larger parts. We are excited to get some of this equipment installed. It will definitely be part of our expansion plans in the year of 1995.

I will attempt to keep you informed as we move through the next several months as to how these changes will affect the future growth and profitability of **Associated Engineering**.





If you think there is something fishy about celebrating Christmas in July, you're right! Of course it helps if you can get the fish to come to you, regardless of the season. On July 5th, the troops all gathered at the "Ranch" for our annual "Christmas Party." A tank was stocked with trout, and we were allowed to keep anything we caught. Also, if you caught one with a blue tag attached to its tail, it was worth \$20!

Top left: Everyone gathers to listen to the rules of the game. **Top right:** Chuck shows how to catch trout the easy way. **Bottom left:** John Kapsner makes sure the big one gets away from Joe Appelhof.