

# 12 Legends

A STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH INDUSTRY ICONS



## Still Proud to be a PMP

By Tom McCloud • Contributor

The extermination business, as it was known when I began this career more than 50 years ago, was a part of my life from early childhood. Some of my earliest memories include how closely the exterminators of the day guarded their “secret” formulas for pest control.

In those days, the sales pitch was focused on “secret” formulas more than the actual knowledge and application techniques. Many of the first commercial chemicals were lethal, as there was no government regulation. Everything from strychnine to thallium sulphate to cyanide was commonly used. Even without regulatory parameters, great care was taken to protect people while still getting the job done.

In the early 1930s my father, Walter McCloud, met with Bill Buettner and other industry leaders to discuss pest control issues. Through these discussions, the National Pest Control Association (NPCA) was formed; which later evolve into the National Pest Management Association (NPMA).

My father became the seventh president of this association in 1939. The industry leaders who formed the NPCA were helpful to my professional development after my father’s untimely death in 1947. I’d just gotten out of the Army and my father’s friend Professor J.J. Davis helped get me into the first urban entomology class at Purdue.

The 1951 NPCA convention in Boston was my introduction to all the leaders in our industry. As a 24-year-old, I was one of the youngest business owners attending. With many of my dad’s friends in attendance, I was treated as one of them from the very first meeting, and developed lasting friendships and mentors.

Ed Sameth, Bart Eldridge, Bill Buettner, Maury Oser, Ralph Heal, Phil Spear and many others helped shape my career and future successes. NPCA became the breeding ground for most of our industry advancements and was instrumental in bringing respect to our profession. I remember a time not so long ago when it was embarrassing to mention that you were an exterminator. Now we’re proud to say we are part of this industry.

### THE INDUSTRY BOOMS

Many more pest management companies were founded in the post World War II years. With new pesticides, no regulations, and GI bills that helped with education, pest management was a perfect industry start up operation. Entrepreneurs were able to quickly expand their businesses because so many pests were major health and safety issues.

The rat population was extremely high, and I regularly sold jobs where hundreds — and even thousands — of rats were invading companies. Roaches, bedbugs, flies and many other pests, while at extremely high numbers, were easily controlled with DDT, chlordane and other chemicals popular in the 1940s. The public then had a much higher tolerance of our industry.

In the early 1950s, insect and rodent resistance to pesticides became a crisis for America and our industry. The need for chemical companies to create new pesticides was urgent. As the U.S. became comfortable with pesticide controls, additional chemicals became available. McCloud Services as well as several other pest management professionals (PMPs) saw great growth in these years.

New challenges emerged in the 1960s with the environmental movement. In 1962, Rachael Carson’s book *The Silent Spring* was published. Public fear escalated about pesticides and the damage they could do to the environment. DDT and other pesticides were banned, and in 1969 the EPA was formed, forever changing the landscape of the pest control industry.

I’ve had a unique perspective of the last 60 years during which I’ve seen our industry evolve from one without regulations, little respect, and no attention to safety, to an industry that now uses the least toxic chemicals possible and employs sanitation solutions to implement the standard we call pest elimination.

I’m proud to be part of a vocation that is recognized as a legitimate industry, vital to the health, property and well being for all Americans. **PMP**



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You can reach McCloud by e-mailing [tommcloud@mccloudservices.com](mailto:tommcloud@mccloudservices.com).