

Some Non-statistical Reminiscences of My 50 Years of Chairing the Deming Conference

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In 1964, I was Group Leader, Process Analysis at Lederle Laboratories; American Cyanamid in Pearl River, NY. I worked closely with Charlie Dunnett whose department owned the computer and mechanical calculators my group used. In December, he was presenting on his t test and he invited me to go along. The Princeton Conference started at 2 PM Friday and ran through lunch on Saturday. It included a beer and cider party on Friday evening and a Saturday lunch for a total registration fee of \$6. The topics ran the gamut of highly theoretical from the Princeton Statistics Department to extremely simple QC talks. I enjoyed the atmosphere and camaraderie so I went every year for the next six years. I usually stayed in a cheap motel on Route 1 but occasionally splurged on the Nassau Inn.

I had joined the ASQC in 1962 and by 1969 was quite active in the Metropolitan Section's executive committee and thus was acquainted with the members of the conference's organizing committee. Stu Hunter handled the liaison with the University and Harry Howard was the official chair but the de facto chair was Art Bobis who headed the statistics group in Cyanamid's Bound Brook, NJ facility. The week after the conference, I had to go there to discuss modeling drug stability reactions on Cyanamid's Wayne, NJ analog computer. I ranted to Art on such points that most attendees were grandfathered out of paying the \$10.50 registration, the Friday afternoon to Saturday schedule was odd, and there was no unified theme to the talks. After listening to me grumble for about 5 minutes, he told me that he was leaving Cyanamid to become Vice President of his family's folding chair business and how would I like to be chair. It sounded like fun so I accepted.

I enlisted Charlie, Khushroobanu Shaikh and Don Behnken from Cyanamid and in 1971, my old NYU Professor, John Kao, for the committee and retained Art Bloomberg (Figure 9) who did an awesome job on arrangements and registration until his death 25 years later. John stayed on the committee for the next 25 years and in 2012, at the age of 96, we gave him a distinguished service award (Figure 2). (He died on June 8, 2014 at the age of 97.) Stu Hunter was also extremely helpful with arrangements for the next 9 years until the conference left Princeton. He then stayed on the program committee until 2004 and in December 2014 attended the conference at age 91½. I got together with him once or twice a year for a luncheon at the faculty club where I gained a reputation for only eating the desserts. In 2013, we gave Stu a distinguished service award despite the fact that he was only a youngster of 90 (Figure 3).

I changed the venue to all day Friday with four 3-hour sessions of 3 one-hour related talks, while retaining the luncheon and beer and cider party. (I claim credit for enforcing the term *related* as prior to this anyone who wanted to talk could. In a similar vein, I added the word *Applied* to the title of the conference in 1972.) We had to raise the registration fee to \$15 but we also raised attendance to about 100 and tried to let no one in for free. The Metropolitan Section was pleasantly surprised that the conference actually made money and with the exception of an experimental outlier year of 2001 where statistics was radically deemphasized, the conference never lost money again.

Publicity evolved during my tenure. The somewhat difficult to read program was printed on various shades of orange stock (Figure 13), as the Princeton colors are orange and black. Initially, it was mailed to all Metropolitan Section members, with copies given to Princeton and anyone who wanted to deliver them to various statistical meetings. We progressed to use the ASA mailing list, which I personally edited to remove foreign addresses and companies that I felt had no interest in our program as well as merge in previous attendees. (I also surreptitiously added a few names of family and friends.) We then paid to put the entire program in *Amstat News*. This worked fine for a few years until the ASA delayed mailing the critical issue for many weeks. This decimated our attendance but the ASA reimbursed us more than our cost so we were okay financially. I then similarly edited the Biopharmaceutical Section's mailing list until we were able to rely on our website and emails sent to the Biopharmaceutical and Biomedical Sections. We crafted a print version of the program until 2016, distributing copies at various meetings. Before my retirement, I always had Wyeth print an orange batch that I distributed at various SUGI and PhilaSUG meetings that I habitually attended. In the early years there was little proofreading. (My 26th conference debut was labeled as the 25th.) From 1996 until her premature death in 2009, Jackie Kennedy (who I worked with at both Lederle and Wyeth) had OCD in correcting our program's and website grammar. My son, Walbert, from 2001 to 2016 was compulsive in making sure our printed version was the best that it could be, emailing speakers to make sure that their copy was grammatically correct and of a similar size to their opposing tutorial or short course. The final product was then used as the basis for

creating the website. Creating the print version was a nasty job that no one after my son wanted, until we added Li-An Xu (Figure 15) as Program Coordinator to our committee who did a superlative job of creating it this year.

In 1971, the ASA's Biopharmaceutical Subsection assumed co-sponsorship. In 1973, Bill Wooding became their first official representative and the Section has been continually active in the conference. Ivan Chan and Kalyan Ghosh (Figure 6), who both joined the committee in 1997, have been their longest serving agents. In 1979, the Statistics Division of the ASQC assumed co-sponsorship. Bill Strawderman joined the committee in 1980 for 14 years and Frank Alt (Figure 9) in 1983 for 11 years as their official reps. They did an excellent job in evenly balancing biopharmaceutical topics with QC and applied topics in other industries. Once they left the committee, the conference gradually shifted to being completely biopharmaceutical and the Statistics Division became a sponsor in name only. Biopharmaceutical made sense due to the heavy preponderance of pharmaceutical firms in New Jersey. In 2010, my daughter (Katharine) wrote a term paper marketing plan for the conference with some good ideas that alas were never adopted. It found that of 585 past attendees for 2006 to 2008 sorted by zip code, 61% were within reasonable driving or ground public transportation distance, 19% were on the East Coast too far to drive, 16% were from the rest of the country, 2% Canadian and 2% foreign. The foreign percentage has since slightly increased. The conference steadily grew in attendance and length. Book sales and tutorials based on recently published texts started in 1976.

The conference had a peak attendance of 476 in 1977 when it overflowed the Woodrow Wilson School. We felt that the crowd posed a security problem so for the first time we decided to check badges. The registration fee had at this point been raised to \$40 but it included meals. Literally dozens of people hadn't paid. One individual threatened to sue as he said he'd been coming for 5 years without paying and it was illegal for us to check badges without advance notice. An author of a highly acclaimed text who flew in from California also said that she had never paid in the past. (1975 was the *UN Year of the Woman* and she was one of our speakers in our mainly distaff program.) Two individuals from a major drug company in NYC were stopped at the door of the meeting room. When they were next caught trying to slip in a back door, they paid but came back 15 minutes later to ask for a refund. Their boss told them that if they couldn't sneak in, they couldn't attend. As a registrant left our book exhibit, a book fell out of his pants leg but he kept on walking. A member of the program committee, Kris Arora, owned an excellent local Indian restaurant (Sitar) and he catered a very successful Indian buffet in the basement of the Statistics Building. During the meal, 4 students were caught exiting from a closet where they had earlier secreted themselves.

In 1979, the conference established the W. Edwards Deming Medal in Statistical Excellence. I was undeservedly awarded the first silver medal and for the next 16 years the medal was presented at the conference to distinguished statisticians. It is now awarded by the national ASQ to QC practitioners. In 1981, John Mandel (Figure 11) of the National Bureau of Standards received the first medal after Ed who (Figure 4) was the keynote speaker every year and presented the medal until his death in 1993 shortly after the conference. The following year, with his daughter's permission, we renamed the conference in his honor. I was privileged to get to know Ed during this period and was a guest in both his Washington home and Manhattan apartment on several occasions. Ed was one of the participants in the 3-day first conference held under the auspices of the Planning and Statistics Division of the War Production Board at Princeton University in December 1945 and always had a soft spot in his heart for it. He spoke at the conference several times prior to the medal's establishment. One amusing incident occurred in 1974. Ed was scheduled to speak for two hours followed by a famous pollster headquartered in Princeton. The pollster still had not shown up 30 minutes prior to his talk. I called his office, and heard in the background, "Tell them I'm not here!" Ed graciously agreed to continue to talk and did not stop until well after 3 hours.

By 1979, the conference had become too big for the University to handle. Also, Princeton decided that we could no longer cater our meals and we had to use their food services at a cost that was triple what we had paid before. Reluctantly, we moved to Villanova. It was a successful conference but we only stayed for a year mainly due to extreme complaints of the quality of the catered food that caused the majority of the participants to boycott all meals after the first. In the 70's and 80's, I was extremely active in ASTM's E11 statistics committee and chaired their nonparametric subcommittee as well as a group revising their E178 outlier standard. Vic Barnett and Toby Lewis had just authored a widely praised outlier text so in 1979 I invited them from England to give a 3-day course before our 2-day conference. Within the course, I gave a session on E178 and its associated software (which I wrote in Fortran) that was well received. Intriguingly, the course was held in a hotel across the road from Wyeth-Ayerst where I would be transferred 16 years later when American Home Products bought Cyanamid. While the format varied over the next

few years, the full week conference was here to stay. In 1982 we started our current structure of a 3-day conference followed by two 2-day short courses with only a couple of minor deviations. One course was made the responsibility of the ASA's Biopharmaceutical Section and their agents have done an excellent job of organizing this ever since. The other one was given to the ASQC's Statistics Division but after they terminated their active sponsorship in 2000, I organized it for two years after which Fred Balch, our vice chair, (Figure 5) assumed control and has done a fine job, as evidenced by the fact that his registration beat the competition in 12 of the past 15 years (Figure 1).

One of my claims to fame was coming up with the idea of having all sessions be 3-hour tutorials (preferably based on recently published texts) as opposed to 3 one-hour talks on related subjects organized and hosted by a moderator. Tutorials made their appearance in 1975 and the last one-hour talk was essentially given in 1982. Coincident with this, the conference moved to the Holiday Inn at Newark Airport in 1980 where it remained for the next 5 years. Until my wife compelled me to move in 1990, I was a lifelong rent controlled Manhattan resident who twice failed my driving test. This obscure point is relevant, because I insisted on including information on how to get there by public transportation. My instructions were to take a nonstop \$1.50 bus to Newark Airport, walk about a quarter of a mile along a busy exit ramp, try to safely cross it, and then go through a hole in a chain link fence. When I got there the day before the conference, I found that the hole had been repaired. I had to take a bus to a Newark hardware store, buy a pair of wire cutters, and regenerate the hole. Also, from 1978 thru 1990, I annually presented a full day seminar on meeting planning and finances at the New England Quality Control Council Training Conference.

After the Holiday Inn, we moved to Atlantic City (AC) in 1985 where with two not too successful exceptions and one disaster, we have remained ever since. I got married in 1984 and my 3 kids virtually grew up in AC. My 2-month-old son got thrown out of the Osmond Family production of Fiddler on the Roof at the Claridge for crying. I've never been paid for my conference work but in 1986 I won a drawing (attended by Mickey Mantle no less) at the Claridge for meeting planners where the grand prize was a trip on the QE2 (in a large ocean view cabin) to England and back on the Concord, 11 days later. We had a great time but my wife suffered some odd complications such as physically losing her green card, being allowed on the ship without a British visa and thus having a rather difficult time getting off, and losing her brown Philippine passport two hours prior to our scheduled return, which caused her to somewhat believe in being cursed. The passport was the same color as our hotel room carpet and our son had apparently grabbed it from his crib and dumped it. These incidents somewhat assuaged my guilt for not rebooking the Claridge.

Besides attending the conference in their formative years, my oldest son (Walbert) redesigned our program into its current form; my youngest son (Peter {Figure 10} currently stationed at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska) served as registrar in 2009; and my daughter was awarded the conference's second Walter Young scholarship in 2008. Peter did the first version of our transactions in 2016 when Ed Warner's successor quit 5 weeks before the conference. Peter wanted to show the conference to his wife so they attended that year but I paid all of their expenses.

In 1983 Karl Peace (Figure 9) replaced Jim Arsevan as the Biopharmaceutical Section rep and for 11 years did an exceptional job in getting speakers and successful short courses. Then after a dispute that is remembered differently by the parties concerned, Karl resigned and founded BASS whose format was initially very similar to our conference. Mimicry is one of the greatest compliments and I felt vindicated in our choice of the conference's format. BASS evolved into a somewhat different structure while ours remains unchanged. In 2010 Karl graciously accepted our invitation to present a tutorial on his latest text and we recognized him for his contributions to our conference. His coauthor, and my coeditor of the 2014 book (Figure 5) that contained the precursor of this paper, Din Chen, did an equally outstanding job in replacing him for the next 4 years. Din was awarded a plaque as a tutorial was presented on 5 different books that he coedited in 5 consecutive years. He has since presented a tutorial most years and is currently our Publicity Chair and was previously our Transactions Chair.

After 5 quite successful years at the Sands, we were banished as the Sands their meeting rooms were replaced with a gambling floor. We had a multiple year contract and the Sands negotiated a very favorable contract at Resorts as part of their settlement. Resorts has a very strange meeting facility on its 13th floor consisting of a large auditorium and two very long narrow meeting rooms. There is a parapet surrounding these rooms and in good weather, one can walk along the outside of the building with a rather spectacular view of AC that was quite enjoyable in good weather. (I recall telling the register in the restroom how well the conference was going when a registrant outside the window disputed this.) We remained there successfully for 7 years, mainly because the contract included a free cocktail hour with excellent food and an unlimited open bar. This proved to be a mixed blessing as one of our moderators had to

stay in the local hospital with an inebriated registrant for a number of hours until a family member came and picked him up. I paid hospital visits to 2 registrants that were mugged outside Resorts. One moderately distinguished statistician was ejected from the hotel for urinating in the cocktail line and the police ejected another for doing something worse on camera in the hallway. The Tropicana sales manager relocated to Resorts and she offered us a good contract unsolicited, but without free cocktails, their weird meeting setup proved to be a hard sell.

At the end of the nineties, the Metropolitan Section experimented with QC short courses and tutorials with less than stellar results. In 2000 they fired me as chairman as they felt the conference should be devoted to Deming's QC principles despite the fact that Ed was a statistician for the greater part of his career. I did not contest this as I felt a 31-year tenure was adequate. A few weeks later they reinstated me as co-chair as they couldn't find anyone else to handle the statistics portion of their revamped program. All programs during my tenure as chair can be found at www.demingconference.org. The Spring 2001 program was fundamentally different from anything seen before or since. It was held in the spring at the Newark Airport Holiday Inn because it could not attract sufficient registrants to be held in December. It still lost quite a bit of money but as so much had been invested in the conference (e.g., paying a professional design firm \$3,500 to compose the program), it wasn't cancelled. The statistics tracks did marginally better than the QC ones but both did poorly. Meals were included but there were more speakers and committee members at the meals than participants. I moderated a statistics course that came close to making money but the QC course was held with a single registrant and the instructor was paid appreciably more than the registration fee. The one positive change we made that year was that Ed Warner joined the committee as transactions chair and all registrants have since been given a bound copy and a CD (subsequently upgraded to a memory stick) of the speaker's slides. I regained my sole hold on the chair and Satish Laroia (Figure 3) was ensconced as arrangements chair and did an outstanding job in improving and strengthening the conference's amenities.

Registration has always been a problem. In our record year at the Woodrow Wilson Center, I personally typed the 476 punched cards and wrote the listing program in Fortran. We had a number of registrars but they did not stay long, due in part to the hassle of opening the mail and interpreting the poor handwriting on the registration forms. Fred Balch (Figure 6), currently our longest serving committee member joined in 1993 as registrar and served for 7 years before transferring to the program committee. His successor served for 6 years but was a challenged speller and complained that his hotel suite did not have enough space to adequately layout and arrange the forms on the floor. Our biggest technical innovation came when Wenjin Wang (Figure 6) joined the committee in 2005 as Bibliolater. In 2006 he replaced Kalyan Ghosh (Figure 6) as Webmaster and designed a website that allowed for online registration, removing the need for the registrar to type all of the demographic information. We still allow for mail registration if the payment is by check but have not received a paper form for a number of years.

We went back to Resorts in 2001. We did okay with registration but got considerable complaints on the missing free cocktail party. We then went to the Taj for a year but weren't too happy with their facilities. Ever since we've been at the Tropicana with a very high rate of recidivism as our attendees like the Havana Tower. From past experience, we're reluctant to change what has proved to be a relatively successful format. However, the conference is still evolving. Since 2007, we've awarded a \$4,000 college scholarship to the offspring of a participant. For a decade, Kalyan's spouse, Nandita Biswas (Figure 8) ran a student scholar program where we support the attendance of 2 to 4 local biostatistics PhD students who present their work in a poster. She finally quit and was replaced this year by Sofia Paul and the award was made national with Ivan's help. In 2012 Manoj Patel, our current registrar (Figure 7), initiated a program where we encourage our attendees to also present posters. Pinggao Zhang (Figure 15) replaced Manoj as Poster Chair this year. BASS can keep their southern contingent in October or November while we'll stick to AC in December despite its avalanche of 4 casino closings in 2014. We've been fortunate in that we've never lost a speaker due to weather in AC. However, we have lost a few speakers in recent years just prior to the conference and twice we were unable to replace them with either their co-speaker or having them present on Skype. Bill Wang (who was on our committee from 2004-7) was re-added to our committee this year and now solicits a backup speaker who can attend the conference for free and is guaranteed that he can present the next year if he isn't needed.

In 2014, I was awarded an engraved iPad (which my wife immediately commandeered) as a longevity award for chairing the conference for 45 years. I emphasize longevity as the ASA rejected my nomination for Fellow (despite Stu Hunter's vociferous support) stating that they do not entrench Fellows simply for longevity. Still I'm quite proud of

my achievements in creating the conference in its current format. Obviously at 34, I can't go on forever but I'll remain as long as I believe I can continue to contribute positively to the conference's continual success.

The ASQ's Metropolitan Section took over financial sponsorship of the conference from the ASA's local section in the mid-fifties and did a fine job until last year when the National ASQ unilaterally changed their rules so that National got a much greater control over the net favorable balance of meetings run by local sections. Satish established DemingConference.org as a non-profit in NC (with himself as president) and the Metropolitan Section relinquished their financial sponsorship. The new organization has experienced growing pains and paid registration dropped radically last year and evidently even more so this year (Figure 1: Incomplete 2019 data is as of November 4th). Free represents the total of committee, speakers and student scholars, which appear to be increasing as registration decreases. The rest of the data is for paid registration. Over my objections, Wenjin was replaced as the web designer with an Indian firm that, at least last year, made it much more difficult to make website corrections. While the committee receives periodic reports from Manoj on the registration status, I no longer have direct access to the database or to the conference's financial info. Manoj resigned as registrar after the conference and was replaced by Wenjin. Hopefully this will improve the situation and registration will return to its former levels. I don't always see eye-to-eye with Satish but I will do my best to see that the conference continues to successfully operate.

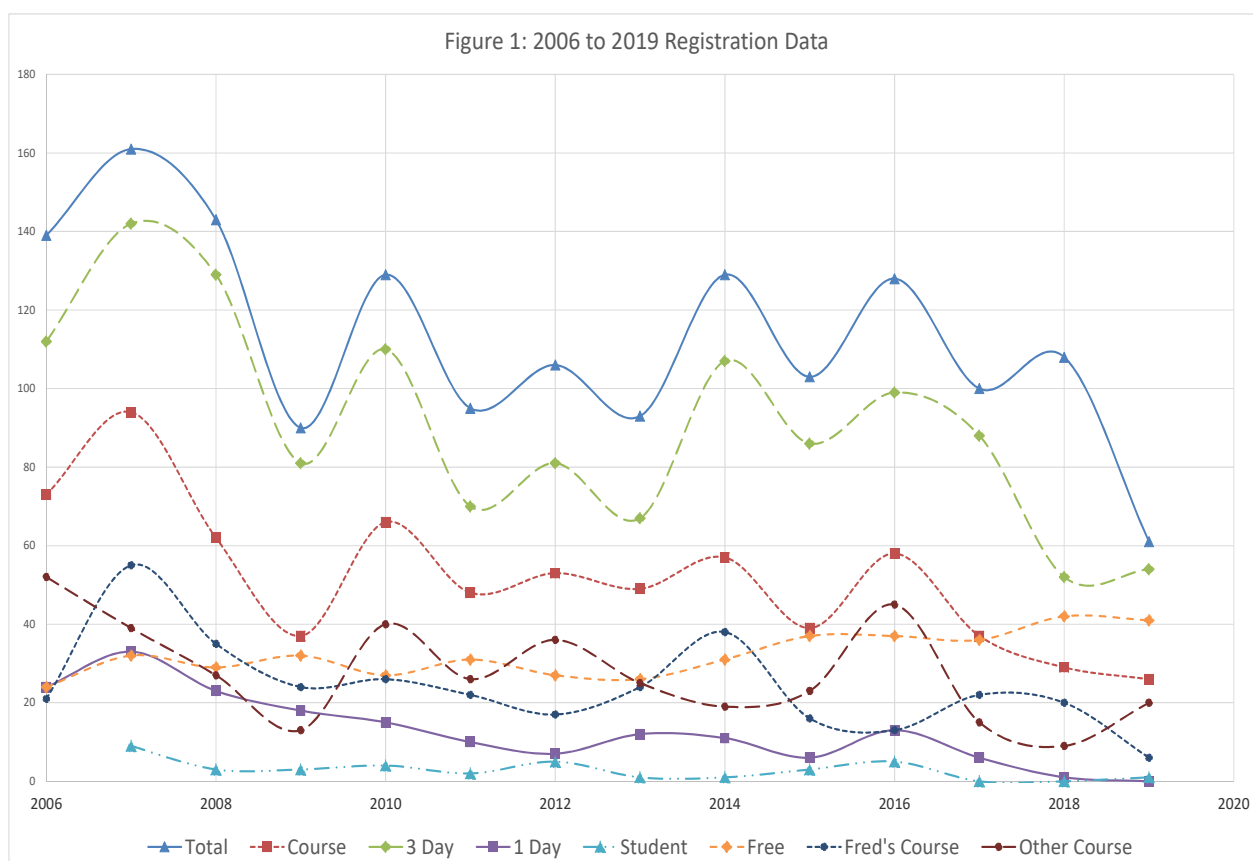




Figure 2: Kao and Young 2012



Figure 3: Hunter, Laroia, and Young 2013



Figure 4: Deming and Young 1974

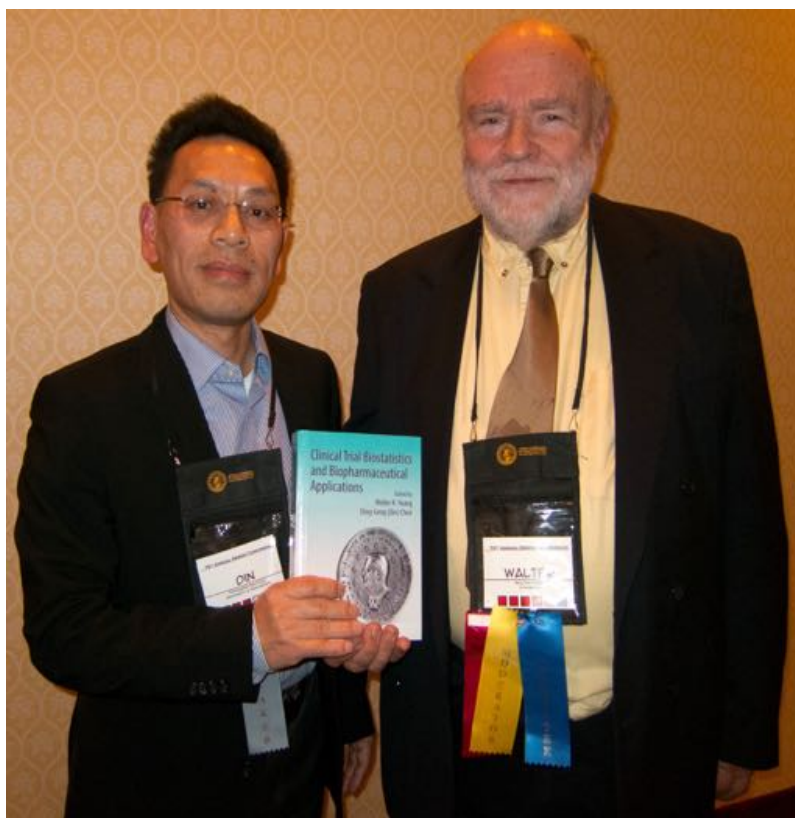


Figure 5: Chen and Young with Book 2014



Figure 6: 2014 Committee Members Left to Right
 Standing: Ivan Chen, Kalyan Ghosh, Naitee Ting, Xiaoming Li and Wenjin Wang
 Seated: Satish Laroia, Walter Young, Alfred Balch and Joseph Borden



Figure 7: Manoj Patel with Mat Davis (Student Scholar Poster Presenter) 2013



Figure 8: Nandita Biswas with Student Scholars 2011



Figure 9: 1989 Committee Members Left to Right

Standing: Karl Peace, Walter Young and Frank Alt Seated: Art Bloomberg, Jenny Wong and Mary Grimstead



Figure 10: 2009 Committee Members Left to Right
Xiaoming Li, Ivan Chan, Joe Borden, Satish Laroia, Fred Balch, Walter and Peter Young



Figure 11: John Mandel 1981 Deming Medalist



Figure 12: Marjori Keshmiri Publicity Chair 1984 – 1991

Conference Chairman WALTER R. YOUNG Lederle Laboratories Pearl River, N.Y. 10965 Tel: 914/735-5000, Ext. 3240		Arrangements HARRY P. HOWARD RCA - Audio Electronics P.O. Box 600 Princeton, N.J. 08540 Tel: 609-448-3400, Ext. 2532	
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FEE:	Advance:	At Conference:	
All inclusive registration	\$15	\$18	
Full-time Students (meeting only)	\$ 3	\$ 5	
Program Advisors: Dr. Donald W. Bolen, American Cyanamid Co., Stamford, Conn. Dr. Charles W. Donnell, American Cyanamid Co., Pearl River, N.Y. Mr. Alexander Steinberg, RCA, Corp. Components Div., Harrison, N.J.			

Figure 13: Photo of 1970 Orange Program Committee Section



Figure 14: 2015 Committee Members

Ivan Chan, Wenjin Wang, Fred Balch, Manoj Patel, Joe Borden, Nandita Biswas, Walter Young, Satish Laroia and Naitee Ting



Figure 15: 2019 Committee Members Left to Right
Front Row: Din Chen, Yibin Wang and Naitee Ting

Back Row: Li-An Xu, Pinggao Zhang, Kalyan Ghosh, Joe Borden, Satish Laroia, Fred Balch, Walter Young and Wenjin Wang