

*Ed Bradbury*



*Gene Harrington*



*Don Reiersen*



*Dempsey R. Sapp Sr.*





# Class of 2014

By Will Nepper Managing Editor

**T**he *Pest Management Professional (PMP)* Hall of Fame was established in 1997 to recognize and thank those who have led the pest management industry to new heights. This year, four industry icons — Ed Bradbury, Gene Harrington, Don Reiersen, and Dempsey R. Sapp Sr. — join the ranks of 75 other *PMP* Hall of Fame inductees.

★ **Ed Bradbury** is cofounder of Viking Termite & Pest Control, one of the largest and most respected pest management companies in North America. He's served as president of the New Jersey Pest Management Association (NJPMA) six times and on several National Pest Management Association (NPMA) committees. Bradbury is also a board member of the NPMA's Professional Pest Management Alliance (PPMA).

★ **Gene Harrington** didn't take long to make his name in the pest management industry. After starting with a job as manager of government affairs with the National Pest Control Association (now NPMA) two decades ago, Harrington is still with the association as vice president of government affairs, shaping industry-related legislation and regulations.

★ **Don Reiersen** started as a student assistant for fellow *PMP* Hall of Famer Dr. Walter Ebeling (Class of 2003), studying mosquitoes and other insects. Now he conducts research for the department of entomology at the University of California, Riverside with 2007 *PMP* Hall of Famer, Dr. Mike Rust. Their research areas include urban insect pests, integrated pest management (IPM), insecticide resistance and field control strategies. Reiersen also is a mentor to next-generation researchers.

★ **Dempsey R. Sapp Sr.** is widely considered a founding father of the pest management industry. After earning his master's degree, he opened Gainesville, Fla.-based Florida Pest Control & Chemical Co., now one of the biggest family-owned pest management companies in the U.S. He was elected president of the Florida Pest Control Association in 1958 and spent three years on the Structural Pest Control Commission of Florida.

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# Quality is Job One

Ed Bradbury learned at Western, then started his own company, Viking, and grew it into a \$22 million company.

**John Walsh** Contributor

**E**d Bradbury, CEO of Viking Pest Control in Bridgewater, N.J., is a marketing guy turned pest management guy whose entrepreneurial spirit shines brightly. Considering the success of his company, he can still be considered a marketing guy. And now, he's officially a Hall of Famer.

After the Westfield, N.J., native graduated from Farleigh Dickinson College in 1968 with a bachelor's of science degree in marketing, he worked in the transportation field at H&F Warehousing developing a warehousing system. While he was at H&F, the company grew tenfold.

During this time of growth, one of Bradbury's college friends, who worked for Western Pest Services at the time, watched his management skills develop and suggested he interview with Western. He did, but turned down the job. Western called back a few weeks later and asked Bradbury to reconsider. He did. This was in 1974 when Western was about an \$18 million company with a territory that stretched from New Jersey to Virginia Beach, Va.

Bradbury started as a branch manager at Western's office in Mountainside, N.J., and also managed its termite division. As he moved up the chain, he was eventually promoted to run the Region I division, covering five offices. During his ascension, he worked for and learned from Regional President Joe Stise, until the latter was promoted to company sales director. Bradbury then worked for Stise's replacement, Elwyn Nylander, for a year until Nylander had a non-fatal heart attack.

"We were sitting in a meeting," Bradbury recalls. "He turned to me and said, 'Take over.' Then he went into the hallway and collapsed, so I ended up running the division he was in charge of.

"He was most influential to me," Bradbury adds. "During a time when the industry had a lot of fly-by-nights doing business, he was all about ethics and treating the customers right."

Before starting with Western, Bradbury had an opportunity to work with a food company called National Brands in New York City.

"The first interview went OK, but during the second interview, they said I had to be there by 8 a.m.," he said.

"To do that, I'd have to take a series of trains and the subway because I lived 15 to 20 miles outside New York City. It was hectic, and I didn't want that lifestyle."

## Different direction

Soon after, Bradbury felt the urge to go out on his own. Western was changing, but not the way he liked. Bradbury wanted to go in a different direction, so he did.

In 1980, Bradbury started Viking Termite & Pest Control, which he founded on the simple philosophy of providing value and quality to clients. In his first year, he generated \$85,000.

The next year, he doubled that figure, and in 1982, he doubled it again. Last year, company revenue was more than \$20 million, coming from customers in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware.

"My wife, Eileen, was very supportive," he says. "We had three kids at the time, and we had just sold our house and were building a new one. I was working 18 hours a day. I sold, serviced and did it all. Eileen helped out, increasing Viking's commercial sales. She might have been one of the first female salespeople in pest control. Along the way, we've hired great people — some of whom are still with us today."

The secret to his success? "I believe you must engage and empower your people because you can't do it all on own. As a service organization, our product is our people."



## PMP Hall of Fame

### Class of 2014

**Name:** Ed Bradbury

**Organization:** Viking Termite & Pest Control

**Title:** CEO

**Years in pest management:** 40

**Industry mentors:** Elwyn Nylander, Dr. Doug Mampe and John Cook, among others

**Key positions held:** Branch and regional manager at Western Termite & Pest Control, CEO of Viking Pest Control

**Crowning achievements:** They include working on the first Strategic Planning Committee for the NPMA in 1991 to give new direction to the association; being rated the 28th largest pest control company in *PMP's* Top 100; being elected president of the NJPMA six times; and being Regional 1 vice president for NPMA.

Growing organically and through acquisitions over the years, Viking has a mix of 62 percent residential and 38 percent commercial business. In 2008, Viking partnered with Copesan, an alliance of regional pest management companies that united as a single entity to provide quality pest control throughout North America. Viking, which is certified as a QualityPro company through the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), had continued to grow in double-digit percentages throughout the years.

Bradbury admits Viking offers no other products or services that another company couldn't offer, so it must do a better job than its competitors. In doing so, Bradbury follows simple rules, such as showing up on time, looking professional, being knowledgeable about the trade and asking for the business. Viking offers a 100 percent guarantee for all the service it performs. Since 1980, he hasn't laid off any employees — there are 210 now, some of whom have worked for Viking for more than 25 years.

"I enjoy people in the pest control industry, and I like building a company that offers services that help people and provides good jobs," he says. "We offer good benefits, and it's nice to see families grow with us. Some of their kids now work for us."

In the beginning, Bradbury had grandiose visions for his company, but reality set in and for the first four years could only focus on the day-to-day operations. Then he was able to put a business plan together and stick to it. He started with basic pest control (rodents and insects). As time went on and the company grew, Bradbury wanted to expand his offerings and cross market to customers, so he added lawn care services.

"The problem we faced is that I wanted to be the best and give a 100 percent guarantee," he says. "The margins in lawn care were slight, and that area of the business needed more investment. The pest control returns were better. As we grew that division, I recognized it was a distraction to our pest control, so we sold it for a nice profit and reinvested into the pest control side."

### Positive influences

While at Western, Bradbury's fascination with entomology, as well as the control of pests and the laws and regulations related to pesticides, intensified. As such, he attended any

professional development class — many at Rutgers, where he eventually helped create educational programs when he could. He became active in the New Jersey Pest Management Association and has served as president six times, along with several other positions, since 1980. He has also been involved with the national association, serving as regional director and on the board of directors, since 1984.

Bradbury says he has also gained a lot of entomology knowledge from industry consultant and fellow Hall of Famer, Dr. Doug Mampe.

"I looked to him for help," he says, reflecting on his longtime friendship with the *PMP* columnist. "I could pick up the phone anytime and ask him a question and he'd help me. He'd even come out into the field with me and offer solutions. That was invaluable."

And although he may not know it, John Cook, owner of Cook's Pest Control in Alabama, has also had a significant influence on Bradbury. Years ago, Bradbury listened to Cook give a presentation at NPMA's annual PestWorld conference about setting goals and growing a company 20 percent a year, doubling it within five years.

"As a result of listening to John, I got my employees to buy into the growth goals with a 'Think Double' campaign," he says. "I encouraged them and gave them bonuses as we achieved our goals."

Bradbury, 69, also has mentored others, specifically those coming into the industry with a similar background. About 15 years ago, the NPMA wanted to help others via a mentoring program, and Bradbury



Bradbury's two sons, Ryan (left) and Dan (right) run the business as co-presidents..



volunteered, working with others throughout the country. Within the state association, he is also always willing to help.

**When Bradbury first started Viking, he worked 18 hours a day.**



### Beloved business

Bradbury and Viking also are involved in the community via organizations such as the American Heart Association, The Arc (for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities), the Special Olympics and the American Cancer Society.

"It's important to give back to your community," he says. "It comes back in spades."

### Awards Ed Bradbury has won include:

- ★ First annual recognition of advertising merit certificate
- ★ 1990 and 1991 consumer "Best Choice" award for Pest Control
- ★ Pest Control Operator of the Year in 1989 from NJPCA (now NJPMA)
- ★ Finalist for the 2008 Executive of the Year award from NJ Business & Industry Association
- ★ 1993 PCT Leadership Award

Because Bradbury enjoys the business, he says he'll never completely retire. Son Ryan, 38, is a Florida State University alumnus who concentrates on the company's operations and sits on Copesan's board. Son Daniel, 34, is a University of Colorado graduate who focuses on marketing and advertising. Both run the business as co-presidents, and both started with careers outside the industry first. Ryan Bradbury worked for a major drug company and spent time as a stockbroker. Dan Bradbury worked for Avaya, a spinoff of

Lucent Technology. Still, they started in the business working for Viking during summers growing up, and while in high school and college.

"They started at the bottom and worked their way up, so they have a greater appreciation for things," says Bradbury, who still works 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. most days but takes a bit more time off than he used to. "I'm planning on working a lighter schedule, if not shorter days, in the future, which my wife is encouraging." **PMP**

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# He's got your back

Gene Harrington has kept the industry's best interests in mind during the legislative process.

**John Walsh** Contributor

**G**ene Harrington wanted to become a journalist, then a lawyer. For the industry's sake, though, we're glad he didn't. The vice president of government affairs for the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) is the main reason why pest management professionals (PMPs) can still apply sulfuryl fluoride.

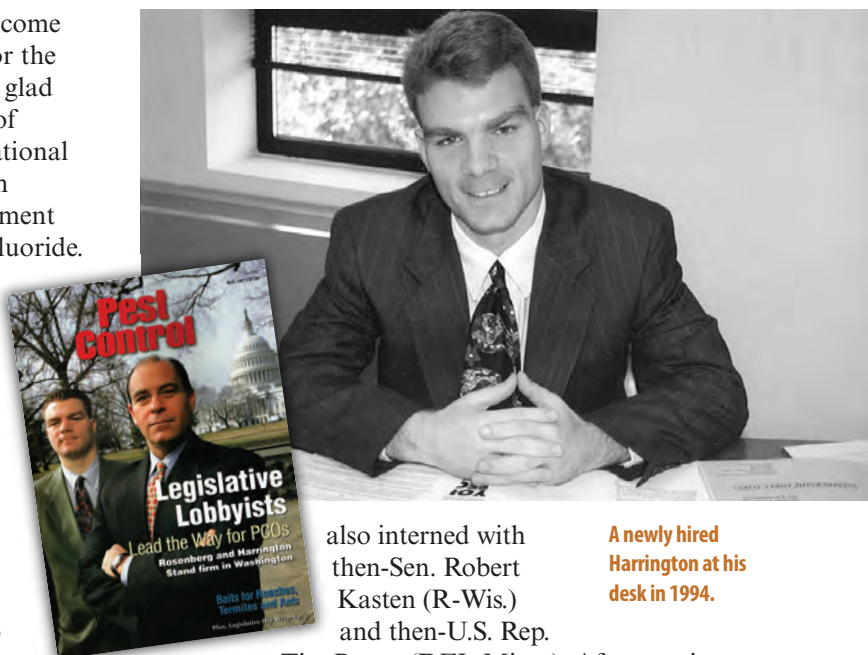
Harrington was behind the legislative triumph when he successfully lobbied Congress to include language in the recently enacted 2014 Farm Bill, which preserves the food uses for the fumigant sulfuryl fluoride. Using his strong relationships with manufacturers, he worked with Dow AgroSciences and various user groups to help him.

"To get Congress to save a pesticide in almost unprecedented," says Bruce Carter, president of Carter Services in Farmington, N.M., and board member of the New Mexico Pest Management Association.

But before legislative triumphs, a young Harrington determined careers in sports and journalism weren't for him. As a kid, he had visions of being a professional athlete, which faded quickly. After graduating from high school, he attended California University of Pennsylvania, where he played soccer and wrote for the school newspaper. At that point in his life, he wanted to become a sportswriter. But after writing just two baseball articles for the school paper, he decided a job like that would be too redundant.

As the 1988 presidential election heated up, Harrington's interests evolved; he became more involved in politics and public policy. He had various jobs in public affairs and wrote political columns for the school newspaper. Then he transferred to the University of Maryland — which was closer to his home — where he took entomology classes and worked several internships on Capitol Hill.

During his last class in college, he interned with then-Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.). Harrington



also interned with then-Sen. Robert Kasten (R-Wis.) and then-U.S. Rep.

**A newly hired Harrington at his desk in 1994.**

Tim Penny (DFL-Minn.). After earning a bachelor's of science degree in journalism with a minor in government and politics, Harrington was hired by Dorgan's office as a legislative correspondent. He worked for Dorgan from 1992 to 1994. In 1994, he applied for a job at the then-National Pest Control Association, and it hired him as manager of government affairs. He's been there since.

## Spreading the word

Throughout the past 20 years, Harrington says, one of his biggest career challenges has been communicating to state and federal legislators exactly what it is that the pest management industry does.

"People downplay the need for what the industry does, and the significance of retaining PMPs," he says, acknowledging that, by and large, the NPMA has a good relationship with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state regulatory offices.

Another big challenge is educating the legislators that the activist groups get to first.



## PMP Hall of Fame

### Class of 2014

**Name:** Gene Harrington

**Organization:** National Pest Management Association (NPMA)

**Title:** Vice President of Government Affairs, NPMA

**Years in pest management:** 20

**Industry mentors:** Bob Rosenberg, Gene Chafe, Ken Fredrick, Bruce Carter, Scott Steckel

**Key positions held:** manager of government affairs, NPMA; director of government affairs, NPMA; vice president of government affairs, NPMA

**Crowning Achievements:** Led effort to include language in 2014 Farm Bill preserving the use of the valuable food protection pesticide sulfuryl fluoride. Negotiated policy statement with U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, limiting the agency's competition with the professional pest management industry for urban rodent control. Played a key role in defeating legislation in 2000 banning the use of pesticides on various federal properties. Deeply involved in countless state legislative and administrative issues, addressing issues ranging from reorganizing the state regulatory structure to school pest management to nuisance wildlife control.

"We make sure legislators, especially the new ones, are well informed," he says.

One issue that required a big education component was PMPs losing work to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services (USDA-WS).

"We brought the issue to the attention of lawmakers, who were hesitant to believe the story we were telling them," Harrington says. "When people first heard this, they thought it wasn't true, but we provided facts and details. It was a problem."

Harrington worked with lawmakers and their staffs on legislation, establishing parameters about the type of work the USDA-WS could and could not perform. The legislation eventually led to the agency adopting a policy precluding USDA-WS from performing urban rodent control in most circumstances. The policy went into effect in October 2013.

Other key federal legislative victories for Harrington include helping make workable a 2009 measure that initially would have made the treatment of pests on airplanes extremely difficult, and getting an earmark for federal termiticide research included in the fiscal year 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

### State issues, too

Harrington also has played a significant role in state legislative and regulatory issues, helping develop and implement workable pest management legislation and rulemaking from Alaska to Maine.

New Mexico is just one example: Between 1995 and 2000, the state's pest management industry was seemingly under constant attack by activist groups that regularly pushed legislation for multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS), anti-preemption and school integrated pest management (IPM). In the spring of 2000, activist groups circumvented the state's agriculture department (its pesticide regulatory agency), and persuaded the board of education to take up onerous, unworkable school IPM regulations that would have made controlling pests at schools difficult.

Harrington accompanied Carter throughout the state for two weeks while they developed and executed a lobbying strategy, enlisting the help of a member of the board of education. Within 24 hours,

they convinced the board member to rewrite the regulation to the industry's liking. The suggestions were adopted, and are still in place today. And since, the activists have rarely challenged the industry at the state level, according to Carter.

"Without Gene, this victory wouldn't have happened," Carter says.

"I'm often approached by people in the industry with concerns about regulation," Harrington says. "I do everything I can to help."

In 2007, Arizona was going through a sunset review of its Structural Pest Control Commission to determine whether the commission was worth retaining or should be abolished. Harrington and the NPMA worked with PMPs in Arizona for six years to make sure the industry's interests were kept in mind when the state dissolved the commission and moved pest control regulation to the Department of Administration and, ultimately, the Department of Agriculture.

"Initially, we supported retaining the commission, but legislators decided to abolish it," Harrington explains. "Then we said we need to be put in the Department of Agriculture, not the Department of Environment. My experience in Arizona was akin to a 500-level course about public policy."

Harrington acknowledges regions of the country are affected by the pest management industry differently. For example, lawmakers in the Southeast are more aware of the industry and its value because pest pressure in that region is much higher than, say, in the Northeast. As a result, lawmakers in the Northeast



Harrington (right) participating in an August 2013 business roundtable at NPMA's office.



aren't as aware of the pest management industry when making policy.

Since Harrington started at NPMA, the association's relationship with the EPA has improved — but he credits that primarily as a result of the work of CEO and fellow Hall of Famer Bob Rosenberg. Harrington has focused more on congressional, state legislative and administrative, and other federal regulatory

issues. Still, he and Rosenberg worked closely on several issues (including collaborating on a long-running legislative column in *Pest Management Professional* magazine), and Harrington credits Rosenberg for getting the opportunity to work at NPMA.

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him," Harrington says. "He hired me."

Other mentors include Carter, who educated Harrington about bird, rodent and snake control; Gene Chafe, the general manager of Kennewick, Wash.-

**LEFT: Fly-fishing in Idaho. RIGHT: With wife, Kelly, and twin sons, Logan and Quinn.**



based Senske Pest Control, who was instrumental in educating Harrington about industry operations, products and other aspects of field work; and Ken Frederick, a Tucson PMP with whom Harrington on the aforementioned issue in Arizona.

The pesticide issues that Harrington and NPMA's public policy staff are working on these days include pollinator protection and the ongoing evaluation of pesticide use.

"This and future rounds of EPA's pesticide evaluations are going to be more rigorous than in the past, which poses challenges for industry," he says. "We won't lose many compounds outright, but labels will be much tighter." **PMP**

You can reach Walsh, a PMP contributor, at [jwalsheditor@gmail.com](mailto:jwalsheditor@gmail.com).

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# Half of R&R



Don Reiersen takes cockroach and ant control from Mike Rust's lab to the field. **John Walsh** Contributor

**T**here's yin and yang, peanut butter and jelly, Lennon and McCartney — and then there's Rust and Reiersen. But that partnership might not have happened if it wasn't for Dr. Walter Ebeling, a fellow Hall of Famer (Class of 2003) known by many as the father of urban entomology.

**Don Reiersen**, a native Californian who was born in Pasadena, was studying to become a high school biology teacher at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) when he answered a job posting for a student assistant to Ebeling in 1962. Soon Reiersen was maintaining and studying cockroaches. The former Eagle Scout entered UCLA's graduate entomology program and worked with Dr. John Belkin, studying mosquitos and other insects important to public health.

Belkin told Reiersen the only way to earn a Ph.D. with him was to sacrifice his job with Ebeling and work full-time as doctoral student. Newly married, Reiersen couldn't afford to do that financially. He continued working with Ebeling, transferred schools and earned a master's degree at Long Beach State, where his wife, Sandra, also earned a master's degree in education.

Ebeling and Reiersen, who spent summers as a boy



working on his grandparents' farm in South Dakota, worked together for 11 years studying the practical aspects of cockroach control, including insecticide effectiveness and mode-of-action trials. But in 1975, Ebeling retired, and UCLA closed the entomology department — splitting it between the University of California, Riverside and the University of California, Davis.

Reiersen chose Riverside, and when he arrived on campus, the university was in process of replacing Ebeling.

That person was Mike Rust, a young Ph.D. from the University of Kansas who studied under Dr. William Bell, professor of entomology. Reiersen, a research scientist, was assigned to support Rust.

"He was young, intelligent, capable and enthusiastic," Reiersen says of Rust, his Hall of Fame colleague (Class of 2007). "We got along especially well. Mike hadn't had a full-time academic position before this one, and I had been there 11 years. We were off and running. Academia was this whole publish-or-perish thing, and Mike was going to be examined and tested a lot before he was to be granted tenure. I was eager to help him earn it, which he did on the first try within five years. I helped him build and organize his lab, and did everything I could to help him get his research published. Being published is the ultimate. We do it to publicize information and have our research findings available to the public."

Besides his own unique areas of interest, Rust continued and expanded the work of Ebeling because he realized the importance of Ebeling's groundbreaking urban entomology research — and the value of working with pest management professionals (PMPs). Reiersen, too, liked laboratory and field work, as well as pest management in outdoor wildlife and recreational areas.

Rust and Reiersen's relationship is tight: They're on the same wavelength, people reference them together. They attend conferences together, they've run marathons together, their families are friends, and they've worked together more than 35 years.



Reiersen liked lab and field work, as well as working in outdoor wildlife and recreational areas.

## Field work

Besides his research on termites and fleas, two areas of study Reiersen has focused on throughout his career are cockroach and Argentine ant control. With both, he has focused on the biology and behavior of the pests, as well as the potential products used to control them and how to maximize that. Many of the products they've investigated and screened were unregistered, numbered experimental insecticides — a few of which were eventually registered for use by PMPs. He has monitored insecticide resistance and documented which products were and were not affected by resistance; he also has researched various ways to combat that. His studies have proven that small amounts of pesticides are often better than large amounts — specifically, lower concentrations of thiamethoxam and fipronil.

"It's counterintuitive that less is better, but that's usually the case," he says. "We've used the same concept for the past 15 to 20 years. Initially, we tested the concept on cockroaches, but expanded the concept to several other pest insects as well."

Reiersen also has researched areawide control of yellowjackets, determining which nasty wasps are pests and which ones aren't. For western scavenging species, he developed an areawide control program for multiple acres — not just in back yards but in specialty areas such as around schools and in waterparks, vineyards and orchards.

With much of his research, Reiersen conducts initial tests of ideas in Rust's lab, then tests them in the field to confirm effectiveness and mode of action. He calls PMPs or property owners to assist him when testing materials.

"We worked with PMPs who couldn't get the unregistered material we were testing unless they

## PMP Hall of Fame

# Class of 2014

**Name:** Don Reiersen

**Organization:** University of California at Riverside (retired)

**Title:** Staff Research Associate, Department of Entomology, University of California-Riverside (retired)

**Years in pest management:** xx

**Industry mentors:** Mike Katz, Corky Mizer and Dr. Gary Bennett, among others

**Key positions held:** staff research associate, department of entomology, University of California-Riverside

**Crowning achievements:** work with cockroaches (biology, behavior and control); work with Argentine ants (biology, behavior and control); work with yellowjackets (identification and area-wide control)

had special permission," he says. "Those PMPs were the first to know something was coming."

For example, Reiersen was testing a fipronil bait on Argentine ants on the Channel Islands off the coast of Santa Cruz. The PMPs who were helping him wanted to try it on their own, but the bait wasn't registered yet.

At one point, repellency was becoming an big issue for the industry, so the Rust-Reiersen team developed the choice box, which was used to study repellents among various insect populations. When chemical resistance was problematic, Reiersen helped developed a spray strategy to counter the problem.

## Mentoring

In addition to Rust, Reiersen has learned from various mentors in the industry throughout the years. Among the many are:

- Mike Katz and the team of research entomologists at Western Exterminator who assisted in several of Reiersen's research projects;
- Corky Mizer, owner of San Diego-based Corky's Pest Control;
- Dr. Gary Bennett, a fellow Hall of Famer (Class of 2006) who has given him tips on making contacts in the field and getting good cooperation from PMPs; and
- Pat Copp from Orkin, who has worked on many cockroach and ant control projects and has helped bridge the gap between scientists and PMPs.

On the flip side, Reiersen was mentor to many academics in the industry, including professors Dr. Jules Silverman at North Carolina State University, Dr. Arthur Appel at Auburn University, and Dr. Linda Bui at Louisiana State University.

"We became very close with almost every graduate student Mike took on," he says. "I'm proud of when people say I'm an extension of Mike. I tend to be more available because Mike is so busy, and the students and I are constantly in the lab together. One of my roles



Reiersen enjoys traveling, especially to Hawaii with his family once a year.



was to test the students' ideas and help develop them in the lab."

### Thankful and content

Even though Reiersen retired in 2007, he was on rehire for two-and-a-half years with UC-Riverside.

"They couldn't keep me on rehire any longer," he says. "But six months ago, the university asked me to consider returning part time — 45 percent time is the maximum you can work on rehire. In the meantime, I volunteer and help Mike some, but I prefer to be paid. Mike is considering starting two grants on which I would assist and help organize and run."

An avid jogger (actually a Boston Marathoner), Reiersen enjoys traveling, especially to Hawaii once a year. In 1999, he received a medical scare when he was diagnosed with an acoustic neuroma, a brain tumor that was removed. The benign tumor left him deaf in one ear, but he considers himself lucky to have no other lasting effects.

He's also thankful for his career and history with Rust.

"I've traveled all over the world doing urban entomology work," he says. "Mike has given me the freedom and confidence to do such work."

**Rust and Reiersen's relationship is tight: They're on the same wavelength and people reference them together.**



Throughout the years, Reiersen never entertained the idea of leaving the industry, or even taking a different job within it. He was approached by the industry several times, and the state asked him to work for it, but he was having too much fun.

"I couldn't think of a better working environment," he says. "I'm very content with where I am. If Mike had left the university or changed direction, things might have been different." **PMP**

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# Heat Assault 500X



## HEAT ASSAULT

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# An Experimental Success

**Action Pest tests two Bayer solutions to see whether either can diminish the company callback rate.**



**Scott Robbins**

Scott Robbins has been technical director for Evansville, Ind.-based Action Pest Control for about 15 years. Almost from the day he took on the role, he says, "I wanted to get away from truck-mounted application equipment for exterior application." In 2009, Robbins was able to make the move, converting most of company from low-dose application power sprayers, which took up a lot of room on the trucks, to backpack sprayers.

"We saw no change in our callback percentage," he admits — which, while not bad, could be improved.

In mid-2010, Robbins began talking with his sales representative from Bayer Environmental Science, a business unit of Bayer CropScience, about using Suspend SC.

Trying it out a few months later, "it was remarkable," Robbins reports. "We saw 11 percent reduction in callbacks in a year."

Because he talks regularly with his rep, Robbins knew that Bayer had plans for another version in the product line: Suspend Polyzone. He knew SC was a "gateway" to the new Suspend product. That move was made in 2013, with positive feedback.

But Robbins wanted hard and fast numbers, not just anecdotal evidence from technicians. He set up an experiment, with two of the company's six branches given Suspend SC and the others Suspend Polyzone. He accounted for the regional and weather differences to limit any variables into the data.

At the end of the 8-month test, Suspend Polyzone came out slightly ahead, with a 4.5 percent retreat rate (retreats were limited to calls for ants, spiders and crickets). For the branches with Suspend SC, the callback rate was slightly higher at 5.2 percent.

While that might not seem like much, considering the company's technicians made 24,134 service stops, that meant that there were 169 fewer callbacks for techs using Suspend Polyzone. That translates to roughly a full month's work for a single technician, and \$4,225 in savings (at the conservative estimate of \$25/callback), if all the branches had been using Suspend Polyzone.

"That's a pretty considerable difference," Robbins

says. "Even though the products have the same active ingredient and usage rates. Veteran techs see the difference in the field."

Action Technician Jaima Cartwright reports Suspend Polyzone has made a big difference for her accounts, particularly those with odorous house ants (OHA) issues.

"She loves Suspend Polyzone," Robbins says, noting that the product has become the company's standard maintenance product for general pest accounts overall. There are a few odd pests or

uncommon situations that require other solutions, but for most everyday treatments, Suspend Polyzone is the product of choice.

Many companies manage their product purchase by analyzing cost for finished gallon. Robbins considers the fact that by doing fewer callbacks, his technicians are more productive and his customers are happier, "which is much more valuable than saving pennies per gallon," he says.

In addition to the Suspend SC vs. Suspend Polyzone experiment, Robbins uses his own home as a test subject. He doesn't treat his house bi-monthly like most of his customers.

"I don't make routine scheduled applications," he says. "I wait until there is a problem and I treat it."

Recently, field crickets were an issue. Robbins treated the perimeter of his house — and a couple of evenings later, while taking out the garbage, he noticed how much quieter his yard was compared with that of his next-door neighbor. "Polyzone had done exactly what it was supposed to do," he says.

The product has even succeeded for the company's legacy quarterly customers. There's been no increase in callback rate even for those customers.

"All along, our relationship with Bayer has been very positive," Robbins says. "They match their products to our services. It's a fantastic product. It performs as Bayer says it will. Suspend SC is a great product, and Polyzone is an improvement on a great product."



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# A pioneer



Floridian Dempsey R. Sapp Sr. helped create pest control laws and bring respect to the profession. **John Walsh** Contributor

If the pest management industry had its own version of Mount Rushmore, **Dempsey R. Sapp Sr.** would be one of the four on it. The pioneer has been many things: a farmer, typist, WWII veteran, entomologist, pest control operator and business owner.

Born in 1922, Sapp grew up on his family's farm in New River, Fla. After graduating from high school in 1940, he worked in a local courthouse typing various documents including wills and deeds. He enlisted in the Navy in 1943 and was active in the European and Pacific Theatres. While in the Navy, he enrolled in radio school and communications training after taking a typing test, during which he typed 136 words a minute. The world record at the time was 144.

Sapp enrolled at the University of Florida (UF) with the help of the G.I. Bill. Originally, he wanted to become a lawyer, but he ended up in the entomology field because of financial necessity. One day, his wife, Margie, told him they were going to be parents. That news spurred him to get a better-paying job than the paper route he had. The pest control department on campus was hiring, and the job paid \$40 a month. Sapp's good friend Earl Dixon introduced him to Dr. John Creighton, an entomologist who hired Sapp because of his agricultural background. A year later, a supervisory position that paid \$100 a month became available. Creighton asked Sapp to manage the pest control department, but to do so, he first had to take an entomology course, which was taught by Dr. Larry Hetrick, another entomologist. Sapp, took the course, liked it and forgot about law school. He graduated from UF in 1948 with bachelor of science degree.

## Into the business

Wanting to start his own business, Sapp earned a master's degree in entomology from UF in 1949 because he thought it would serve him well. Two days after receiving it, he opened Florida Pest Control & Chemical Co. in Gainesville, Fla., with his business partner, Roy Roig, whom he met in college. Opening



a pest control business in September was difficult because winter was nearing and people didn't think about pest control during that time of year. After the first five months in business, Sapp told his wife he might have to get a different job; but the business improved because of the termite pressure in the spring and the postwar home-building boom.

The industry standard for treating slab construction at the time was to drill on the inside of a structure next to the foundation wall. Pest control operators needed a method to treat interior expansion joints from the outside. Butch Sinclair, a student who worked for Sapp, had a solution. He proposed drilling from the outside wall and using a quarter-inch pipe under the slab to treat the underlying fill dirt and expansion joint. They tried it, and to Sapp's knowledge, it was the first subterranean termite treatment performed this way.

**Sapp's first job in the industry was working for an entomologist at the University of Florida.**

## PMP Hall of Fame *Class of 2014*

**Name:** Dempsey R. Sapp Sr.

**Organization:** Florida Pest Control

**Title:** owner (retired)

**Years in pest management:** 68

**Industry mentors:** Drs. John Creighton, Larry Hetrick and Andrew Rogers – all entomologists

**Key positions held:** owner of Florida Pest Control & Chemical Co.; president of Florida Pest Control Association

**Crowning achievements:** \$1 million gift to the University of Florida for an entomology chair; affecting pest control legislation in Florida; starting and growing Florida Pest Control

During the 1950s, the persistent chlordane was the pesticide of choice for termites, and until pests starting showing resistance toward the pesticide, monthly, bimonthly and quarterly treatments weren't necessary.

Florida Pest Control's breakeven point was four years after it started, according to Sapp. His business partner, Roig, wanted to leave the business, and Sapp couldn't change his mind after talking to him for two hours. Roig parted ways with \$10,000 – the worth of his half of the business at the time – and bought a farm.

After surviving its first five years in business, the company grew quickly. The first office included a retail garden store and offered garden supplies. The business grew so fast, Sapp had a difficult time keeping up with expansion. Throughout the years, termite control was about 40 percent of the business. After 40 years, the company became solvent.

"We'd buy a place, move into it, outgrow it, and get a bigger place," he says.

Today, the company has 20 offices in Florida and more than 500 employees, including graduate entomologists and professional technicians. It's considered one of the biggest family owned pest management companies in the United States. Even though Sapp retired from active work in 1987, he never really completely retired. He's board emeritus for the company.

### Industry at large

While expanding his company, Sapp was active in the broader pest management industry, particularly with the Florida Pest Control Association (now Florida Pest Management Association). He attended his first association meeting in 1946 while a student at UF, where the association held its meetings. Before 1947, the pest control industry in the state was barely regulated. The association recognized this and sponsored the original Structural Pest Control Act, Chapter 482, which became effective in 1947. For the most part, the industry wasn't very reputable until it was regulated.

After a decade of involvement with the it, Sapp was elected president of the Florida association in 1958, when he appointed staff to help rewrite Chapter 482. As a result of that work, new legislation was adopted in 1959,

**Sapp says his son, D.R. Sapp Jr. (right), has done an excellent job with the family company.**

the same year Sapp was elected to serve a three-year term on the Structural Pest Control Commission of Florida. With his positions on the commission and the Florida Pest Management Association, Sapp affected a great deal of pest control regulation, some of which is still in effect today.

### Recognition

In 1987, the industry started to recognize Sapp's work. That year he was the recipient of the first Pioneer Award presented by the Florida Pest Management Association.

In 1999, the founder of Florida Pest Control & Chemical Co. gave his alma mater \$1 million for an endowed professorship/entomology chair, called the Margie B. and Dempsey R. Sapp Sr. Distinguished

Endowed Professorship in Structural Pest Control and Urban Entomology, which is housed in the university's Institute of Food and Agriculture Services. At the time, it was the first professorship funded exclusively by a pest management professional (PMP). The endowment supports the work of Dr. Phil Koehler, a professor of entomology who oversees UF's Urban Pest Management Laboratory.







“I always wanted him to go into the business, but it can be a big mistake forcing people to do something they don’t want to do. He worked his way up the ranks.”

“The advent of Termidor put us back in the termiticide business,” he says.

Sapp says his son, Dempsey R. Sapp Jr., has done an excellent job taking over and running the company, which he did 22 years ago.

“I always wanted him to go into the business, but it can be a big mistake forcing people to do something they don’t want to do,” the elder Sapp says. “He worked his way up the ranks.”

Nowadays, the 92-year-old lives on his farm in Bradford County, Fla. On many an afternoon, one can find him relaxing under the gazebo by his pool, occasionally taking calls from reporters asking about his life. **PMP**

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In 2001, the Floridian was recognized by Gamma Sigma Delta, the Honor Society of Agriculture. He also received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from UF in 2005 for his achievements and contributions to the industry, state and students.

### Looking back

The biggest change in the industry since Sapp started in it 68 years ago is the continuous change of materials PMPs use.



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