

Stephen Manheimer Looks Back at 40 Years of Game Changers

Stephen Manheimer, executive vice president at Kerry Ingredients & Flavours, and a member of a family that has served the F&F industry for decades, attended the 1974 meeting of the Essential Oil Association (EOA) at San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel. Speaking to delegates of the International Federation of Essential Oils and Aroma Trades (IFEAT) from the same hotel, this time as a Medal Lecturer, Manheimer noted that of the 81 associate and full member companies present at the 1974 meeting, just 20 exist today. The times have certainly changed. Two years after that EOA meeting, widespread essential oil fraud from Indonesia and the industry's subsequent inability

to hold the responsible parties accountable, led to the formation, in Kyoto in 1977, of IFEAT. "Sometimes in life, bad things teach you good lessons," said Manheimer. Later, he added, "The traditional trade associations have been hugely helpful as a place to pool our shared concerns to help navigate the storms. These organizations allow us to generate the critical mass needed to deal with regulators and the NGO community alike."

Since the 1974 EOA meeting, much has changed. China evolved from a planned economy in which business meetings featured readings from Mao's Little Red Book, to a market-driven economy in which business leaders drove Mercedes. Population and economic expansion led to China becoming a massive market for consumer goods companies and a key producer of many aromatic materials formerly produced in the West. As the country begins to direct its populations to the cities, Manheimer warned, "Essential oil production, which takes place in the Chinese countryside, requires much labor. Consequently, it is imperative that we offer the

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From left: Michael Boudjouk (Medallion International, Inc.), Medal Lecturer Stephen Manheimer and Ramón Bordas (Bordas SA); photo: Laure Moutet.

farmers economic incentives to continue planting and harvesting these vital crops."

Later, he said, "Natural products are here to stay. We must, as an industry, figure out, in the current business environment, what the cost drivers are. We then must be sure the growers are receiving their due rewards for these efforts, while understanding the environmental impacts. The producers and interested parties must step up and share the costs associated with regulatory compliance; without it, materials will be dropped from the palate."

Over the last 40 years, Manheimer noted there has been profound progress in technologies such as natural and synthetic molecule production; automated labs; agricultural techniques that produce more efficiently and eliminate or reduce agricultural residues; flavor authenticity; and the mechanics of taste and smell.

Perhaps reflecting on his own industry experience, Manheimer left the attendees with the following thoughts: "The family enterprises remain the bedrock and foundation of the essential oil production and processing industries, where knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. This is also true for many specialty chemical and distribution enterprises. Their long-term view and commitments have contributed greatly to the growth of our industry and to the global consumer brands served. Family businesses will continue for the foreseeable future. Besides the old family businesses, there are always new sprouts popping up in spite of the current formidable entry barriers."



September 1974 cover of *Perfumer & Flavorist* precursor, *Cosmetics & Perfumery*, which covered the San Francisco meeting of the International Congress of Essential Oils, a forerunner of IFEAT.

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