



Forty Years of Understanding Food's Movement after the Farm:

A History of the Food Distribution Research Society, 1967-2007

Although isolation most often has characterized professional organizations and has kept disparate but related bodies from benefiting from knowledge exchanges, there existed among a small core of broad-minded visionaries a desire to bridge one of these gaps. This group particularly had in mind bonding in one organization three separated facets that related to food distribution. The idea was simple; agricultural economists at land-grant colleges, public-sector employees of state and federal agricultural agencies, along with representatives of companies directly involved in distributing food would be able to benefit from idea exchanges. The result of this thinking was a somewhat unique academic society. It was different because of its expressed determination to eliminate a vacuum of examining food distribution only theoretically without making a very serious attempt at gaining anything directly from food-industry practitioners' actual experiences and practical applications. Thus, the primary idea was for dependent learning through a development of a three-way partnership.

Two pioneer members were instrumental in meeting this goal. Professor Jarvis L. Cain and business executive Douglas J. Richardson might have represented two different backgrounds and perspectives, but they possessed a common resolve and purpose to work at establishing an organization that could feed off their varied experiences and knowledge. At the time when these two gentlemen were joining forces, with others, to form a society, Cain was on the faculty of the University of Maryland as an agricultural economist, and Richardson was a food-company executive involved with industrial relations and trade-association issues. Enthusiasm became the

chief characteristic these two men shared about a need for a professional body that could combine the scholarship and rigorous discipline of the academic world with the dynamism and energy of the business community. Their strong resolve to make this possibility a reality enlisted others who agreed with their vision into the mixture. Thus, a small network representing higher education, government, and food distributing formed an alliance that led to the formal establishment in 1969 of the Food Distribution Research Society. In addition to Cain and Richardson's vital contributions, Donald J. O'Neill, Dale L. Anderson, Theodore W. Leed, Lewis F. Norwood, Jr., Eric C. Oesterle, James F. Ritchie, Ray Hoecker and Paul Schafer also had responsible roles in developing a viable, working alliance.

Although the formal incorporation occurred in 1969, preliminary and exploratory actions for joint activities among academicians, entrepreneurs, and government servants had begun in Washington, D.C. on May 5 and 6, 1960. No publication of papers had resulted from their sessions, but agreement had followed for another meeting. Set for Columbus, Ohio, it more or less had adhered to the same informal guidelines which had been witnessed a year earlier in the nation's capital. This pattern of men gathering from different working backgrounds would continue through the sixties. After an assembly in the Buckeye State, a variety of locations welcomed attendees interested in discussing a range of issues with pertinence and importance to the distribution of food. Hosting these conclaves in almost all cases was at Land-Grant universities. Topeka, Kansas, had been the only exception, and its assemblage on June 3-5, 1962, had represented the last time convention goers would be coming together before autumn. Thus when the campuses at East Lansing, Michigan, Amherst, Massachusetts, Columbia, Missouri, Newark, Delaware, West Lafayette, Indiana, and Blacksburg, Virginia, had served as subsequent sites, these early gatherings of individuals interested in exchanging relevant ideas and

theories about all the multiple and complicated phases of food distribution, their arrivals for this common purpose had occurred primarily during late October.

Of the preliminary gatherings, the one at Newark, Delaware between September 25 and 27, 1966, achieved the most concrete accomplishments. It was there that the delegates agreed to a motion to form an association with a constitution and by-laws. Thereupon, a committee drafted these documents for presentation and approval at the next gathering. As a result on the agenda at the business meeting held at the Purdue University between October 22 and 24, 1967, delegates were asked to vote on a constitution. After their approval, a next order of business was electing a slate of officers under the recently adopted organizational charter. The resultant nominations and elections by the 1967 convention elevated these men to assume the first executive positions under the new constitution:

President: Theodore W. Leed, University of Massachusetts

Vice-President and President-Elect: Donald J. O'Neill, Grand Union Company

Secretary/Treasurer: Dale L. Anderson, United States Department of Agriculture

Directors: Lewis F. Norwood, Federal Extension Service; Eric C. Oesterle, Purdue University; Harry F. Krueckeberg, University of Delaware; George L. Baker, Super Market Institute; Harold J. Rafson, TOPCO Associates; and Earl E. Mason, Cooperative Food Distributors of America

Reflective of the initial purpose of bringing the talents and experiences of diverse backgrounds into participation, the men elected to be members of the fledgling society's first officer corps certainly accomplished a fundamental goal of great importance to the founders. Government, education, and business were equitably represented among the first officers. In terms of positions in the organization, only one major addition resulted. While meeting in 1969, delegates decided the organization needed four vice-presidents. Thus, they enacted a

constitutional amendment that empowered the president to choose assistants designated as vice-presidents and endowed with responsibilities over programs, research, education, and membership.

With a constitution and officers in place, formal incorporation became the next priority. This officially occurred on February 20, 1970, under the laws of the state of Maryland. Having successfully achieved a legal procedural step, the Food Distribution Research Society was now a registered non-profit educational organization. Under its approved charter, FDRS would direct itself toward achieving four stated goals. First and foremost, the organization would seek to “provide a forum for exchange of ideas and information and to act as a clearing house for food distribution research and education.” Secondly, the society’s membership would strive to “encourage applied research, assist with problem definition, provide coordination, foster implementation of results, and assure feedback between researchers and users of results.” Third would be its efforts to “assist with food industry education and training, as well as implementation of new ideas and concepts.” And finally, FDRS would intend to “provide for professional development, advancement and recognition in the food distribution field.”

True to its stated objectives and reasons for being, the Food Distribution Research Society has stayed the course since its incorporation. The modifications which have been made through the organization’s forty years of existence reflect new necessities as well as additional opportunities for greater service. For example, the number of vice-presidents increased to six with officers added with responsibilities over communications as well as a scholarship prize (more on this later). The by-laws of FDRS’s Constitution were clear and specific, spelling out in careful detail what each office and every committee would be authorized to do along with noting election and appointment procedures. With allowance for constructive changes as the

membership convening at annual business sessions would determine as necessary, the constitution has evolved into a somewhat fluid and dynamic document reflective of all the altering requirements confronted by an organization faced with new challenges and opportunities. By approving amendments, FDRS's members at organizational business meetings on October 14, 1987, October 14, 1995, and October 17, 2000, tweaked the constitution to reflect better how the society could serve not only its members better but also the food-distribution industry generally.

A check of past presidents from 1968 through 2007 reveals several noteworthy trends. Frank Panyko's elevation to the highest office in FDRS during 1991 represented the final time the organization's leadership would pass to someone from outside the halls of higher education; Panyko had moved into the presidency from The Food Institute. All his successors would be drafted from inside higher education, whereas his predecessors had brought a mixture of backgrounds and experiences to the top position at FDRS. In addition to agricultural economists, holders of the presidency included these individuals with their diverse resumes:

YEAR	PRESIDENT	AFFILIATION
1969	Donald J. O'Neill	Grand Union Company
1971	James F. Ritchie	Victory Markets
1973	Dean W. Jones	Consultant
1975	Harry Schreiber, Jr.	Peat, Marwick & Mitchell
1977	Lewis F. Norwood, Jr.	NARGUS
1979	Gerald E. Peck	NAWGA
1981	Dick Polk	Polk Equipment Company
1983	Paul Canavan	Stop & Shop

1984	Harold S. Ricker	USDA/AMS
1985	Douglas J. Richardson, Jr.	American Home Foods
1989	Gordon Flynn	Gordon Flynn & Associates
1990	Charles R. Handy	USDA/ERS/NED
1991	Frank Panyko	The Food Institute

The organization not only stopped passing its presidency to non-academicians, but it began entrusting its highest office to women. Constance Falk from New Mexico State University was the gender-breaking pioneer; she was awarded this coveted honor in 1994. And some five years later, Barbara James from Ohio State University became the second woman to assume FDRS's leadership while Dixie Watts Reaves of Virginia Tech University assumed the presidency in 2005. From origins as a male-led body, the Food Distribution Research Society changed its composition and attitudes, this to incorporate into the organization persons from across previously guarded male-female barriers.

A final presidential trend involves the geographical spread represented by the origins of the organization's top officers. Unlike many societies with tendencies to reward only members who have come from certain areas of the nation and who have received the most prestigious "pedigree" degrees, FDRS has been different. Throughout its existence, the society has consistently been open to anointing talented men and women with its top office without regard to sectional bias. Thus, FDRS presidents have not only represented institutions from everywhere in the United States, but these people have held advanced degrees from every section as well. This willingness to be cosmopolitan has had the effect of removing snobbery, and it has increased unpretentious fellowship and friendships among the membership. As was heard from several people interviewed for this project, real possibilities have existed for their travel in any direction

nationally with result being prospects of finding friends made from mutual affiliations with FDRS.

As an organization with strong ties to agricultural economists, FDRS recognized early the need for providing an outlet for scholarly contributions. Not surprisingly as a result, one of the society's first decisive acts was to establish a publication specializing in topics related to food distribution. The decision to publish the *Journal of Food Distribution Research* came in 1969. Volume one, number one contained papers delivered at the tenth annual meeting on the campus of the University of Maryland, and as such, the initial issue represented a reprinting of the proceedings of the tenth annual meeting. Contributions varied from a general presentation about research opportunities and challenges in food distribution for the upcoming decade to predictions about future changes in how food would reach consumers. In a keynote address delivered by Harvard Lecturer Emeritus William Applebaum and entitled "Challenges to Food Distribution Research in the 1970's," the speaker envisioned the decade's issues to be centered around work productivity, central packaging of meat, better quality control of produce, increased brand identification, improved store-location strategy, and greater product profitability.

From Applebaum's crystal ball about the future, there followed a variety of topics offered by presenters from mixed vocational backgrounds. First by the listeners on hand to hear diverse speakers and later by readers of their presentations in the first issue of the *Journal*, knowledge spread from several perspectives. Marketing specialist Pete Purcell, for example, shared how one company was applying a totally different concept to how it was presenting fresh fruits and vegetables. It had discovered a clever way of eliminating the costly shipping of lettuce-wrapping layers; its solution was packaging complete salad mixes of shredded lettuce. According to the analyses of Professor Daniel I. Padberg of Cornell University, supermarkets were not going to be

viable grocery outlets in the future because of their replacement by ultramarkets. Not all predictions about the future turned out to be correct. In the case of Howard L. Green's "Current Limitations of EDP," his doubts about data processing's usefulness to food distribution proved to be wrong. Of more practical value to shippers of produce was Robert E. Hardenburg's discussion, "Refrigeration Requirements for Perishables," that detailed and specified the optimal temperature and relative humidity recommendations for the storage and transport of fresh fruits and vegetables after their harvests. As much as this research horticulturist offered specific suggestions, his USDA colleague from ARS, mechanical engineer William Goddard, was doubtful refrigerated vehicles could consistently maintain such ideal conditions. His research indicated that the problem was finding a way to maintain a completely even distribution of both cold and humidity to all sections of an individual shipping trailer.

FDRS issued two more issues of its *Journal* during the first year of publication. Both followed a somewhat similar theme. The first was a bibliography of progressing food-distribution research projects under way in 1969, whereas the second updated the activity into 1970. Both exercises were useful inclusions because they offered scholars knowledge about ongoing scholarship related to food distribution.

Future editors continued as useful to the *Journal's* readership a pair of patterns set in the first issue. For each volume, the opening issue contained proceedings from the last annual meeting. Since each session had followed a particular theme, the included entries reflected what had been presented earlier by readers of papers. The basis of every essay given at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, between September 30 and October 2, 1985, centered on "Emerging Opportunities, Problems, and Issues in the Food Industry." This applied as well to William T. Boehm, director of economic research for the Kroger Company, who delivered the keynote

address; he entitled his presentation, “Food Distribution Research: Our Challenges and Responsibility.” He defined three emerging issues in the distribution of food: the constantly changing nature of retailer outlets for food commodities, the pace, both at retail and in the office, of technological innovation and adoption, and finally, the increased variability of the external environment.

One change occurring in the *Journal* reflected deviations from the original group who had participated in and belonged to the Food Distribution Research Society during its infancy. Disappearing almost entirely from annual gatherings of the organization and contributing what might be called practical lessons as opposed to more theoretical knowledge were men like Douglas Richardson who were active insiders in the actual distribution of food to consumers. A transitioning of the *Journal* from a publication easily comprehended by people in the industry to one intended as an outlet for academicians’ scholarly research with usually an econometric basis can be seen in the ten articles embodied in a second issue from volume XVII. A more formal organization characterized each contribution; the consequences were articles beginning with abstracts and concluding with results. In essence, the *Journal* had advanced from being a publication that benefited and interested both university professors of agricultural economics and participants in food distribution to becoming a refereed academic publication intended mainly for a scholarly readership. In its current state, the cycle to inclusion, according to Editor Albert Allen, follows a rigid pattern. After receipts to him of internet-submitted manuscripts, his responsibility involves making preliminary judgments about quality and appropriateness. If in Allen’s professional opinion, merit exists, the article then passes to a team of “blind” referees for them to evaluate further and to suggest changes. Then after a submitted and judged work has satisfied all conditions, the result will be its eventual appearance in the *Journal*. Given these

expectations and parameters, Allen has been accepting for publication only about twenty-five percent of everything that has arrived for his consideration and inclusion.

A brief analysis of the *Journal of Food Distribution Research* for March 2007 demonstrates the publication's evolution. Both editors and all but one of twenty-five editorial review-board members had university affiliations, and the one exception worked for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Among the first seven "Research Reports" which appeared in this particular issue were the following titles: "High-Value Agriculture and Structural Changes in the Indian Meat Industry: Implications for Agribusiness and Small Farmers"; "Dynamic Economic Relationships Among Danish Markets for Pork, Chicken, and Beef"; "Niche Market Meats in Bulgaria"; "The Effects of Amendment 13 on the Fishing Port of Gloucester, Massachusetts"; "Decreasing Brazil's Transportation Costs through Improvement in Infrastructure: A General Equilibrium Analysis on Soybean Complex World Market"; "Canadian Food Processors and Retailers: Measuring Changes in Concentration and Efficiency Since the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement"; and "Who Shops at Supermarkets?: A Study of Retail Patronage in Nicaragua." Obvious to any reader of many of these titles was their outward thrust into topics without much direct bearing on food distribution in the United States. Something else can be gleaned from examining the multiple authors of these studies and the twenty others published here in this issue; everyone—either in a capacity as a faculty member, graduate student, or extension researcher—had firm connections to an institution of higher education. Finally, the apparent audience to whom all research had been directed was obviously fellow academicians. A cursory glance at these articles, if contrasted to ones appearing in the *Journal's* first releases, indicates the importance the later authors had given to employing statistics, graphs, and mathematical formulas in the process of developing ideas. For some FDRS

pioneers like Douglas Richardson without backgrounds in more sophisticated methodology, the publication's movement away from practical, easy-to-understand articles has caused them to feel marginalized.

Changes in the *Journal* reflected who was now attending annual meetings and belonging to the organization. Gradually decreasing from both were individuals without university affiliations. In the Food Distribution Research Society's early history, the organization had been able to attract several persons from outside academia to its sessions both as contributors and as observers, but their attendance gradually dwindled. At the 2007 sessions in New Orleans, the theme was Food Defense and Protection of the Supply Chain. The keynote address, "Food Defense and Safety of the Food Supply Chain," was delivered by, Colonel John Hoffman, a senior research scholar at the National Center for Food Protection and Defense. Rick Mathews from the National Center for Biomedical Research and Training was also an important contributor to the program. A drying up of their financial gifts to the organization became one of the primary negative consequences of the general disappearance of representatives from industry. Without their presence, a positive result did emerge as compensation for an absence of lay people; FDRS truly had become a professional academic body with higher standards at its annual meetings and in its publication. Any comparison of early contents published in the *Journal* to what would be resulting later clearly highlights just how much scholarly improvement had come to FDRS. Unlike the earliest issues when the contents had been dominated by only a few contributors and different editorial guidelines, later standards imposed on prospective authors wishing to contribute articles to the *Journal of Food Distribution Research* resulted in a publication with contents certainly equal to that of all other scholarly publications in agricultural economics. Thus the result for academic contributors,

being able to add references to articles published in this first-class highly specialized periodical to resumes assisted in making claims for tenure and for higher professional ranks.

Members agreed that being able to gather annually for meetings held across the United States was one of the greatest attractions of FDRS membership. For everybody who was interviewed or surveyed for this study, consistency about enjoying chances to meet each year and renew friendships occurred. When asked to point to one particular location as the most outstanding, a general consensus emerged that an opportunity for convening in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada had yielded the most memorable experience. Regardless of the cities selected for hosting conventions, local arrangement committees always provided fascinating tours and interesting guest speakers from either industry or government. No matter if members were guided through a supermarket chain's distribution center, a milk production facility, or an alligator farm, the results were the same; visitors were learning something more about the diverse elements of the food-distribution industry.

Boarding buses for guided tours represented only one positive aspect of going to annual meetings. A major theme characterized every once-a-year gathering of FDRS members. At Boston during 1974, the central topic was food industry productivity in an era of energy management, while at Orlando seven years later, attendees learned more about the food industry in the electronic age. Flanked around the annual business meeting where FDRS officers reported on the organization's financial condition and where issues of importance to the society opened to discussion and settlement were presentations of scholarly papers, receptions, and banquets. Through the generosity of William Applebaum, FDRS's first lifetime member and a person who left a financial endowment to the organization, awards began going from the society in 1978 to outstanding graduate students. Winners of these cash awards were invited to attend annual

meetings as fully funded guests of FDRS, and to the applause of members, they received cash prizes for their scholarly contributions to food distribution. What had begun as an award based on the best judged doctoral thesis expanded in 1987 and 1999 to include thereafter respectively secondary cash and travel prizes for the best submitted master's degree study and for meritorious non-thesis scholarly work. An ability of the organization to provide for this eventual recognition at its annual banquets, cover travel expenses, and award winners monetarily resulted from prudent investments of Applebaum's initial endowment of \$9,000. In little less than thirty years of Douglas Richardson managing this initial fund, annual dividend income has expanded to exceed \$6,900 on a portfolio worth more than \$212,000 in late 2007. An expanded endowment allowed FDRS to maintain its commitment to provide winners with paid expenses to the annual convention even when circumstances were as unusual as they were in 1992 when the winner had to be brought from New Zealand to greater Boston.

As FDRS matured as an organization, awarding service became regular features of annual conventions. Beginning in 1996, recognition followed for three contributions. To become a candidate for the Frank Panyko Distinguishing Service Award, members had to fulfill ten years of continuous membership, demonstrate outstanding service and leadership to the organization, and receive a nomination by a member of good standing. Between 1996 and 1998, veteran members Jarvis Cain, Douglas Richardson, and Ulrich (Carl) Toensmeyer gained recognition and praise as Panyko recipients for their valuable contributions. Unlike the reward for long service, another prize was initiated in 1996 to encourage younger members to continue their work in the organization. Known as the Patrick Byrne Award for Emerging Leadership, it was for individuals who were able to meet six criteria: ten or fewer years of continuous service in FDRS, membership on the FDRS board of directors, no experience as a society president,

documented contributions to the organization, demonstrated evidence of continued involvement as a FDRS leader, and nomination for the prize by a FDRS member in good standing. First honoree Rudy Nayga of Texas A & M University had a very special reason to be proud of becoming the initial winner; in 1996, he had the distinction of being able to add the Patrick Byrne prize to another accomplishment within FDRS. Only four years had passed since his superior dissertation had qualified him for an Applebaum Award. Being selected as recipients of Frank Panyko and Patrick Byrne awards meant recognition at annual meetings as well as receipt of plaques.

Another innovative breakthrough occurred for the first time at the 2000 convention held at Roanoke, Virginia. To encourage interest in and study of food distribution among both undergraduate and graduate students, FDRS began a case-study competition. By the rules, collegiate teams representing their institutions received advance notice about which industry would be the basis of a problem for scrutiny and eventual advice. Under review for preparation at New Orleans in 2007 was a subject related to a Louisiana sugar refiner. Members of one of three squads representing Mississippi State University told of gaining knowledge of the general topic and then setting out to learn as much as possible about this industry ahead of their travel to the convention. Once at the host hotel, their team consisting of a graduate student and three undergraduates received some general details about one sugar refiner and told to sequester themselves in a room for seven hours, this to work up a fifteen-minute Power Point presentation of their case study. Judged both as “a boost of confidence” and “a learning experiences,” the activity was one the participants found to be more positive than negative. In terms of what they considered to be ways of improving presentations, they advised that competitors be made aware of specific problems which need to be addressed in case studies, and they suggested better

feedbacks about the bases of judging and scoring teams' performances. A final competition added some color to corridors at conventions, and that was the poster contest. Submissions had to concern an aspect of food distribution, and judging was based on originality and content.

Beside the onset of various awards and contests, the Food Distribution Research Society was increasingly endeavoring in several different ways to become international in scope and membership. Survey refereed articles appearing recently in the organization's *Journal of Food Distribution Research*, and the result will indicate evidence of topics that address global issues. Moreover in a majority of cases, authors of these essays either have been holders of academic positions outside the United States or they have been immigrants to America. Checks of surnames and addresses in the FDRS member directory underscore just how much this society has broadened its appeal to attract men and women from several foreign countries. Examine, for example, the "2004 Member Directory and Handbook," and easily ferreted will be a readily apparent willingness for wanting a broadened and expanded membership base. Among the 197 individuals who were listed as members in 2004 are persons from Nigeria, Sweden, Italy, Canada, Finland, Japan, and China. In addition if surnames offer clues about nativity, then the subject of food distribution as a specialty field of study has drawn many foreign-born scholars to remain in the United States to pursue this interest at American universities and eventually to join FDRS. In 1996, for example, A. Desmond O'Rourke, a native of Northern Ireland, became the society's president. Finally as part of a strong attempt to internationalize FDRS, a study tour of Western Europe occurred in 2001. Subsequent visits to the United Kingdom, Spain, Canada, and Mexico have given those members participating invaluable opportunities for observing similarities and differences of processing and distributing food on another continent from what they had experienced and studied in the United States; and members able to go north and south

of the American border also enriched and broadened their minds about food distributing in Canada and Mexico.

Minutes from annual meetings of FDRS's Board of Directors emphasize how unselfishly these officers had always been willing to be to insure the preservation and enhancement of an organization for which so much endearment was felt. Investments were often a concern because of the vagaries of the stock market. For eighteen people attending a board meeting at Seattle on October 29, 1994, the financial news was not positive. Losses for 1993 totaled more than \$4,600 because expenses had outpaced incoming revenue by this amount. Overall at board meetings, reports about monetary placements were positive, however.

Other problems arose for attention at board meetings related to travel. One problem debated was the dilemma posed by the Applebaum winner. Since the recipient was living in New Zealand, a question arose about reimbursing his airfare to the United States. The board decided to pay for the travel and form a committee to consider travel limits. Ongoing as well at board meetings were discussions about what could be done to entice new people to join the organization and to retain existing members. With a membership hovering between 190 and 225, the Food Distribution Research Society required its members' unswerving loyalty and their on-time contributions to the treasury.

As a means of informing the membership of news related to food distribution, the society, its members and officers, and upcoming annual conventions, FDRS published a newsletter. Published irregularly in the beginning, these news reports were released at different times every year. Like the *Journal of Food Distribution Research*, evolving improvements occurred with newsletters. From being brief and without much data, this source of keeping the membership informed has progressed into a valuable supplement.

Such tools as desktop-publishing software have allowed for more professional-looking releases of timely information and reports.

Important as annual conventions, contests, awards, newsletters, and publication opportunities in the *Journal* have been, interviews with both younger and older members reveal the true strengths and bonds which have enabled the Food Distribution Research Society to remain viable since its incorporation in 1969. Consistently, members told of having a strong sense of belonging. When combined with fellowship, it provides FDRS with something intangibly missing from most other professional bodies. “Something happens that always brings a smile or a chuckle, no matter how bad things may seem” was how Forrest Stegelin conveyed his positive reactions succinctly to his attendance at conventions beginning in 1979 at Portland, Oregon. In the case of Dixie Watts Reaves, great memories abound. As a co-host of sessions held at Roanoke, Virginia, in 2000, she appreciated “so many members [who had] made a point of thanking me for my efforts. It was heart-warming to feel the support and appreciation of the membership.” Reaves also cited “Great informal dinners on the town following our tour afternoons.” One that stood out as most special for her was a “dinner at the Italian restaurant in Miami” during the 2002 convention. Connie Falk, FDRS’s first female president, fondly remembered hot tubbing in Monterey, California, while attending the 1998 sessions, dancing in Virginia, and riding a tram in Albuquerque with members she helped to host in 1989 during her first year with FDRS. Robert L. Degner, a person who joined the society in 1979, personalized his recollections to include three favorite members: “Listening to Jarvis Cain pontificate on various matters, especially when he peered into his crystal ball to predict the future of food distribution. Interestingly, he has usually been right on track! Another fond memory is of Doug Richardson giving his investment reports, as he tried to suppress his personal pride. He had

every reason to strut and be proud as a peacock with his successful investment decisions!

Another lasting and very fond memory was hanging out with Frank Panyko [who] was full of fun and advice on everything, especially how to survive the big city jungle, wheeling and dealing with stores selling stereos and appliances and so forth. His love for FDRS was contagious, and he was generous to a fault in providing me with complementary copies of the Food Institute reports while I served as President.” In addition to sustaining friendship made through membership, James E. Epperson from the University of Georgia liked what he considered FDRS’s greatest strength, an organization “well grounded in reality.” As for David Schaffner from California Polytechnic State University, he always managed to find something applicable to his classroom teaching from every convention.

The hook that caught first-time convention goers to want to belong to FDRS was usually the same. For this author who was a guest in New Orleans at the 2007 meetings, a clear appreciation resulted from members’ elaborations about what had drawn them into the Food Distribution Research Society. Every person interviewed about their experiences told more or less the same reason for joining. After having received an invitation to attend an annual convention by a graduate-school advisor or departmental colleague, the visitors invariably had positive reactions. Devoid of any cliques or hierarchical obstacles, FDRS members have provided an atmosphere that is welcoming to everyone, no matter one’s race, gender, age, national origin, academic pedigree or employment. Newcomers also appreciated opportunities to tour private-sector participants in food distribution and to meet and learn from this sector’s great leaders. Wes Harrison, an FDRS officer on the Applebaum Award Committee and a faculty member at Louisiana State University, offered a personal experience that typified how several other members had been introduced to FDRS. As an LSU newcomer, veteran FDRS leader

Roger Hinson invited Harrison to come along to an annual meeting, and impressions were so positive that the guest not only joined the organization but in short order became an active participant.

As for changes which have resulted at FDRS, the most veteran members often have expressed the same regret. Generally, they have not condoned especially the sharp declines of input and participation by persons from the private sector. As much as members who belong to the Society's older generation have tended to recall fondly equal roles for both academicians and entrepreneurs and managers actually involved in food's distribution, certain realities prevail, too. With so many consolidations and mergers within the food industry, its modern leaders do not have time available to devote to an organization with only interpreted peripheral value to their daily activities. With increased size, the most important companies have no longer a need for theoretical advice from the Land-Grant institutions' agricultural economists because their firms have developed this expertise internally. And finally from the perspective of pressures of publish or perish placed on university professors, the *Journal of Food Distribution Research* has evolved into a key outlet for their research. As a refereed publication, it has gained prestige and recognition as a legitimate recipient of the scholarly contributions so necessary for gaining tenure and advancements in rank.

A look back at forty years of FDRS's formal existence reveals an organization that has remained largely true to its founders' aspirations. Food distribution's multiple aspects and specialties have remained at its core of interests. Unlike original members and officers who had been drawn from inside and outside academic circles, a complete change has occurred. Excepting one or two officials from the United States Department of Agriculture, almost everyone else holding a position within FDRS since the selection of Frank Panyko to the

presidency in 1991 has come from higher education. With this change, the *Journal of Food Distribution Research* has gained stature as a respected scholarly publication, and the presentations at annual meetings have often reflected more sophisticated approaches to problems associated with food distribution as well as being more international in scope and coverage. Yet for all the differences, FDRS has been able to retain a quality that its membership has felt separates this organization from so many other academic groups, and that is an informal friendly atmosphere that has caused everyone to feel important and respected.

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