

Cleaning & Restoration

\$9.00

March 2007 • Vol. 44 No. 3

Published by the Restoration Industry Association

Founding Fathers of Restoration

AS PROVIDERS OF PROPERTY DAMAGE RESTORATION, REMEDIATION AND CLEANING SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC, WE SUBSCRIBE TO THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATES:

TO TREAT OUR CUSTOMERS AND RESPECT PROPERTY WITH CARE AND RESPECT

TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIGH STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

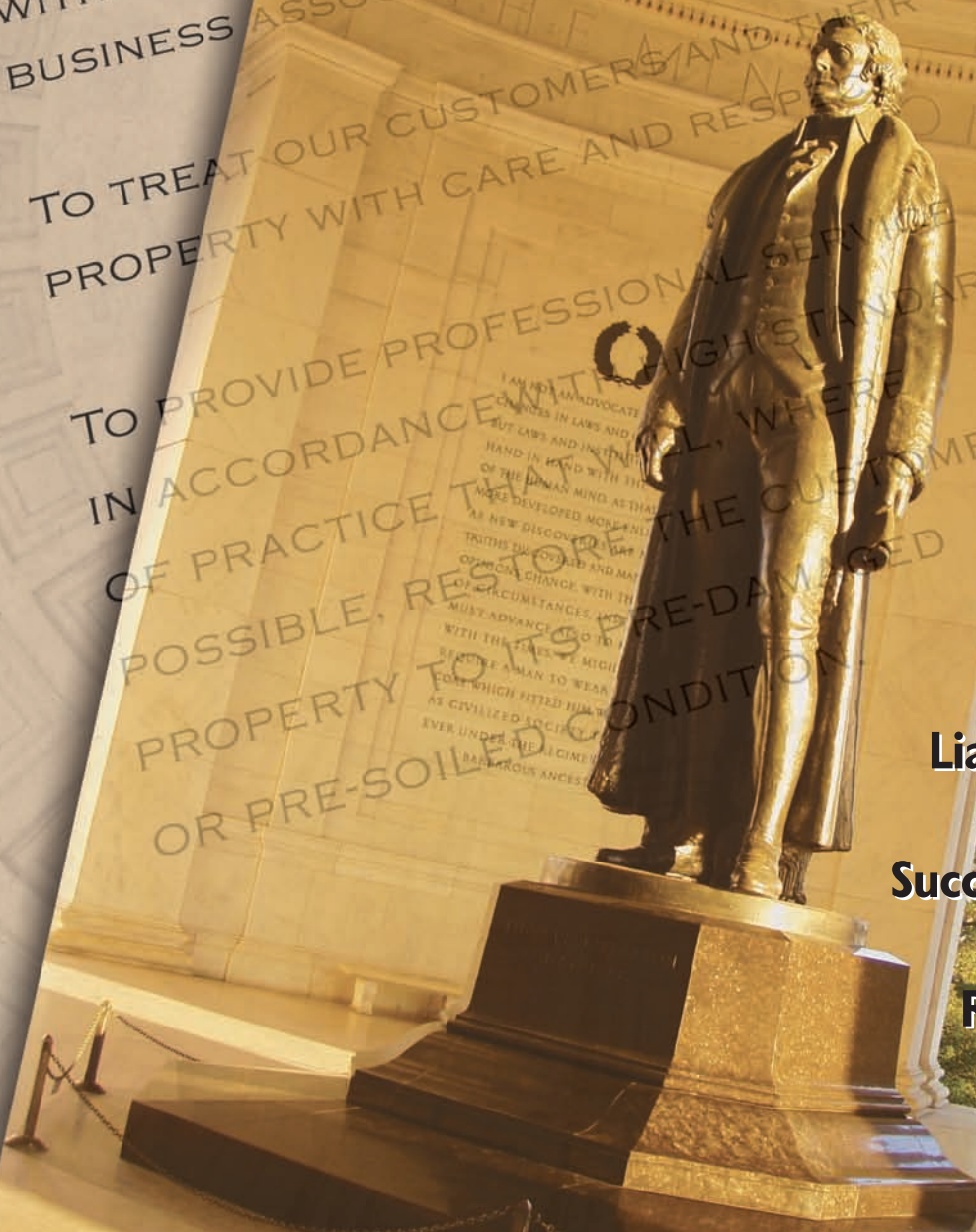
WHERE POSSIBLE, RESTORE THE CUSTOMER'S PROPERTY TO ITS PRE-DAMAGED OR PRE-SOILED CONDITION

Inside:

Asbestos Liability Issues

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The Four Faces on Mount Restoration

Taking the Best of the Past to Build for the Future

By G. Pete Consigli, CR, WLS

Last month the Association of Specialists in Cleaning and Restoration (ASCR) announced a decision to rebrand the association to the Restoration Industry Association (RIA). This was the association's fourth major name change in its six decades of existence. From a trade group for rug cleaners to the Association of Interior Décor Specialists, to ASCR, the industry has continued to evolve and improve.

As the makeup of the association's membership and industry needs have changed, so have the focus and structure. With the annual convention and exhibition this month, I thought it appropriate to honor the "Founding Fathers of Restoration" who have played a critical role in establishing RIA as the leading authority in the art and discipline of restoration. This walk down memory lane will provide an historical perspective and encourage others to build on the accomplishments of those who have plowed the soil that bears the fruits of their labor today.

The core values of the founding members and leaders influence a group's identity for years to come. And every so often, the new generation of leaders needs to reflect upon what has already been learned by their predecessors.

One Restorer's Vision of the Four Faces on Mount Restoration

The term restoration has become diluted over the past two decades as the business of cleaning and restoration has matured into an industry and profession. For the purpose of this article, restoration will be defined as the art and discipline of fire and water damage restoration.

In simple terms, one could define it as the process of removing residues from materials and surfaces using the least intensive and most cost-effective approach. The business of restoration might then be considered the process of choosing the company with the best value proposition to return damaged materials to a

pre-incident condition by creating desirable results with the greatest demonstrated cost-savings versus replacement.

Some may not have thought of fire and water damage restoration in that context, but perhaps they should. The professional restorer must figure out how to remove residue and return an item back to the way it was in a cost-effective way, while getting the customer to accept the result and pay for the service.

That process involves skill and training in identification, inspection, selection, application, quality control, project management, customer service, and a sound understanding and implementation of marketing, accounting and general business practices. Much of what professional restorers do today has been ingrained into the restoration DNA and has left a lasting footprint on the industry that will last well into the 21st century.

There are four men whom I believe have achieved an iconic place in the history of restoration and should be recognized for their achievements and qualities that have influenced the next generation of industry innovators and leaders.



Founding Father #1: Martin King, CR, ASA

It is not by accident that fire comes before water as the nomenclature is fire and water damage restoration. So it should come as no surprise that the first founding father of restoration comes from a background of fire damage restoration. Many would be

surprised if I didn't suggest RIA technical advisor Martin (Marty) King, CR, ASA, as the first founding father and metaphorical candidate for placement on Mount Restoration.

In 1971, Marty came to the then (pre-ASCR branded) Association of Interior Décor Specialists, with a group of 45 damage restoration companies looking for a home to function



as a trade group. This resulted in the founding of the National Institute of Fire Restoration (NIFR). That eventually was rebranded as the National Institute of Disaster Restoration (NIDR) in the 1990s and was ultimately folded into today's Disaster Restoration Division.

When asked what his goal was when he founded the NIFR, his reply was very Marty-like, "My goal was to see the practice of insurance damage repair become a profession."

Over the last 35 years, Marty has raised the bar for restoration to a professional level. His teachings, writings and innova-

tive restoration product concepts have influenced a generation of restorers, some who have already retired and others who have become industry leaders in their own right.

The Certified Restorer® (CR) program is one of his most lasting individual achievements and has left an indelible footprint in establishing criteria equivalent to the Ph.D. within the restoration profession.

The RIA Guidelines for Fire and Smoke Damage Repair (originally published under the NIDR brand), has expanded into a U.K. version with a possible global application into the

emerging Australasian restoration industry. As the primary author, Marty led an RIA/industry peer review group in the mid to late 1990s to define the discipline and philosophy of fire damage restoration from the frame of reference of a CR.

Several other restoration specific specialty items developed under Marty's tutelage include:

- the Emergency Tips brochure and video
- the *Journal of Insurance Damage Repair*
- the Homeowner's Bill of Rights
- the Controlling Water Damage presentation
- the Get Out Alive awareness program
- the Water Damage Risk, Diagnosis, and Repair video
- several restoration specific consumer information flyers

He also pioneered the 1980s Clearscope computer estimating program language and format, which served as a model for much of what is commonly used in today's programs.

When you combine these accomplishments with his hundreds of articles, including monthly Restoration Corner columns in *CR* magazine, the NIFR and NIDR technical and management seminar presentations of the 1980s and 1990s, RIA convention and conference presentations, and years of advice given to RIA members in his role as technical advisor, Marty's legacy will last for years and influence and define what the professional restoration is and should be. He is the first face I'd place on Mount Restoration!

Founding Father #2: Lloyd Weaver

If water follows fire in the fire and water damage restoration nomenclature, then Lloyd Weaver is the next person I'd place on Mount Restoration. From the Black Hills of South Dakota, Lloyd first started appearing on industry convention programs in the mid 1970s. A salt of the earth kind of guy who had an entertaining presentation style, he toured the countryside giving on-location water damage restoration seminars.

Lloyd introduced the first specialty designed Porta Dryer for on-location wet carpet drying. While that might not seem like much in today's sophisticated world, 35 years ago Lloyd's methodology challenged the rug cleaning establishment and its in-plant wet carpet service. Lloyd also infuriated the fire restoration establishment as he encouraged carpet cleaners to diversify. The problem was that a bunch of carpet cleaners was now getting exposure to "insurance" work with many entrepreneurs becoming competition as they expanded into smoke damage restoration.

A flood in his hometown of Rapid City, South Dakota, brought Lloyd into the on-location drying and Porta Dryer business in the first place. While doing pro bono work for the community, he recognized a need to streamline the process of restoring floor coverings and drying structural materials for homeowners who were on a limited budget.

Lloyd was a pre-IICRC, WRT or ASD instructor who did not have any competition because he was the original and there was no other company that might be offended if the seminar wasn't generic. Students came to hear what Lloyd had to say and sell, and he had one particular student (Founding Father #4) who took his ideas not just to the next level, but to the next stratosphere. His influence and vision are what place Lloyd Weaver as the second face on Mount Restoration.



Founding Father #3: Cliff Zlotnik, CR, WLS, CMH

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a second generation pest control descendent pioneered a unique deodorization process for smoke odor that was a big problem for the fire restoration contractor of the day.

Although Unsmoke Systems is also known for water, sewage and mold odor-related specialty products, as well as a unique pet odor control and treatment process, Cliff Zlotnik, CR, WLS, CMH, along with his brother Arnold, took a business started by their father and uncle and successfully navigated new waters in the field of smoke and fire damage restoration.

Cliff was the first notable personality to look at the process of smoke and fire damage restoration in a systematic way. He commercialized a methodology to motivate carpet cleaners, janitorial companies, remodeling contractors and the established fire reconstruction contractors of the day to consider expanding their services to include interior restoration as an additional profit center and business opportunity.

Anyone who ever attended an Unsmoke traveling road show seminar in the early 1980s will never forget Cliff as the mad scientist-type running amok in the hotels of North America! Whether it was firing off a smoke bomb in an attendee's van in the parking lot to demonstrate his unique three-step deodorization process, or inspecting the men's room with 20 students and a black light to detect urine residue, Cliff's hands-on style is legendary.

Perhaps Cliff's greatest lasting legacy is as the pioneer who introduced and popularized the concept of hands-on restoration training. In 1985, he converted a vacant church rectory into a hands-on training site for fire and water damage restoration, a place which became known as the Unhouse training facility.

Throughout the past two plus decades, Cliff has continued to raise the bar in the restoration arena in a variety of ways. Through his Restorex network he popularized the concept of not only restoring damaged real property and cherished possessions, but also restoring the victims' peace of mind and shattered dreams. He made the process of restoration not only a

technical accomplishment, but an emotional restoration process for the customers of professional restoration companies.

Cliff eventually moved the Unhouse training facility to a larger old church and rebranded it the Restoration Sciences Academy (RSA). Through the Unhouse and RSA, thousands of restorers, distributor affiliates and other restoration stakeholders have been educated on the latest technologies in restoration. Whether it be the demystifying of electronics restoration and unique applications of desiccant drying in the 1990's, to raising the bar in the 21st century to hands-on sewage and mold remediation, Unsmoke continues to be the first in leading the way for restorers to do it better and more cost-effectively.

In 1995, RIA (then ASCR) called on Cliff to lead a steering group of restorers who considered leaving RIA to start their own trade group specifically dedicated to water damage restoration and the emerging environmental issues surrounding water loss. Under Cliff's tutelage, RIA granted divisional status to the Water Loss Institute (WLI) and in San Francisco at the 1995 convention, RIA Past President Joe Jones declared, "There is a new kid in town and his name is Willy!" Throughout a decade of excellence, the influence of the WLI's unique outreach initiatives and search for new information indelibly framed the direction of today's restoration industry in a variety of arenas.



Founding Father #4: Claude Blackburn

The final face to be placed on the metaphorical Mount Restoration is a man of humble beginnings — Claude Blackburn. A native of the beautiful U.S. Northwest, he is probably Lloyd Weaver's most famous seminar attendee.

In the mid to late 1970s, Claude was a struggling young father and carpet cleaner with two little mouths to feed. With only \$35 dollars in the bank, he moved his family to Skagit County, Wash., about 60 miles north of Seattle. After paying \$27 (of the \$35) for a partial rent payment on his apartment, he had \$8 to fill the refrigerator. He had no choice but to get out and knock on some doors; he needed money and he got it by cleaning carpets.

Then in 1981, he opened Dri-Eaz Products in the basement of his home to supplement his income from Claude's Carpet

Care and Deflooding Services. His first innovative product was Easy Blocks, a high density foam block used to elevate flat furniture off of wet flooring surfaces. Claude did the unthinkable and mailed free samples to 15,000 carpet cleaners by using the national Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code listing. Carpet cleaners quickly discovered that these blocks were more effective than the standard wood blocks of the day and Dri-Eaz was successfully launched.

Claude's early adolescence showed an affinity for risk taking. His hobby and a side line business

involved ultra-light airplane distribution and flying. Trusting an aircraft without an engine seems like

a good prelude to a young upstart who took an innovative concept of a portable dryer and on-location carpet drying, and turned it into a world-wide phenomenon.

In the early to mid '80s, Claude developed his skills as a seminar presenter for Dri-Eaz as he toured North America, selling the concept of water damage restoration as a highly profitable expansion for carpet cleaners or fire restoration contractors.

His company mastered the skill of selling by providing low-cost seminars, and Claude was sometimes mocked for pricing his seminars under \$100. But he knew exactly what he was doing; he consistently played to packed rooms, while the attendance of others' seminars dropped off. Under Claude's innovative pioneering, Dri-Eaz pushed the envelope in the decades of the '80s and '90s.

One of Claude's most accomplished innovations in the mid 1980s was the Dri-Eaz 750, a trailer-mounted desiccant dehumidifier that redefined what a market leading restorer should have in his drying toolbox. Even his staunchest critics admitted it was the greatest marketing tool the restoration industry had ever seen at the time. This was validated when the first "real" unit sold (the proto-type was placed with a Seattle restoration contractor) was bought by a dry carpet cleaner from Michigan who wasn't even in the water damage business, but

entered it after spending what then was considered a huge amount of money for a dehumidifier – \$25,000!

Another of Claude's big ideas was the Dri-Eaz Restorative Drying Symposium™ that began in 1994. The first Symposium attracted 300 attendees in a remote location in mid-summer. It proved that solid programs with excellent speakers and content could get people to go nearly anywhere at any time. The Dri-Eaz Symposiums of the 1990s were industry inclusive, and down-played the fact that Dri-Eaz was the commercial sponsor.

In the late 1990s, Claude led Dri-Eaz on a path to develop a mission, vision and core values. This strategic planning helped provide a direction for the company for years to come and reinforced the Dri-Eaz position in the global marketplace. The successors to Claude's legacy face the challenge of doing justice to a lifetime of work by propelling the company to its next great achievements.

The Future is Bright

As the RIA enters its seventh decade as a leader in the cleaning and restoration industry, the question is, "What will today's leaders add to their founding fathers' success?"

When restoration historians reflect on Mount Restoration two decades from now, will they be able to say with clarity, accuracy and in a truthful manner that the succeeding generation of innovative pioneering restoration leaders continued to raise the bar? Will they say those entrusted to follow in their footsteps took the industry to the next level, helped further define the profession and gained the respect of related industry colleagues and the public they serve? Finally, will it be evident that today's leaders were good stewards of the legacy they passed on to their successors? Time will answer these important questions.

Each of these men has played a significant role in the growth of the industry, contributing their knowledge, expertise, creativity and entrepreneurial talents to create a lasting legacy that has and will affect the lives of millions of individuals. The industry and those who are the recipients of its services and expertise owe them an immeasurable debt. ■

G. Pete Consigli, CR, WLS, considers himself to be a lifetime student of restoration and admits he has a bias to his suggestion regarding the four founding fathers of restoration. Having learned from these four men, worked with them, and acquired great admiration for their qualities and accomplishments, he considers them to be his restoration heroes.