

Delivering a legacy for ASEAN glassmakers

The ASEAN Federation of Glass Manufacturers celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2017. In the build-up to this October's annual conference in Vietnam, John Wallis caught up with two of the AFGM's best known personalities over the past four decades. Peter Javier and Leslie Struys were influential in the organisation's creation and development, as well as the subsequent appointment of *Glass Worldwide* as its official journal.

Within South East Asia's close-knit glassmaking community, they are known as 'the last of the Mohicans'. Peter Javier and Leslie Struys have been closely associated with the ASEAN Federation of Glass Manufacturers since the organisation's creation in 1977. Both enjoyed successful glass industry careers and even in retirement, they continue to be widely revered by their peers and successors. They were influential and active participants within the AFGM family and were the obvious people to consult about its evolution.

ONE COMMUNITY

Established a decade earlier, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional organisation comprising 10 South East Asian states that promotes inter-governmental co-operation and facilitates economic integration among members. Since its formation in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, the organisation's membership has expanded to include Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. Its principal aims include

the acceleration of economic growth, social progress and socio-cultural evolution, as well as the protection of regional stability and the provision of a mechanism for member countries to resolve differences peacefully. 'One vision, one identity, one community' is the association's ethos, creating 'a community of opportunities'.

Still a relatively young organisation, ASEAN has exceeded the expectations of Leslie Struys, for example. For the region's glassmakers, he looks forward to greater co-operation with similar organisations in Australia, Japan, North America and Europe. "There is much inter-company contact around the world but less so at an industry level. This can be further developed" he suggests.

Peter Javier is equally positive. "With the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the region's glass industry can now identify opportunities and challenges in a market of about 600 million people."

REGIONAL GLASS FOCUS

According to Peter Javier, the formation of regional industry associations was encouraged by the ASEAN Chambers



In attendance at last year's ASEAN Glass Conference were such influential personalities from the AFGM's formative years as (from left to right) Dibhyaraks Sukham, Frans Iskandar and Leslie Struys. Dibhyaraks Sukham joined Bangkok Glass in 1984 as General Manager. He retired from the company in 2005 as CEO. Frans Iskandar worked in the Indonesian glass industry for many years and served as Honorary Secretary at the IGMA. Leslie Struys was General Manager and Chief Executive at Malaya Glass for 24 years, before retirement in 1997. All three have been elected to senior positions within the AFGM during the organisation's 40 year history.

of Commerce and Industry. As a result, there are now more than 30 regional industry associations, including the ASEAN Federation of Glass Manufacturers. "The prime mover in the AFGM's organisation was the then President of the Glass Manufacturers' Association of the Philippines, Perfecto Darwin. He invited representatives from four other ASEAN countries that had glass industry associations to join GMAPI in setting up a regional industry association."

In July 1977, glass industry representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand met officially for the first time in Manila and Tagaytay City in the Philippines. A constitution and by-laws >



AFGM dignitaries at the landmark 40th ASEAN Glass Conference in Thailand last year, including current and former Executive Committee members.



Peter Javier (left) and Leslie Struys (centre) with former AFGM Secretary General, Nelson Hui Yuen Kin.



The ASEAN Glass Conference continues to provide a valuable opportunity for local glassmakers to conduct business and socialise with the world's leading plant and equipment suppliers.

were drafted and that October, they were ratified. In July 1988, the ASEAN Federation of Glass Manufacturers was given interim recognition by the ASEAN-CCI. Started by 19 glass manufacturers from five member countries, four decades later the AFGM continues to be a very active and vibrant regional body. This includes links with other glass organisations in other parts of the world. "As a result, one of its working groups is focused on other industry associations and other glass organisations" Peter Javier explains. "Another working group is focused on environmental issues and concerns."

Today, the ASEAN Federation of Glass Manufacturers brings together members of the Indonesian Glass Manufacturers Association, the Glass Manufacturers Association of Malaysia, the Glass Manufacturers' Association of the Philippines, the Glass Manufacturers Industry Club at the Federation of Thai Industries and the Vietnam Glass Association. This includes 50 local manufacturers, with a diversity of interests in the container, flat, lighting, tableware, fibre and specialty glass sectors. The AFGM's current Chairman is Viwat Supatham and the Secretary General is Worawit Suresarakorn, both from Siam Glass Industry Co Ltd in Thailand.

Part of the group that organised the AFGM in 1977, glass industry stalwarts Peter Javier and Leslie Struys are both past Chairmen and Peter was Secretary General for three separate terms. They both cite their close involvement with national and regional organisations as career highlights, having hosted numerous annual conferences and council meetings over the years.

LIFE-LONG AFFILIATIONS

Peter Javier joined Union Glass & Container Corp close to Manila after graduating from university in 1962. The plant was still in its pre-operational phase at this time. "I planned to enrol on an MBA programme at the University of the Philippines while working, so I had to turn down other, more lucrative job offers far from Manila" he recalls. "It was quite a surprising first job for me, because the thesis for my chemical engineering degree was on plastics!"

The first international project of Shin Toyo (now Toyo Glass), Union Glass was established to produce widemouth and narrow neck flint and emerald green containers for alcoholic and carbonated beverages. In 1977, the company became affiliated to Owens-Illinois Inc.

Peter Javier joined Union Glass as a quality control technician, later becoming a supervisor, then head of quality control. Subsequently, he served as head of batch and furnace/cold end/decoration, before managing forming, hot end maintenance and mould shop operations. His elevation

through the company's management ranks included spells as Production Manager, Plant Manager, Vice President of Operations and finally, President and Chief Operating Officer. "I didn't expect my career ladder to reach that level!" he comments.

Sadly, Union Glass closed in 1992 but the business had played a central role in moulding Peter's professional and personal life. In addition to developing a life-long association with the glass industry, the company was responsible for bringing Peter together with his wife Celia, who worked there in an administrative role.

Subsequently, Peter Javier represented some of the industry's leading suppliers in the Philippines, while maintaining a pivotal role in the continued success of the AFGM. "I always liked my job and had opportunities to progress" he maintains. "My managers and colleagues were always supportive. Consequently, I have been a glass man throughout my professional career."

Similarly, Leslie Struys has been associated with the glass industry for his entire career, having worked for a soft drinks company that owned a glassworks. "I was seconded to the glassworks, which was supplying container glassware to the parent company" he explains.

Born in Singapore, Leslie completed an economics degree before starting work in 1960 as a management trainee at Fraser and Neave's Singapore base. In 1962, he became Plant Manager at the company's Nipoh operation in Malaysia, moving to Johor Bahru five years later to open a new bottling plant.

In 1973, he was appointed General Manager of the Fraser and Neave subsidiary, Malaya Glass Products. Subsequently, he joined the board and served as Chief Executive for 24 years, taking retirement in 1997. Leslie has continued to play an active part in the glass industry in recent years, however, becoming a non-executive director of Fraser and Neave in 2001.

"Throughout my career, I have been inspired not only by my bosses but by peers and staff reporting to me who have made the job really enjoyable" he observes.

EFFECTIVE MEETING FORUMS

Peter Javier and Leslie Struys are justifiably proud to have been instrumental in the ongoing success of the ASEAN Federation of Glass Manufacturers. The annual ASEAN



Leslie Struys with Paul Low Seng Kuan, Malaysian Senator and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department. Paul Low was previously Executive Director at Malaysian Sheet Glass and for many years, together with Leslie Struys, was instrumental in the development of the Glass Manufacturers Association of Malaysia and the ASEAN Federation of Glass Manufacturers.

Glass Conference in particular continues to provide important links among local manufacturers, the industry's suppliers and other glass organisations. "This annual bonding provides multi-level opportunities for positive contacts" says Peter Javier. "The presence of second generation glass men and suppliers is living proof of the conference's value." Together with his colleagues, Peter has always urged prospective delegates to take advantage of the multi-level contact opportunities provided. "It's a mixture of serious and casual opportunities!"

This year's ASEAN Glass Conference (the 41st) takes place in Da Nang, Vietnam on 9-13 October 2017, hosted by the Vietnam Glass Association. This is only the second time the conference has been staged in Vietnam and is expected to provide an impressive venue for the AFGM's 40th anniversary celebrations.

"Over the years, the benefits provided to local glassmakers attending ASEAN Conferences and AFGM Council meetings have been enormous, as they have been able to network with those not only from the ASEAN region but also from companies around the world" Leslie Struys comments.

Whether either of the last two Mohicans will be present in Da Nang this October is uncertain but their legacy remains intact for others to develop further in the future. In the meantime, Peter Javier confirms that he will continue to enjoy time with family and friends, while Leslie Struys will spend more time "smelling roses and doing absolutely nothing, which I have discovered is habit forming!" ■

FURTHER INFORMATION:
web: www.aseanglass.org