

Peter Hayward

Like many people I sort of fell into wood protection rather than choose it as my given career. I had finished a Masterate at Lincoln University (then called Lincoln College in deference to its Agricultural leaning). There were two potential jobs on offer, one with the meat industry and an industry job with Dow. I applied for both and was short listed for the Dow job in New Plymouth, North Island. Now, being a true, insular South Islander I had to look up the school atlas to see where New Plymouth was as I had no real idea.



Off I went for the interview. My professor was a little worried as it was for dairy hygiene research and I had majored in industrial Microbiology so he lent me a book on basic techniques and said “read it before you get to the interview”, I think he was worried he had not fully covered things during lectures, or he realised I skipped lots of lectures and didn’t really concentrate when I was at them - never mind, I got the job.

Now, Dow New Plymouth was basic in single chain quaternary compounds and early on in the job I started looking for other uses than hygiene. We discovered that FRI in Rotorua was looking at quats for wood protection and we had in fact supplied samples a year or so earlier. So off we go to Rotorua to meet a very suave UK gentleman (John Butcher, IRG President 1986-89) and a very casual chemist in the guise of Alan Preston who rubbished the use of single chain quats for wood protection against twin chains (and was subsequently proven to be correct). However this encounter started my quest and later career in wood protection.

After a few years looking at various combinations with and without quat and for various use areas, and yes I was still doing dairy and food hygiene work but it was not half as interesting, I persuaded Dow and a grant from FRI for support to undertake a PhD back at Canterbury University Forestry School. So we bundled all the family into our van, by this stage we had 3 girls, and headed off to Christchurch for 2.5 glorious years completing a PhD looking at the degradation of wind-thrown wood held under sprinkler irrigation.



Perhaps at this point I should digress and fill in some early gaps. I was born in late 1949 in Wellington but was soon down in the South Island where I grew up in the country town called Darfield that is now known for being the epicentre of the first large



earthquake that partially destroyed Christchurch on 4th September 2010. Early schooling was in Darfield, first few years of High school was in Christchurch but finished my last two years at Darfield High where I met Chris and we were married 2 years later; she was 18 and I was 19, so go figure. From that time on we have been somewhat inseparable doing almost everything together, have raised 4 wonderful but very stroppy young ladies and now have 16 grandchildren.

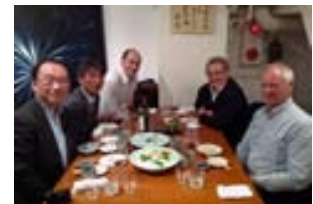


Anyway back to the story. After attaining a Doctorate we moved back to New Plymouth to further the wood protection program which Dow saw as important because Midland (Dow central) said so although we never found, nor wanted to find, a fit for chlorpyrifos which was their signal big product. After a few years they realised chlorpyrifos was not going to make it big time in the wood protection game (sometimes it does take years to get a message through to Multi National corporation) so lost interest and wanted us to abandon all work, which we did but it took us 2 years. After that I lost interest in Dow so left, mucked about as a consultant for a couple of years,



then started our own company called Zelam (actually initially it was called Taranaki Nuchem) with antisapstain products being the first. That was in 1988.

For the first few years growth was tough as we were an unknown juggling for market space against the likes of Arch and Osmose. However we were investing in research and had our first big break with a product designed for Juken Nisho which controlled mould in MDF board that was manufactured for wall lining of green concrete in new high rise concrete buildings. From that point the company grew exponentially and claimed the protection of engineered wood sector in NZ and later Australia. This was a market segment that really only Osmose tried to challenge us in. However we were able to invest between 15 - 20% of gross earnings into research and this helped us stay ahead. Importantly we still had an Agricultural portfolio of products which was also growing and this gave us the buying power for active supply as well as access to a good range of new chemistry, something we were very keen to bring to the wood protection market.



By the early 2000's we saw our future in this engineered wood protection sector and made the decision to support Arch with our anti-sapstain products. They took over our existing products and



we continued to develop products, but for them exclusively. This allowed us to move our focus on to the US market and in particular to the West Coast engineered wood mills that were supplying into the Australian market. Unfortunately by this time I was well away from the lab bench being fully occupied with managing a growing company but I never gave away the opportunity to attend IRG meetings.



I joined IRG and attended my first meeting in 1984 at IRG15 on the Gold Coast, Australia and while I was not able to attend every conference in the early days I attempted to attend as many as possible and have certainly been able to over the last 20 or so years. The draw of IRG was multiple. I always came away from a conference enthused and invigorated from some of the work that was going on around the world and typically had a number of new concepts or ideas that needed exploring over the coming year or so. The delegates at these conferences were interesting with many varied backgrounds and view points and many became very good friends.



Today I am retired (well, sort of), having sold the company to Lonza just over 4 years ago; so lots of fixing things for Chris etc as we have a 4.4 hectare property as well as a 20 hectare Vineyard/Restaurant/Conference Centre just down the road, but I still intend to be present at many more meetings to come. IRG is a great forum for discussing new concepts or polishing up existing theories. Wood Protection has some interesting challenges ahead if it is to meet the expectation of long term protection of wood whilst meeting the new environmental requirements and I believe IRG is well placed to be at the fore front of these developments.

