

# Victor E. Marx

While it may not be accurate to call the American Society of Bakery Engineers under Victor E. Marx's leadership as a "garage operation," the description would not be too far from the reality. Run first from his office and later from his home, the A.S.B.E. was short

on frills during its early years.

The group's origins date back to the spring of 1924 when bakery production managers from around the nation were invited to participate in a three-day conference at the American Institute of Baking in Chicago to share technical knowledge and information regarding the nascent but rapidly expanding industrial baking industry.

On March 18, following two days of extensive discussion, a unanimous decision was reached to create the American Society of Bakery Engineers, a membership organization dedicated to mutual cooperation and professional development.

An article in the March 25, 1924, issue of *The Southwestern Miller* (the publication later renamed *Milling & Baking News*) contained the following description of the group's founding:

*The new organization will hold annual conferences and sectional meetings in all parts of the country.*

*The society has started with 100 bakery production managers as "founder members," each paying an initiation fee of \$5. More than 150 attended, but all were not eligible to membership. Dues will be \$5 a year.*

*The objects of the organization, as outlined in the constitution, are to bring about the greater development of the baking industry by bringing together those responsible for production for conferences and discussion; by educating the industry to a greater appreciation of production superintendents; by setting standards of education which will bring production men greater recognition and by promoting an intelligent understanding on the part of the public of the specialized work of the baking industry.*

*Honorary members will be named by unanimous vote of the society for special service to the industry.*

Mr. Marx was elected the group's first secretary-treasurer and administrator, a





At the 50th anniversary of the A.S.B.E., Victor E. Marx, secretary-emeritus, far right, was joined by, from left, Robert A. Fischer, secretary-treasurer; Charles B. Clark, president; Eugene D. Swenson, first vice-president; and Ernest O. Cain, second vice-president.

position he would hold for 37 years. For the first five years, running the A.S.B.E. was simply an additional assignment as part of Mr. Marx's full-time job. For 17 years after that, Mr. Marx ran the A.S.B.E. from his home, which was the group's headquarters during this period.

Mr. Marx began his career in baking after graduating in 1916 from The Armour Institute of Technology (now part of the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago) with a degree in chemical engineering.

Mr. Marx joined the staff of the Sawyer Biscuit Co. as a chemical engineer and five years later joined the staff of the newly-formed American Institute of Baking, which was located in Chicago at the time. At the A.I.B., he was the first instructor in experimental baking.

While nurturing the A.S.B.E., Mr. Marx remained at the A.I.B. until 1929 when he became editor of *Baker's Helper*, a publication later renamed *Baking Industry Magazine*. Thirteen years later he left the publication and joined the American Dry Milk Institute. Only after 1952, the final nine years he headed the A.S.B.E., was the association a full-time job for Mr. Marx.

He retired in 1961 and was elected secretary-emeritus for life. When the A.S.B.E. was established it had 103 members, a number that grew to 3,312 by the time Mr. Marx retired.

At the 50th anniversary meeting

of the A.S.B.E. in 1974, the Victor E. Marx Award was established to be presented to 50-year members of the society. Eight original members were present to receive the Victor E. Marx Award at the 1974 annual meeting. Eight other awards were mailed to 50-year members not present.

At the Hall of Fame presentation this year, H.O.F. committee chairman Byron Baird noted that Mr. Marx was instrumental in the 1957 organization

of the British Chapter Affiliate (British Society of Baking). Within the A.S.B.E., Mr. Marx oversaw 37 annual conferences, resulting in 963 technical publications and presentations, "many of which laid the foundation for baking science and technology utilized today," Mr. Baird said.

William Fife, Creative Marketing Concepts, Madison, Wis., who presented Mr. Marx's award, noted he had met Mr. Marx more than 50 years earlier.

"I always knew of his passionate desire to make the A.S.B.E. succeed and also to be on the straight and narrow," he said. "He was known as 'the enforcer' by many because he stuck to the rules and regulations without deviation. He was quite a guy. He's the one who really made this society succeed."

Mr. Marx died in December 1975. ■



William Fife by Victor Marx's Hall of Fame plaque.