

100



SMITHERS

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A Century of Smithers

An account of Smithers origins and evolution from 1925–2025 in celebration of its 100th anniversary.

This book would not have been possible without contributions from the following people:

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Pictured Above:
The Smithers Board of Directors (pictured left to right): Martin Spector,
Ray Leach, Jimmy Shumock, Mike Hochschwender, Steve Kresnye, Bud Kisel

Letter from the Board

Reflecting on the hundred-year milestone, Roger Read, retired Smithers Board Member, stated, "If Herm would be with us today, I can't help but think about how proud he would be of the company and all of its team members. It was an honor to serve on this Board."

Smithers Global Team Members and All Who Served Before You,

Smithers is a unique privately held company with a Board of Directors, which began with Herman Hochschwender, and is now led by Mike Hochschwender. Both value insights and collaboration.

The best leaders believe that no great company is built by one person. For over fifty-two years, Smithers has valued the insights of its board members for guidance on industry trends, risks, and diverse perspectives, helping to grow Smithers into a multinational organization.

Celebrating one hundred years in business is a rare achievement, as less than 1% of companies reach this milestone. Smithers success stems from a balanced approach of care, accountability, financial discipline, and measured risk. The Executive Leadership Team has consistently led with integrity, adhering to their guiding principles of Ethics, Mission, Employees, and Me (EMEM).

Over the past several decades, Mike and his Executive Leadership Team grew Smithers into a company with a diverse portfolio, which helps make it resilient through economic challenges and positions it for an exciting future.

Congratulations to all for contributing to this remarkable milestone. Together, you and everyone before you have laid the foundation for Smithers future success.

— SMITHERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

01

The First Thirty Years:
1925–1955



Pictured Opposite Page:
Smithers RAPRA building
circa 1950s

The Beginning

Akron, Ohio's population increased from 69,000 to more than 208,000 between 1910 and 1920,¹ making it one of the fastest-growing cities in the United States. In the tumultuous years that followed between World Wars I and II, the tire industry in Northeast Ohio grew and prospered so rapidly that by 1930, Akron rubber factories produced 40% of the nation's tires.²

There were not enough houses, roads, or services to accommodate all the people pouring into Akron to work in the flourishing rubber shops. The hard-working city could honestly lay claim to being “The Rubber Capital of the World.” Throughout Summit County, where Akron, Ohio, is located, production plants of Firestone, General, Goodyear, Goodrich, Seiberling, Mohawk, and smaller shops drew thousands of workers through their gates every day to build tires and other rubber products.

One important newcomer to Akron was a young man named Vernon Smithers. Born in Beebe, Arkansas,³ Vernon was

one of many people drawn to Akron because of its rubber industry. The growth of the Akron rubber industry was not isolated. Around the same time these rubber companies were sprouting up in Akron, the Research Association of British Rubber Manufacturers (RABRM) was founded in England. In the wake of the Great War, as World War I was called, numerous research organizations were founded to solve problems the war had raised around the world. This research organization, which would later change its name to Rubber and Plastics Research Association (RAPRA), would play a significant role in the Smithers story almost a century later.

Back in Akron, Vernon was not looking for a job but for a way to bring one of his ideas to life. He wanted to create a service for measuring the electrical power required to run rubber factory machinery on a repetitive basis. He ran the idea by Albert Michelson, an executive at the National Rubber Machine Company in Akron. The two jumped from that idea to the concept of an independent service that would analyze the quality of tires. Michelson saw promise in the idea, gave Smithers access to his Sweitzer Avenue garage, and Vernon decided to start a business. Smithers Laboratories was born.

1. Retrieved from <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/bulletins/demographics/population-oh-number-of-inhabitants.pdf>.

2. English, R. Dean. Creative Solutions for 75 Years. Akron, Ohio, 2000, 1.

3. “Vernon Smithers, Testing Firm Founder.” Akron Beacon Journal, September 8, 1973. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/152262769/?match=1&terms=vernon%20smithers%20obituary>.

Changes and Challenges

The 1920s, also called “the roaring twenties,” seemed like a smart time to begin a business. In many places around the world, there was a strong feeling of joy and excitement. World War I had ended. New music, new fashions, and new dances were appearing everywhere. Akron was the center of one of the most important industries in the world.

Using the laboratory equipment he was able to gather, Vernon began testing passenger car tires. He issued the first tire report in 1925, and more followed in quick succession. From the beginning, Vernon wanted to build client loyalty based on trust. His adage was, “If you are not certain it is right, don’t report it.” Within the first decade, the organization was doing business with nearly every rubber company in the United States.

Vernon’s tire testing was groundbreaking. From the beginning, Vernon refused free tires from tire manufacturers for testing. Instead, he purchased passenger tires that were available on the open market. The tests were just as extraordinarily detailed as they are today, and were especially amazing given the limited technology supporting the type of testing Vernon wanted to do. Tests included the wrapping paper that covered all new retail tires, including the measurement and type of paper used, the general appearance, and more.

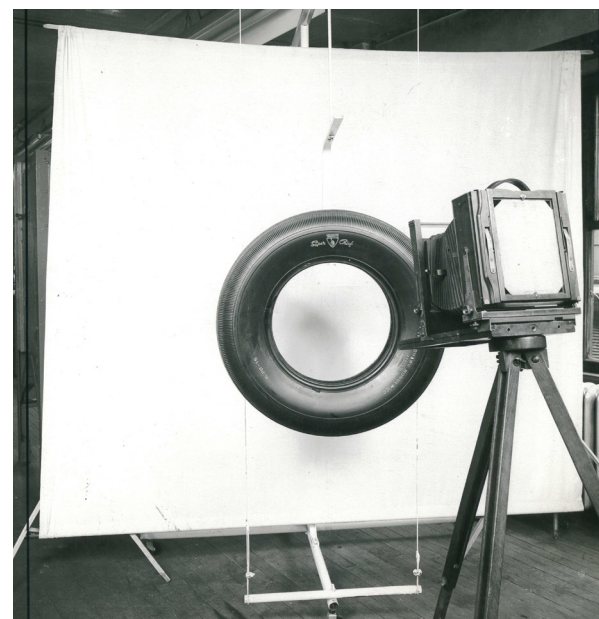
Once the exterior wrapping was tested and analyzed, Vernon’s testing methodology moved on to the tire itself. How did the tire look? Was it clean? Were mold marks properly aligned? Were letters well-centered and legible? Were bead wires properly insulated? All of this was recorded in painstaking detail.

The same testing standards were applied to the company’s testing service for tire inner tubes. The appearance of the tube was reviewed along with how thick the rubber was and whether that thickness was uniform throughout.

Around this same time synthetic rubber was emerging in the market. The Great War had shown that natural rubber was geographically limited and too much in demand to continue to serve the world’s appetite. Locally, Firestone, B. F. Goodrich, and Goodyear were all working on synthetic products.

Even though Smithers Laboratories was a new company, it was already growing quickly in this fast-changing environment. The development of synthetic rubber meant the company had to create new testing methodologies and invest in new testing equipment. In 1927, the company released its first Annual Tire Yearbook. In 1929, the company launched a new testing service targeting garden hoses.

Just as Smithers Laboratories was starting its hose service, the market crashed. October 24, 1929, is still known as Black Tuesday today. Remarkably, a company just four years old managed to overcome the next decade of economic turmoil—a feat many larger companies could not accomplish. The beginning of its service expansions and diversification played a role in its survival.



Pictured Opposite Page, Top Left:
A Tire Crosssection Performed at the
Cherry Street Laboratory

Pictured Opposite Page, Center Left:
Example of Tire photography in the
1920s

Pictured Opposite Page, Bottom Left:
Rubber Stamping

Pictured Opposite Page, Right:
Testing Rubber Strength on an Instron
Tensile Machine



Pictured Below:
Crowd of people gathered outside of the New York Stock Exchange following the Crash. New York, 1929. Photograph.



The Great Depression

During the next decade, Smithers Laboratories operated in a city where 60% of the workforce was unemployed.⁴ With the local rubber companies struggling financially while also battling with the new United Rubber Workers (URW) union (founded in 1935), it was clear Smithers Laboratories needed to seek service lines beyond tires and rubber. In a step that Smithers has repeated throughout its long history, the company pivoted.

Vernon decided to apply his testing methodologies to batteries, which helped supplement work from existing customers. Rubber companies had come to depend on Smithers Laboratories tire test reports, and even though their businesses were low on money, they continued to go to Smithers Laboratories for third-party testing, a testament to how quickly the young company's reputation had grown.

Smithers Laboratories experienced its own challenges during the Great Depression. The administrative center of Smithers Laboratories had moved to a building downtown known as the United Building and had a hard time paying rent consistently every month. It was not alone. In just one month (March 1935) there were six hundred evictions of Akron families.⁵ However, Vernon skillfully negotiated an agreement with the landlord to avoid eviction. This resilience and resourcefulness remain in Smithers culture today.

Demonstrating the trust that the rubber industry had in Smithers Laboratories, yet another new service was launched during the 1930s: preparing tires for promotion. Customers for this service included manufacturers as well as tire retailers.

Across the Atlantic, the Research Association of British Rubber Manufacturers (RABRM) also struggled through the Depression. A 1933 article in *Nature Magazine* discussed the “present plight” of the RABRM, later known as the Rubber and Plastics Research Association (RAPRA). It was “a deplorable example of the results caused by an absence of any stabilized policy of financing industrial research,”⁶ the author argued.

While the RABRM was seeking more funding, a new organization called the Printing Industry Research Association (PIRA) was founded. Meetings on the publishing, print, and packaging industries had been happening regularly since February 8, 1929, when George Riddell presented “The Application of Science to Printing” at Stationer’s Hall, London. His groundbreaking presentation caused a buzz.

By April 1929, there were calls to create an official organization that would focus on “the collation of data, and the prosecution of scientific research into the problems of these trades.”⁷ By October 10, 1930, PIRA was an officially registered association. Like RAPRA, PIRA would play a major role in the Smithers story almost a century later.

In 1939, Smithers Laboratories was given an incredible opportunity to test four tons of smoked natural rubber sheets, which generated a forty-six-page report. Once again, however, global events intervened on the Smithers Laboratories path to success.

4. Price, Mark J. “Local History: Old Age Pension Was Glimmer of Hope in 1934.” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 13, 2022.

5. Englert, Joseph B. “Set Up an Eviction Court.” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 1, 1935. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/228869397/?match=1&terms=evictions>.

6. The Rubber Research Association. *Nature* 132, 378 (1933).

7. From history provided by Sam Sheppard Fidler, May 8, 2024.

World War II Changes Everything

The cities of Suzhou and Shanghai, both sites of future Smithers facilities, had been at war with Japan since 1937, and much of Europe, including Great Britain, had been engaged with Hitler's threats for much of the 1930s. For America, the war officially began on December 7, 1941, with the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Immediately, everything changed. Tire and car companies across the United States stopped producing passenger vehicles and turned their attention to tanks and airplanes. Materials the Armed Forces needed began to be rationed on the home front. One of those materials was rubber.

"I want to talk to you about war—about rubber and the American people," President Franklin D. Roosevelt began in an address on June 13, 1942. "Rubber is a problem for this reason—because modern wars cannot be won without rubber and because 92% of our normal supply of rubber has been cut off by the Japanese."⁸

In response to the president's call, US citizens were no longer allowed to buy new tires, whether for cars or bicycles. Rubber boots were out of the question. The government told Vernon that his tire testing services were not needed. They knew the quality of the tires and did not need new testing during wartime.

Not one to be intimidated by federal officials, Vernon went to Washington, DC, to visit the Rationing Board in person. He presented the data his company had been methodically presenting and emphasized the importance of testing. Vernon won the debate. His lab continued to receive tires and other materials to test throughout the war.

During World War II, when the British Army was victorious over General Erwin ("The Desert Fox") Rommel in North Africa, the Allies captured a substantial amount of broken-down German equipment due to motor failures resulting from the lack of coolants. Surprisingly, the vehicles' tires generally were in excellent shape. The British were curious about the secrets of other manufacturers, and they sent tires to the US Government for detailed examinations.

Specifically, they asked for Smithers in Akron, Ohio, to conduct the work. Smithers team members were proud that the company's reputation for excellent work was recognized around the world. A summary of the analysis showed that the tires held up well because manufacturers used natural rubber in the carcass stock and synthetic alternatives in the sidewall.⁹

8. United Press. "Text of Roosevelt Talk on Rubber Collections." Akron Beacon Journal, June 13, 1942. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/146186042/?match=1&terms=rubber>.

9. English, 11.

OPA Form No. R-602
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION

Certificate of Registration Establishment
Registration

To Buy, Acquire, Sell, and Transfer Men's Rubber Boots and Rubber Work Shoes **Nº 184186**

(Check one) Retailer Intermediate Distributor Manufacturer

This is to certify that:

Name of establishment _____

Address _____
(Street or R. F. D.) (City or P. O.) (State)

having filed an inventory is hereby authorized to buy, acquire, sell, and transfer Men's Rubber Boots and Rubber Work Shoes pursuant to the provisions of Ration Order No. 6.

Local Board No. _____

Date _____ State _____

(Signature of issuing officer) _____
(Title) _____

This Certificate is not valid unless signed by an issuing officer authorized by the Office of Price Administration

POST IN A PROMINENT PLACE

16-29817-1

Pictured Above:
A ration certificate allowing the purchase of rubber boots and work shoes



War-related manufacturing lifted Akron out of the Great Depression.

Membership in the United Rubber Workers, which had its headquarters in Akron, increased from about 3,000 in 1935 to nearly 190,000 at the end of the war. Production workers were well paid. The average hourly wage for an Akron rubber worker was \$1.27 in 1945, compared to about \$1.00 for all US production workers.¹⁰ Women's roles in Akron's rubber factories increased.

A book published in 2000, called *Rosie the Rubber Worker*, parallels these women with the more commonly known "Rosie Riveters" who worked in airplane manufacturing. By the time the war ended in 1945, Akron residents were ready to enjoy life, consumerism, and the American dream.

Pictured Left: Recently-employed women, most of whom have never worked before, being sworn into the rubber workers union at a Sunday meeting. New York, 1943. Photographed by Marjory Collins.

Pictured Opposite Page: Citizens enjoying themselves on a beach front

10. *Ibid.*, 10.





Pictured Above:
An image from the bombing
of Pearl Harbor

Pictured Opposite Page:
Sheets of synthetic rubber are
packed in larger paper drums,
each holding 200 pounds for
shipment. Goodrich. Ohio
Summit County United States
Akron, 1942. Photographed by
Alfred T. Palmer.



Baby Boomers and Consumerism

By 1950, the foreign and domestic demand for synthetic rubber reached record proportions. World consumption was at 2.2 million long tons, an 85% increase over pre-war years. At mid-century, the United States automobile registrations were up 44% over 1941 figures.¹¹ Detroit, indisputably the Automobile Capital of the World, produced eight million new cars and trucks in 1950 alone. It is likely that at some point the tires on most of these vehicles came under the close scrutiny of a Smithers analyst.

Even after all of the turmoil in the world, by 1954, Vernon Smithers became restless. Ever the intrepid entrepreneur, Vernon moved on to what would evolve into floral foam. He was excited about his new venture and invited his son Ted to come back home to help with the new company.

Meanwhile, in England, the Rubber and Plastics Research Association (RAPRA) moved to a facility in Shawbury, Shropshire. Today, this facility includes team members from Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Division and Medical Device Testing Division.

11. *Ibid.*, 9.

Oasis and a New Era

As Vernon Smithers began to develop what is now known as the Smithers Oasis Company, he realized he could no longer invest the time he wanted to invest into Smithers Laboratories. During his search for a buyer, he encountered a young man named Bob Dunlop. Bob was born and raised in Northeast Ohio and earned his BS in Mechanical Engineering from what is now Cleveland State (it was called Fenn State in 1939).

In 1950, Bob left his testing job at B. F. Goodrich and began his own consulting firm. He happened to meet Vernon when they were both analyzing tires in Des Moines, Iowa. Bob impressed Vernon. Later, as Vernon considered potential buyers, he called up Bob. After a whirlwind business trip to Europe, Bob came back to Vernon and said that all he could afford was \$20,000. Vernon counter-offered.

“For a down payment, you may pay me \$10,000 and keep the other \$10,000 for your operating expenses.” The deal was closed. Bob Dunlop took over as president of Smithers Laboratories on July 1, 1955, thirty years and a few weeks after its founding.

The company Bob acquired was small. After making it through the Great Depression, the World Wars, and the chaos that had ruled the rubber industry, Smithers Laboratories was ready to ride the tail of consumerism and enter a time of stability. Over the next decade, that is just what would happen.



Pictured Above:
Robert Dunlap (left), Vernon Smithers (center), and Herman Hochschwender (right)

02

Evolution:
1956–1975



Pictured Left:
Bob Dunlop (left), Vernon Smithers (center), and Herman Hochschwender (right) having a discussion.

Building Upon a Trusted Brand

When Bob Dunlop took the reins at Smithers, he could have changed the company name, but he chose not to. Bob saw that Smithers Laboratories had established brand recognition and tremendous trust locally, nationally, and internationally. Vernon Smithers infused his company with his ideas of customer service and scientific accuracy.

While people trusted Smithers Laboratories, they also knew and trusted Vernon. Bob did not make many changes when he first bought the company. From his first day as the new owner, Bob set out to uphold and build upon the trusted brand as a strategy to grow the company.

Diversification and Growth

Beginning in 1938, Americans began to drive more often and at faster speeds. This inspired the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, signed by President Dwight Eisenhower. Over the next thirteen years, the United States Government would begin to build the interstate system. With greater speed and more accessibility to longer distances, tire wear became a problem. Additionally, according to the Federal Highway Administration, there were a little over 26,000 fatalities from car accidents in 1944. A decade later that number had jumped to over 36,000 fatalities.¹² While only a 4% increase over the ten years, it was notable.

Smithers Laboratories was surrounded by changes in the industry as a result of these developments. Locally, rubber and tire companies headquartered in Akron were working hard on retreading technologies, convincing people that retreading was just as good as buying new tires, not to mention much less expensive. At the same time, companies promoting their retread services were up in arms in 1956 because Congress wanted to increase taxes on rubber to fund the Highway Act.¹³

Another new development during the 1950s was understanding why so many car accidents were occurring. Smithers began to test tires that had been in accidents to determine whether the tire played a role in the accident. Just as Smithers Laboratories became internationally renowned for its tire reports and testing in the early days, at this time Smithers Laboratories strengthened its reputation as tire experts. Team members were often called to be expert witnesses in trials.

In the 1968 Leininger v. Swadner trial, the defendant claimed they had not lost control of their vehicle, saying the accident happened because of a tire blowout.

Bob Dunlop was called to be an expert witness, but it appears from the court abstract that he was not allowed to testify because it was deemed unfair. Nonetheless, Smithers experts became renowned for this type of court case in the 1950s and onward.¹⁴



Pictured Right:
Traffic in North Carolina in 1941. Greater numbers of car drivers in this period spurred more innovation in the tire industry.

12. Retrieved from <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2007/pdf/fi200.pdf>.

13. See for example: Associated Press. "Hits House Road Fund Distribution." Akron Beacon Journal, May 28, 1956. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/149715941/?match=1&terms=rubber%20taxes>

14. Retrieved from <https://case-law.vlex.com/vid/leininger-v-swadner-no-894722571>.



The Move to Market Street

With the new testing methodologies and equipment the industry demanded of Smithers Laboratories, the company needed more laboratory space. The labs had been located on Cherry Street since the early days and by the 1950s, this part of Akron was being refurbished. Bob Dunlop decided it was time to find a new home for the company.

The building at 425 Market Street had been built in the 1920s as a Hudson car dealership. When Bob began looking for a new site, he initially considered a building closer to Route 8, but in 1963 the US Army offered its former Army Reserve Center¹⁵ at 425 Market Street in Akron for \$1.00. Today, this site houses the Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Division Tire Services, Product Testing, and Consulting as well as team members from the Smithers Information Division. The lab continues to produce trusted scientific data for the same tire reports Vernon Smithers published for the first time in 1925.

Bob was proud of the new facility. He even had a pamphlet titled “A Factory in a Lab” published that noted, “We take pride in the physical equipment in our laboratory and in the techniques we have developed over the years. We take more pride in finding ways to answer the new questions that are arising every day. Tell us what you want to know, and we’ll do our best—promptly.”

Pictured Opposite Page:
The Market Street facility, still in use today by Smithers Materials Science and Engineering and Smithers Information Divisions

15. “Planners OK Lab’s Move to W. Market.” Akron Beacon Journal, July 15, 1963. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/151277683/?match=1&terms=smithers%20lab>.

The Beginning of Smithers Scientific Services

While Bob Dunlop guided Smithers Laboratories through a rapidly changing industry and moved them to a new downtown Akron location, another business began to grow just a few miles away: Hochschwender & Associates. The company had been founded in 1959 by Herman Hochschwender.

Herman was born in Heidelberg, Germany, in 1920. After moving to the United States, he earned a degree at Yale, completed some post-graduate work at the prestigious Harvard Business School, and then moved to Akron. Just a decade after starting his business, he, like Bob Dunlop and Vernon Smithers, had established a national and international reputation for expertise tied with a personalized, customer service style that focused on relationship-building. He worked with several of the companies on the Fortune 500 list. By the mid-1960s, Hochschwender & Associates had enough European business to warrant having five employees located there. Despite its success, the business struggled to make a profit. Around this time, Bob's business also faced challenges due to the site move and service expansion.

Herman had six children (four boys and two girls). The youngest, John Michael Hochschwender (known as Mike), eventually became the owner and Chief Executive Officer of Smithers. When Mike was around ten, he remembers his father telling him the business wasn't doing well and they might need to make some tough decisions. One option was selling their house. However, this did not happen. Herman met Bob, and the rest is history.

In 1972, Herman and Bob agreed to merge their companies. This was big news in Akron.

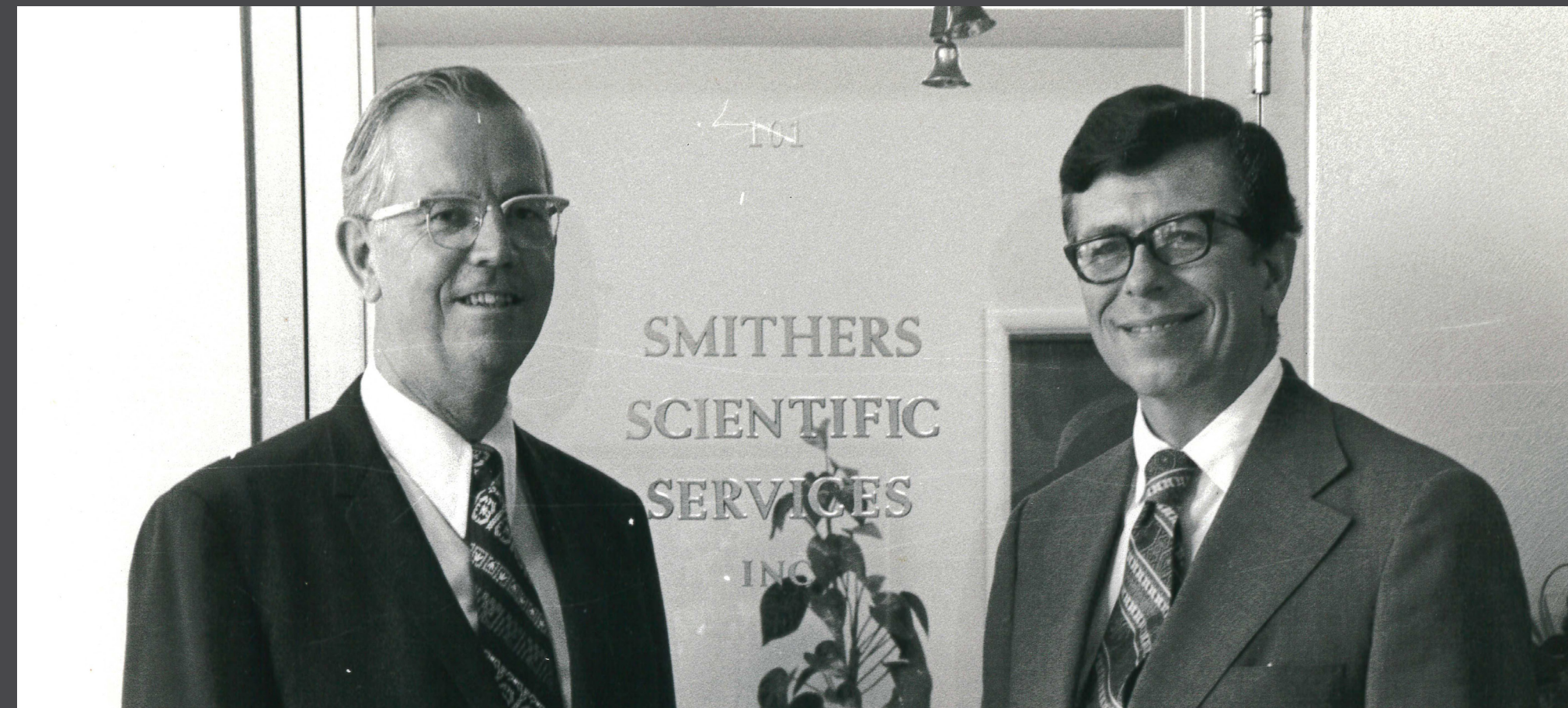
In December 1973, the Akron Beacon Journal published an article titled "Corporate Marriage Fine."¹⁶ The somewhat lukewarm headline actually spelled great news for Smithers. Having joined their forces, Hochschwender & Associates and Smithers Laboratories renamed their company Smithers Scientific Services. It is clear from the article that the merger exceeded expectations. Bob Dunlop, now chairman of the board, said the merger "not only spurred corporate growth but opened new horizons." The company now offered the consultative and marketing expertise of Hochschwender & Associates together with the technical expertise that had continued to develop at Smithers Laboratories.

"Staff and facilities have been expanded with office space doubled so we can offer such services as carpet, mattress, and children's sleepwear flammability testing; motor vehicle safety specification testing and fire-retardant coatings studies," Herman Hochschwender noted.

Smithers Scientific Services also had entered several new fields including microscopy, plastics testing and analysis, and product development. The diversification Vernon had begun in the late 1920s and 1930s was taking off in ways he could not have imagined when he was working in the garage on Sweitzer Avenue.

Pictured Below:

Bob Dunlop (left) and Herman Hochschwender (right) pose in front of the door to the newly minted "Smithers Scientific Services, Inc."



Upon the merger, several company names were considered. Herman recognized that Smithers was more well-known than Hochschwender & Associates, so he put his ego aside for the betterment of the new entity and agreed to name the company Smithers Scientific Services.

While Smithers Scientific Services was being established, another extremely gifted scientist and entrepreneur was making waves in New England. In 1972, the year Smithers Laboratories merged with Hochschwender & Associates, DeBell and Richardson in Enfield, Connecticut, hired Dr. Robert C. Springborn as their CEO and director.

Just four years later, Springborn purchased DeBell and Richardson and renamed it Springborn Laboratories.¹⁷ That same year, he acquired Bio/Tox from Diamond Shamrock in Spencerville, Ohio. Robert and Herman could not know it at the time, but Dr. Springborn would play a significant role in the future of Smithers about three decades later.

16. Kuebler, Joseph E. "Corporate Marriage Fine." Akron Beacon Journal, December 16, 1973. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/152459493/?match=1&terms=corporate%20marriage%20fine>.

17. "Employees Form New Company." The Morning Union, May 4, 1976. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1073870427/?match=1&terms=springborn%20laboratories>.



A Founder Passes

A few months after Smithers Scientific Services was formed, Vernon was invited to a celebratory luncheon. He had been growing Oasis since 1955 and that company was now also flourishing. What did he think about the company that still bore his name?

“The (Smithers) Laboratories developed far beyond our fondest hopes. The reports have become the working book for most of the tire companies all over the world.”

Sadly, by the time the Akron Beacon Journal published its article about Smithers Scientific Services in December 1973, Vernon Smithers had passed away. He died September 1973. Vernon was fondly remembered by the teams at Smithers Oasis and Smithers Scientific Services.

“Vernon L. Smithers was the epitome of the self-made man.”

When he graduated from high school in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, he was the first in his family to reach that educational milestone. Through the years, he continued to take correspondence courses, always seeking to improve himself. After working in Pittsburgh as a draftsman for Westinghouse, he came to Akron in 1924 when he was thirty-four years old and founded Smithers Laboratories the following year.

My dad was an entrepreneur who was always looking for some demanding new challenge, some exciting new business venture. It was not easy starting a business in the post-World War I economic climate he faced in the mid-1920s. When he opened the test laboratories, Dad had little working capital and no wealthy backers supporting him. What he did have was a simple creed about the business: ‘I believe in it. We’re going to do it. We’re going to make it work.’ And he did.¹⁸

— TED SMITHERS, VERNON’S ELDEST SON

Pictured Right:
Vernon Smithers

18. English, 7.

SURRENDER!

Saigon Yields Unconditionally; End Comes Only Hours After Last Americans Fly Out



Ford Calls For Unity At Home

Air America helicopter crewman helps evacuees off ladder and onto copter on roof of Saigon building as the last Americans left Vietnam yesterday. Armada of copters flew remaining Americans to Navy ships lying off the coast after Saigon's Tan Son Nhut air base became unusable because of rocket attacks.

Stories begin on page 3

UPI Radiophoto

End of the Agony — 13 Pages of Stories & Pictures

The World is Changing

The year 1975 would be momentous around the world as well as in the Smithers Scientific Services backyard.

On April 30, the Vietnam War at last came to an end, terminating the United States involvement that had lasted more than twenty years. The PIRA and RAPRA teams in Leatherhead and Shawbury would have been noting the election of Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister. The birth of Apple and IBM Computers, which would impact Smithers along with the rest of the world, was moving closer to reality in a California garage far away from Market Street. The world would turn its eyes to Montreal, Canada, in 1976 for the Olympic games. Also in 1976, Chairman Mao Zedong died at the age of eighty-two, leaving the Peoples Republic of China with no central authority figure.

At this time, Bob and Herman did not realize how important China would be decades later to Smithers future. The next decade would bring growth to Smithers even as the automotive industry changed dramatically. Smithers would once again have to navigate through choppy waters while continuing to serve clients that had been with the company for fifty years. Plus, Smithers would need to continue to seek growth opportunities by adding services, entering new industries, and expanding geographically.

Pictured Left:
The Daily News front page announcing the end of the Vietnam War

Pictured Opposite Page:
Margaret Thatcher, the first female British prime minister, waving to the press after her election



03

Resilience and Expansion: 1976–1985

For fifty years, Smithers Scientific Services relied almost entirely on the rubber and tire industry. Although there had been some diversification, especially after the merger in 1972, most of the company's clients were involved in rubber manufacturing, tires, or other facets of the automotive industry. That is why, when the rubber and tire industry started to experience a significant era of change in 1975, Smithers once again had to figure out how to survive and grow through adversity.



Radial Tires Take Over

Radial tires were not new in 1975. In fact, Michelin had patented radial tires back in 1946. An August 6, 1972, *New York Times* article headlined “Radial Tires Stir Battle in U.S. Rubber Industry”¹⁹ explains why these radial tires still had not become popular in the United States: “Suspension and steering systems on American-built cars were not engineered to radial tires. To comfort-conscious Americans the radials meant louder, harder riding at slow to moderate speeds. Also, radials could not be produced on standard tire making equipment and required very costly retooling.”

American tire manufacturers were keenly aware of how radial tires had taken over the European market. At the time the above article was written, there were three main categories of tires which consumers could purchase in the United States. Bias ply was the “old reliable.” In this type of tire, rubber and fabric is wrapped at about 35 degrees to the point of travel.

Radial tires also used rubber and fabric, but the wrapping was executed at a perpendicular angle, and steel bands were used to secure the tire together. The final kind of tire was called bias belted. Created by Goodyear in 1967, bias belted tires were an attempt to combine the best of bias ply and radial tires.

Radial tires ended up winning the race in the United States just as they had done in Europe, but this created stress for American manufacturers. Foreign companies had already been manufacturing radial tires while American manufacturers had to catch up. Additionally, radial tires lasted longer than bias ply tires. This was good news for consumers but bad news for the automotive industry, which had grown accustomed to regular tire retreading or tire replacement.

Pictured Above:
A shredded bias ply tire with visible criss-crossing plies

Pictured Opposite Page:
A cross-section of a radial tire being inspected at a Smithers laboratory (1980s)

19. Smith, William D. “Radial Tires Stir Battle in U.S. Rubber Industry.” *The New York Times*, August 6, 1972. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/08/06/archives/radial-tires-stir-battle-in-us-rubber-industry-customers-confused.html>.

Plant Closures & The Firestone 500 Recall

The 1970s were devastating for the rubber industry in Akron. In 1975, Goodyear closed its Plant 1, which had focused on truck and industrial tires. On May 10, 1975, United Rubber Workers (URW) Firestone Local 7 President William E. Jones testified before Congress that he felt Firestone would phase its Akron business out completely in the next four to five years (Firestone said this was not true).²⁰ In 1984, BF Goodrich shut down its Akron factory, causing 950 workers to lose their jobs. The city in which Smithers had been founded was changing fast.

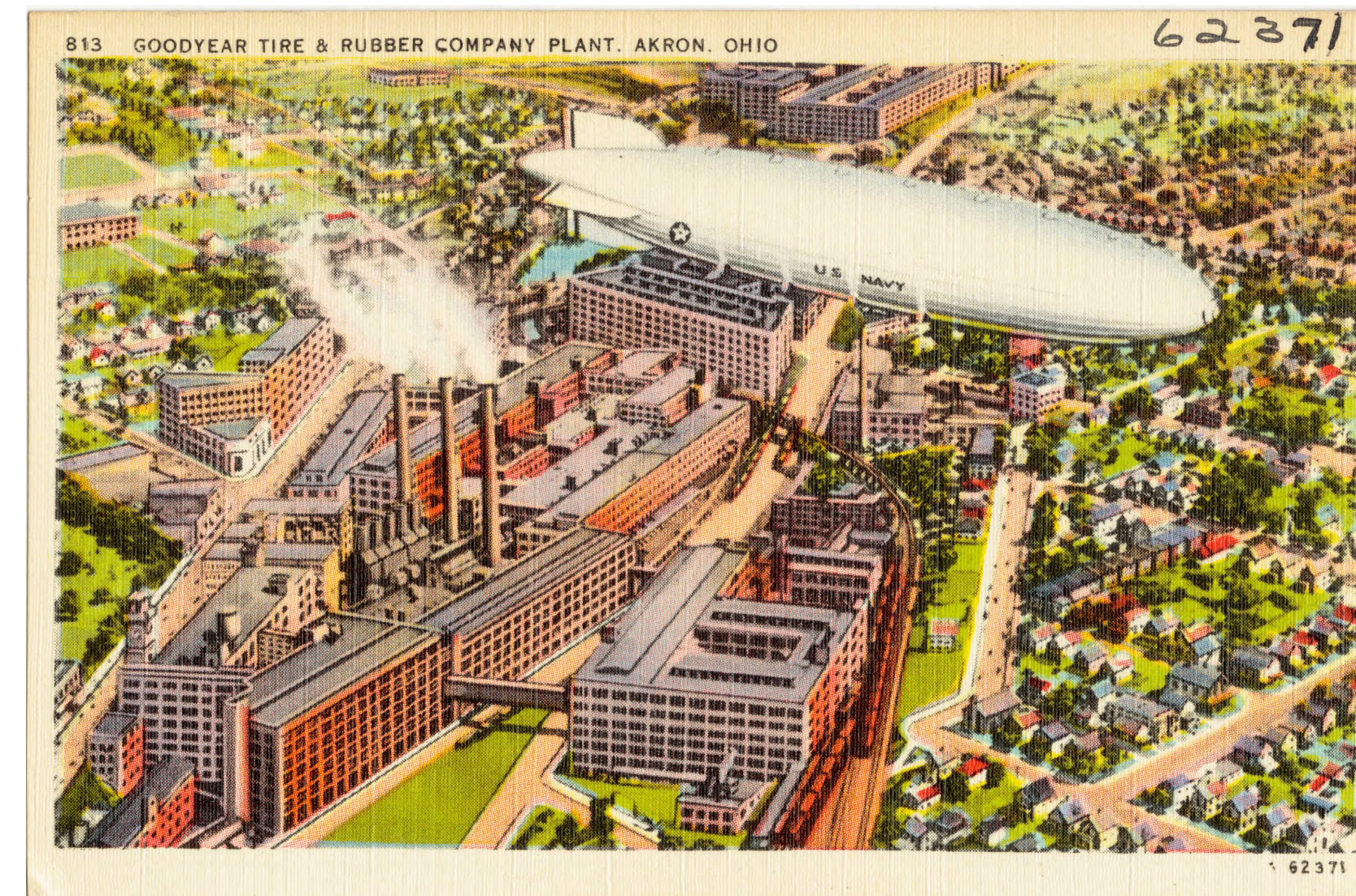
One major controversy that hit the industry during this time hit Smithers even closer to home. Sometime around 1972, Firestone began manufacturing radial tires. A notable

number of consumers complained about adhesion problems, but Firestone maintained that the radial tires were safe.

At one point, two men with two Firestone tires in tow entered the Smithers offices looking for Bob Dunlop. They requested the testing data Smithers Scientific Services had for Firestone. Bob took them to lunch, but the two men left empty-handed. Bob knew it was not ethical to share this data.²¹ He knew that the reputable Smithers brand was only as good as the accuracy of its data and the trust it built with its clients.

20. Feldstein, Stu. "Local 7 Head: Firestone Going." Akron Beacon Journal, May 10, 1975. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/152452641/?match=1&terms=william%20e%20jones>.

21. English, 18.



Pictured Above:
A postcard from the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company plant in Akron, Ohio.

FORD RANGER VOTED “4x4 OF THE YEAR!”

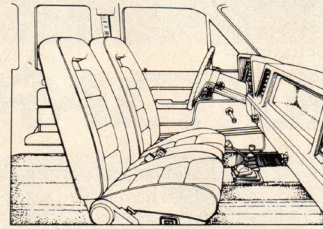
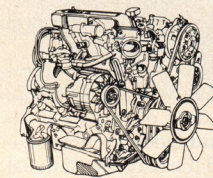
'86 Ranger SuperCab blasts past Toyota Turbo, Nissan King Cab, S-10 Blazer, Suzuki Samurai and Jeep Comanche to win the coveted 4-Wheel & Off-Road award.

Over mountains, beaches, canyons and crags... from Badlands Trail to Big Rocks Road the truck-savvy editors of 4-Wheel & Off-Road magazine drove six top 4x4's through what they called their toughest off-road test ever!

Ford's winning Ranger SuperCab was "... a virtually unstoppable force in the out-back." Proving once again that tough guys finish first!

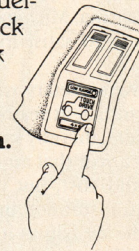
Unbeaten V-6 Power!

One reason for Ford's winning performance—extra



New Ranger SuperCab.

Ford's new SuperCab is one of the roomiest small pickups—22 cu. ft. behind the split-back front seat. Add the optional rear jump-seats and you'll have the only small pickup that can ride five!



off-road power, 140 horses* in Ford's new, bigger 2.9L V-6 option... electronically fuel-injected for quick response, peak performance.

New "Touch-Drive" system.

Now just touch a button on Ford's new "Touch-Drive" console... shift electrically from 2WD to 4WD high and back at any speed. (Manual locking hubs standard for you traditional off-roaders.)

Supertough Truck.

Above all, this Ranger 4x4 is one tough truck—built Ford tough, with a Twin-Traction beam independent front suspension... double-wall construction... tough ladder-type frame. And a payload of 1600 lbs.

Special STX trim.

All this off-road room and toughness comes with all the "goodies," too, in the new Ranger STX optional package—sporty trim, Captain's Chairs, lower two-tone accent, the works. It's the look that says, "4-wheelin', you ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Best-Built American Trucks.

At Ford, quality is Job 1. A 1985 survey established that Ford makes the best-built American trucks. This is based on an average of problems reported by owners in a prior six-month period on 1981-1984 models designed and built in the U.S.

Lifetime

Service Guarantee.

Participating Ford Dealers stand behind their work, in writing, with a free Lifetime Service Guarantee good for as long as you own your car or light truck. Ask to see this guarantee when you visit your participating Ford Dealer.

Buckle up— together we can save lives.

*Based on SAE standard J1349.



FORD RANGER

BEST-BUILT AMERICAN TRUCKS



The Changing Face of the Auto Industry

The automotive industry was in constant flux through much of the 1970s and into the 1980s. The fuel crisis during the 1970s spurred the development of smaller and more fuel-efficient vehicles. Mergers and acquisitions created constant change in the industry, and a new factor revealed itself as well—foreign imports. By 1985, the top-selling automotive manufacturers by market share were General Motors, Ford, FCA, Toyota, Nissan, Honda, Mazda, American Motors, Volkswagen, and Subaru.²² Suddenly, the American "big three" —Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler— had to fight off foreign competition.

Pictured Left: 1986 Ford Ranger Super-Cab advertisement

22. Retrieved from <https://knoema.com/infographics/floslle/top-vehicle-manufacturers-in-the-us-market-1961-2016>

Pictured Below:
Newspaper clipping from August 11th, 1997
regarding the arrival of Smithers in San Angelo



Pictured Above:
Doug Van Arnam

Evolving and Growing

Although the leadership changed, Smithers Scientific Services maintained its consistent strategy of expanding and diversifying in the face of difficult times. Throughout the 1970s, the tire testing and analysis services expanded. The tire report was published monthly and began focusing on those new radial tires, especially as the radial tires intersected with light truck tire construction. The company produced quarterly reports such as International Tire Services and Tread Materials Service. Annual reports included the Inner Tube Analysis and a Road Performance Evolution report (the latter published twice a year). Smithers Scientific Services also responded to subscriber feedback and provided specialty reports focusing on motorcycle tires, bicycle tires, agricultural tires, and more.

As Smithers Scientific Services celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1975, it also expanded beyond tires. Thanks to the rise of the consumer protection movement of the 1970s, Smithers was asked to test many materials for flammability resistance. Smithers also added a Microscopy Division and began testing and conducting chemical analysis of plastics, including thermoplastic and thermosetting resins. Chemical testing to ensure clients conformed with government specifications also began in Smithers facilities. These new service offerings laid the foundation for Smithers to enter new industries such as medical device testing and food contact in the years to come.

The most notable change occurred with the first acquisition in Smithers history. On December 26, 1975, Smithers Scientific Services acquired Compliance Testing, Inc., (CTI).

CTI was founded in 1968 by Dick Van Arnam and Jim Washburn. In addition to the Ravenna, Ohio site, the company had a testing ground in San Angelo, Texas, and one in Raco, Michigan, both of which were included in the acquisition. The two men, along with Van Arnam's son, Doug, started conducting testing on United States Forest Service roads in the late 1960s. While CTI tested tires like Smithers did, they also tested other products, including juvenile furniture, toys, household appliances, and electrical controls, according to an Akron Beacon Journal article²³ about the Smithers acquisition.

Herman Hochschwender is quoted in the same article:

“In acquiring Compliance, Smithers continues to expand toward its goal of providing complete consulting, technical and testing services to the tire, rubber and allied industries.”

It was a significant move for Smithers, and it marked some good news in a time of trouble.

Today, the lab in Ravenna remains a key component of Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Division. It also helped pave the way for the development of the Smithers Tire and Wheel Testing Laboratory in China a few decades later.

The acquisition of CTI and especially the development of the winter testing ground required boots on the ground. Bob Dunlop knew his nephew, Doug Domeck, was not happy with his current place of employment. Bob invited his nephew to join Smithers. The match was a good one. Doug would be with Smithers for the next thirty-five years.

23. Kuebler, Joseph E. “Tire Test Agencies Merge.” Akron Beacon Journal, December 26, 1975. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/155592358/?match=1&terms=smithers>.

Diversification and the First Expansions Beyond Akron

The winter testing grounds have a long history. The site was initially an airfield, constructed during World War II to help protect the valuable locks and narrows that surrounded the Michigan city of Sault Sainte Marie. After the war was over, the site was abandoned for several years. The United States Air Force used the area as an anti-aircraft artillery site. That phase of the site's history ended in 1972 when the Air Force sold the Racó facility to the United States Forest Service. CTI received permission from the Forest Service to start using the area for testing during the winter. The site became an official winter testing ground in 1973, and Dick's son Doug Van Arnám served as the general manager.

When Smithers acquired the winter testing grounds, the former airfield began to evolve into the world-class facility that exists today. What once were runways now have become testing grounds for specific surface types like split mu, alternating ice, and asphalt. The harsh Upper Peninsula winters have allowed Smithers to test vehicles, tires, and vehicle components for durability and effectiveness in cold-weather conditions since 1975. Today, the winter testing grounds receives an average of 2,500 visitors from December through March.

The emphasis today is on full vehicle evaluations of safety and braking systems, and recently testing of electric vehicles launched at the site.

The testing grounds in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and in San Angelo, Texas, represented the first Smithers expansions beyond Akron. While the San Angelo site has since closed, the Racó (or Brimley) facility is still flourishing and celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2023.

Smithers and the city of Sault Sainte Marie have developed a close relationship over the last several decades. Smithers has brought revenue into the city through the purchases of fuel, hotel stays, restaurant meals, and more. The testing grounds are serviced by Kinross EMS, which has added employees to serve Smithers and its clients. Smithers has also created jobs for the local community, including a hundred or more seasonal jobs during the busy winter months.

Pictured Opposite Page:
Overhead view of the Racó
(Brimley) facility in 2024





Pictured Left:
A meeting held at the San Angelo,
Texas test track

Pictured Right:
Doug Domeck (Center) talking with
Steve Mihnovets (Left) and Ellis
Wilson (Right)

New Leadership Emerging

In the late 1980s, Herman Hochschwender became the Chairman of the Board, and Doug Domeck was named President of Smithers Scientific Services.

Over the next decade, more changes would impact the automotive and tire industry, and more changes would happen within Smithers Scientific Services. The intersection of these parallel evolutions contributed to what Smithers is today at one hundred years old.



04

Changes on the Horizon:
1986–1990

Mike Hochschwender's Journey to Smithers

Mike Hochschwender never imagined working for Smithers Scientific Services. He wanted to be an oceanographer. He loved the ocean and swimming from a very young age. At the age of eleven, he was the youngest certified diver in the United States. He was an excellent swimmer at Firestone High School, which is part of the Akron Public School District, and is now in the Firestone High School Sports Hall of Fame.

A few weeks before graduating high school, Mike visited the local Navy Recruitment office to learn more about the Mammal Program. The recruiter took so long looking for the folder on the Mammal program that Mike had already read a pamphlet on the desk about the Navy SEAL program. It was a pivotal read, because at that moment Mike decided that was what he wanted to do. In 1983, only four recipients of the ROTC scholarship were selected for the SEALS program, and Mike was one of them. He attended Tulane University on the ROTC scholarship and earned a Bachelor of Science in biology and environmental science.

He excelled in the military, rising through the ranks to a Navy SEAL Commander. He truly loved serving his country, but he had a desire to have children. He knew there was no way he could be loyal to his brothers in the SEAL team and still be the type of father he wanted to be.

In the 1980s, Mike was deployed to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Earnest Will. One evening he called his father on a pay phone. During this conversation, Mike made a decision that changed the course of his life. He decided he would go back home, to Akron, and help his father with the family business, Smithers Scientific Services. He could then have a chance to start the family he longed for while also helping his father. So, he talked to the Navy, which agreed to give him an extended leave with an opportunity to return to the Navy if it did not work out.

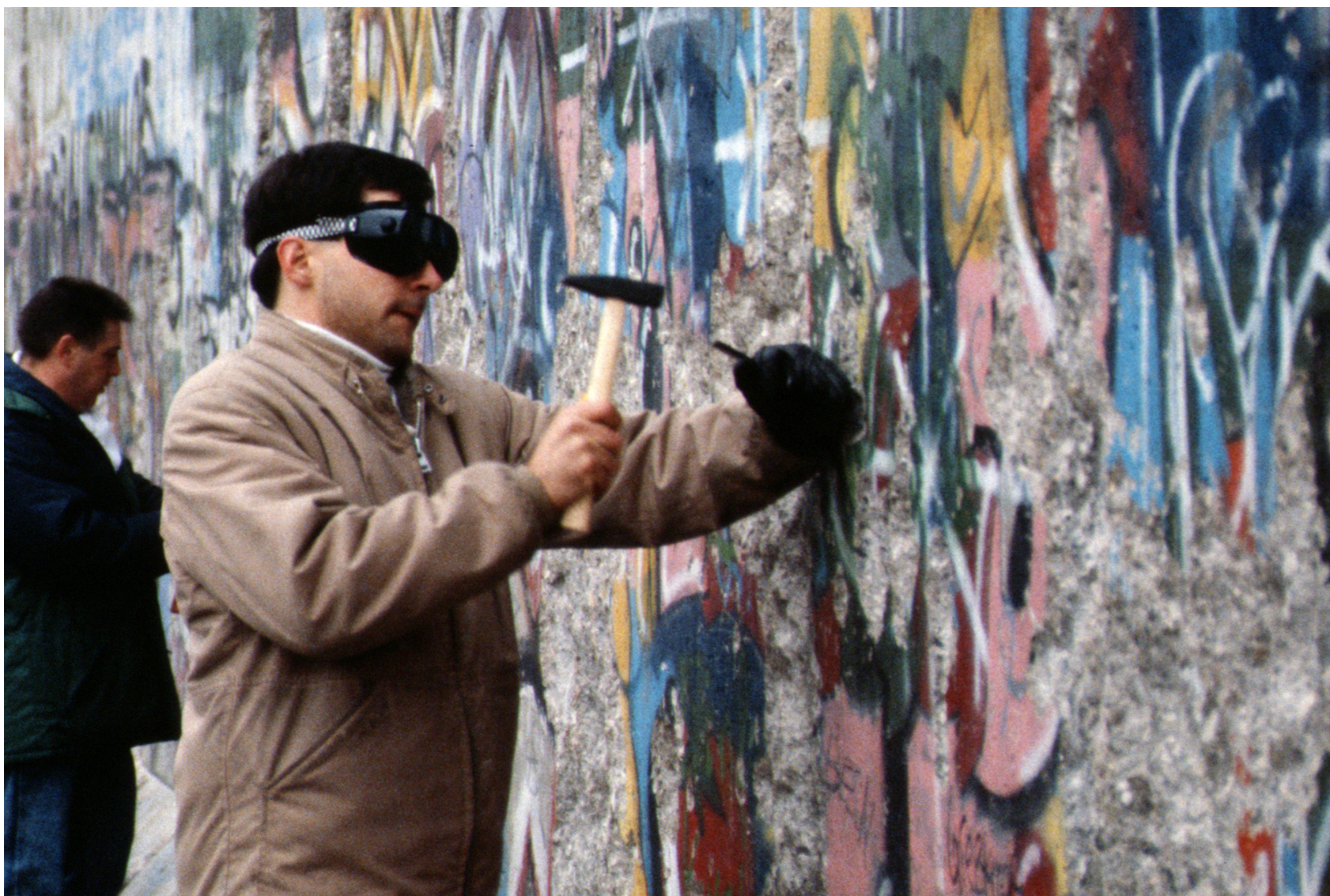
This was such a generous offer that Mike could not pass up the opportunity to give this career option a try.

Although he never pictured himself working at Smithers as an adult, when Mike was twelve years old, his father offered him a summer job to earn some extra money. Mike said yes, of course.

Mike worked eight-hour shifts for two weeks, attaching tags to cut sections of tires. Mike learned that working in the Akron laboratory was hard and, on top of that, his hands were always covered in carbon black. He would scrub and scrub every day until his skin was red. Finally, on his last day, a team member, who had watched him scrub every day for two weeks, reached up over Mike's head and brought down a container of powdered soap. Mike had never noticed it. To Mike's surprise and delight, the carbon black came right off. The team member laughed and smiled at the youngster. Mike laughed too and made his way home excited to show his mother his clean hands.



Pictured Opposite Page:
Mike Hochschwender (middle)
talking with Admiral James "Ace"
Lyons, Jr., USN (left) and Colonel
W.S. Pullar USMC (right)



Pictured Above:
Citizens help demolish the Berlin Wall, 1989

Changes on the Horizon

A lot happened on the world stage in the years between 1985 and 1990. Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan sparked a thaw of the Cold War. In the wake of the Cold War ending, revolution spread across Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, impacting Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and then into the different states of the Soviet Union. The Berlin Wall was torn down. With the start of the 1990s, the United States entered into war with Iraq, now referred to as the First Gulf War.

All of these major world events impacted the world while change began to emerge on the horizon at Smithers.

In March of 1988, Mike began his journey as a Smithers market research consultant. He was a familiar face to many at the office. Team members at that time may have remembered Mike learning to tie his shoes in his father's office. Others may have remembered him from when he helped around the company, which he did quite often.

About six months after joining Smithers Scientific Services as a consultant, in September of 1988, Mike was asked to look at the Akron Laboratories, and specifically the part of the business that was not involved in performing the testing for the Tire Analysis Reports. This part of the lab operation, focused mostly on rubber materials testing, had not been profitable for a number of years. Mike studied the situation and put together recommendations for improving the business. When asked if he was confident the plan could be implemented, Mike said yes, and was put in charge of the entire Akron Lab, including the Tire Analysis Reports. Mike's plan worked, and he turned the materials testing department into a profitable operation.

At this point, Herman saw his son had great potential and suggested that he should pursue a Master of Business Administration (MBA). Herman did not have the time to give his son the necessary training. Mike knew that if he was going to earn his MBA, someone else would need to lead the Akron Laboratory in his absence.

Creation of an Amazing Team

It was October 1990. Mike arrived at the office early. By the evening he had been in his office for about eleven hours, and the last thing on his schedule was an interview for the position of rubber consultant. The candidate's name was Dave Schwarz (pictured below). He had been working at Firestone in the tire development business for seven years. He had enjoyed the job but wanted to experience more variety in his workdays.

When Dave arrived, Mike was very tired and wanted to get out of his office for a bit. Mike asked if Dave minded sitting on the loading dock to enjoy some fresh air while being interviewed. Dave didn't mind, and they each sat in old office chairs with stuffing coming out of them to talk.

They hit it off right away, but no human resources professional would consider it a true interview. They just talked about the tire industry and their experiences, both personal and professional.

After the interview, Mike's boss asked him what he thought of the candidate. Mike said, "I think he is really good, but I don't think there is even a remote chance he's going to accept our offer because I interviewed him on the loading dock." Despite the casual interview, and maybe because of it, Dave accepted the offer and helped shape Smithers into the successful company it is today.

Mike and Dave were young, but very large companies began to depend on them for consultative advice. They made an amazing team right from the start. Dave was technical whereas Mike understood customers and their needs.

After eighteen months of collaboration, Mike headed to the prestigious Wharton Business School to earn his MBA. Dave Schwarz took the reins at the Akron Laboratory on Market Street. This would be the beginning of so much more than Dave could have ever imagined as he sat on that loading dock one fall evening.



Mike fondly remembers how they were able to accomplish things with clients that really should not have been possible for two twenty-nine-year-old men. In part, they won projects because they were transparent about the steps they planned to take and the objectives they hoped to reach. They never over committed, and they always tried to solve the most challenging problems for their clients.

Mike said it best, "Dave is just so intelligent. It's tough to find a problem he can't solve."

Pictured Left:
Dave Schwarz photographed around the time he joined Smithers

Pictured Opposite Page:
Smithers Scientific Services team standing in front of the Market Street Facility where Dave's interview was conducted



05

Diversification and a New Era: 1991–2005

Before heading to the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia to earn his MBA, Mike Hochschwender attended several American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) meetings. One particular meeting, which occurred in Philadelphia, stands out. The attendees were taking a break from the proceedings when Mike overheard people talking about some troubling industry news: “You’re going to have to get certified if you want to do any business in Europe.” Mike asked what they were talking about. “This new ISO 9001 standard,” they said.

Pictured Below:

A Smithers scientist using a LaserMike 183, a machine used for non-contact inspection and measurement of physical properties such as the dimensions, shape, and uniformity of an object.



ISO 9001 and Its Early Impact

The ISO 9000 series was published in 1987. It was created to help companies establish a standard quality management system, and it incorporated seven management principles: Customer Focus, Leadership, Engagement of People, Process Approach, Improvement, Evidence-Based Decision Making, and Relationship Management.²⁴ Earning an ISO 9001 certification signifies a dedication to customers and product quality.

As a testing firm, Smithers Scientific Services had been involved in some quality audits with clients. Mike researched this new quality standard when he returned from the meeting. He felt like this could be a new area of service for

the company, so he presented the idea to the president, Doug Domeck, and then left for Wharton.

After sixteen months of study and earning an MBA, Mike returned to Smithers Scientific Services as the Vice President of Management Consulting. During his absence, not much had happened with his idea for the new ISO certification service. That would all change when, in October 1993, Mike launched Smithers Quality Assessments, the company's first subsidiary and the newest certification body for quality systems.

At Wharton, Mike was assigned a project to write a business plan, and the ISO 9000 certification services business was still on his mind. He chose to focus on this conceptual company for his project. He spent hours researching the market and competition, strategizing, establishing viable financial models, and thinking through how it could be successful. Upon returning to Akron, Mike would soon realize how important that school project would be for the future of Smithers.

24. American Society of Quality (ASQ) website. "Learn About Quality." Retrieved from <https://asq.org/quality-resources/iso-9001>.

Smithers Quality Assessments

The creation of Smithers Quality Assessments was an entrepreneurial pursuit. Initially, the subsidiary provided third-party quality systems audits and certification services to only ISO 9000 Series standards, a worldwide quality system standard. While Mike was at Wharton, Bob Moyer was hired from Goodyear to write the quality manuals that such a business required. However, when Mike returned, there was still no business plan or go-to-market strategy, and a few more key decisions remained.

When Bob retired, Mike hired John Sedlak, who had some previous auditing experience, and the two worked on figuring out how to build not only a new business, but a fairly new kind of business. John and Mike worked on revising the manuals, building the business plan, and getting the new effort launched. When that was complete, Smithers Quality Assessments applied for accreditation. John conducted the first witness audit. Once accredited, Smithers Quality Assessments got to work.

While John did the auditing, Mike handled the sales. The two men met every Saturday morning for six months, sharing what they had learned during their travels the previous week. By simply talking to clients and listening to their needs, over time the team learned to differentiate Smithers from the competition. The differentiating factor, they discovered, was providing a trustworthy and accurate assessment, on time, with a customer-centric approach. This meant they took the time to explain the audit results and help clients understand the corrective measures needed to earn ISO certification. Over time, Smithers Quality Assessments enjoyed an 80% success rate in winning projects.

In 1996, ISO released another new standard, ISO 14001.²⁵ This standard focused on Environmental Management System (EMS) optimization. Smithers was accredited in the same year as the new certification was released. Smithers would continue to work hard to stay on top of the newest ISO standards, regardless of the industry they targeted.

25. International Organization for Standardization (ISO) website. "ISO 14001:2015." Retrieved from <https://www.iso.org/standard/60857.html>.



Pictured Above:
The original Smithers Quality Assessments logo.

SMALL Business News

September 1997 • \$2.00

AKRON

A CEO'S CRASH COURSE

A glimpse at
the succession
behind the
closed doors
of Smithers
Scientific
Services

*****5-DIGIT 4430
21891 AKR 155 Y 94
MICHAEL FAY DIR COMM
SMITHERS SCIENTIFIC SVCS
425 W MARKET ST
AKRON OH 44303-2099

A New Era Begins

In a transition move that had been planned for several years, Mike Hochschwender assumed the duties of President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Smithers Scientific Services in January 1996. Herman Hochschwender retained chairmanship of the board.

In his first message to clients and team members, Mike reiterated the credo that Smithers Scientific Services had followed throughout its existence: “Success in each of our business units [now referred to as Departments or Divisions] can always be realized by sticking to three very basic principles: accurate data, on time, every time, and with efficiency.” Mike brought up the “on time, every time” concept because in the mid-90s, on-time delivery was a struggle for Smithers. The entire phrase — “accurate data, on time, every time, and with efficiency” evolved quickly into an internal mantra for all levels of Smithers team members.

Team members who witnessed the transition immediately saw that Mike was not a “status quo” type of leader. Like his father, Herman, Mike had big ideas for the company, and he also knew that there was not enough demand in the tire and automotive business to continue to base the entire

company’s growth on that industry. Moreover, Mike saw that Smithers expertise expanded beyond tires. Smithers had the capacity to create an environment and business practices where scientists could be successful from a business perspective. Recognizing that as a core competency meant it could be applied to any industry. From that point until the present, Smithers has focused on diversification of services and industries. This has served not only to fulfill needs in a wide variety of areas, but it also protects Smithers from hard times any one industry may endure.

In November 1997, the Akron Beacon Journal published a series called “Stories of Industry Survivors,”²⁶ and Smithers Scientific Services was one of the featured companies. Services were listed as tire testing, rubber products and materials, and consultation for the rubber industry. The company was officially seventy-two years old, but as the next two decades would show, life was just beginning.

Pictured Opposite Page:
Michael Hochschwender pictured
on the cover of *Small Business
News, Akron*

26. Vanac, Mary. “Stories of Industry Survivors, Startups.” *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 23, 1997. Retrieved from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/151740306/?match=1&terms=smithers>.

RAPRA and Malcolm Copley

An indication of how quickly Mike gained international respect in his role is a conversation that occurred in 2000, just four years after he became CEO. Mike had been visiting Malcolm Copley, the head of RAPRA, for years, and in 2000 Malcolm told Mike, "I'm ready to retire. If you can figure out a way to purchase us, I'm all ears."

That was a greater challenge than one might assume today. RAPRA was a "limited by guarantee" company.

A simplified explanation of this type of company is it does not make any money for the owners as it does not actually have "shareholders." Somewhat similar to a nonprofit in the United States, all of the profit is invested back into the company. This has its advantages, but it also means that there is no place for the money to go if the company is sold. This was the problem that Mike had to solve. It would take six years before RAPRA would see Smithers added to its name.

Pictured Opposite Page:
Malcolm Copley (left) with
colleague



Entering Life Sciences

Long before Mike met Dr. Robert Springborn, Herman Hochschwender and Dr. Springborn had met and gone to lunch. Dr. Springborn apparently left the meeting thinking he had tried to acquire Smithers, but “Herman was a tough one.” Herman Hochschwender thought he had tried to purchase Springborn Labs but “that Dr. Springborn is a tough nut to crack.”

We will never know what that conversation really was and who the actual “tough guy” was. What we do know is that Mike was looking for ways to expand Smithers Scientific Services, particularly into the life sciences, and that search would lead him to Dr. Springborn.

Mike’s undergraduate degree was in biology, and life sciences remained an area of interest. Mike had also read books by several business strategists who suggested that investing in man’s relationship with the environment would be the next large area of opportunity. Predictions indicated that the field of biology, along with environmental science as a whole, would change as much over the next thirty years as technology had changed in the previous thirty years. Mike wanted Smithers to be part of this industry evolution.

Smithers encountered the Springborn name while trying to acquire another company in North Carolina. The company had listed Springborn Laboratories as one of its competitors. After a few months of negotiations, the acquisition of the company in North Carolina fell through. Mike reached out to Kerry Dustin and asked him to help Smithers Scientific Services find a company to acquire in either the automotive or the life science industries. Surprisingly, Kerry told Mike, “Don’t hire me. I already have someone to introduce you to.” Ironically, Kerry had been hired to sell Springborn Laboratories.

In 2002, Springborn Laboratories was twice the size of Smithers Scientific Services. Along with labs in Wareham, Massachusetts; Snow Camp, North Carolina; and Spencerville, Ohio; Springborn Laboratories had an international presence in Horn, Switzerland. The Ohio lab focused on mammalian toxicology while the Wareham, Switzerland, and Snow Camp facilities focused on environmental toxicology. Mike wanted it all but knew the purchase of both the mammalian and environmental toxicology would put too much debt and risk on Smithers Scientific Services. Mike negotiated and purchased the environmental toxicology portion of the business. Just a few months later, Charles River acquired the mammalian toxicology portion in Ohio.

“Springborn was our first significant diversification but like our other companies, it is a technology-based service provider. Strategically, we saw long-term growth opportunities in biological and chemical services associated with fields studying the environment and the effects of materials and chemicals. We were specifically attracted to Springborn, because of its leadership position in the industries it serves and its excellent reputation in the fields of ecotoxicology, environmental fate, and metabolism analytical services.”²⁷

27. *The Free Library*. S.v. “An interview with Michael Hochschwender: Smithers acquiring capabilities and capacity.” Retrieved Jun 21 2024 from <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/An+interview+with+Michael+Hochschwender%3a+Smithers+acquiring...+a0170195390>.



The Smithers Group

In January 2003, the launch of The Smithers Group was announced in the Akron Beacon Journal. The Smithers Group was a holding company, supporting Smithers Scientific Services (the tire and automotive business), Smithers Quality Assessments, and Springborn Smithers Laboratories.

Each of the three companies maintained a name known and respected to its clientele. Automotive and tire clients had been working with Smithers Scientific Services and Smithers Laboratories before that for decades. Springborn Laboratories had been serving its customers for decades as well, so keeping the Springborn name made sense. Smithers Quality Assessments was already ten years old. Retaining the industry-recognized names as well as the Smithers brand laid the foundation for the Smithers brand to flow into many new industries as the company continued to grow over the years to come.

Pictured Left: Disease and parasite evaluation at Springborn Smithers Laboratories

“Smithers is a science company.”

Although this was Mike’s first acquisition, the team members at Springborn Laboratories were truly impressed with how the transition was handled. Former President of Smithers Environmental Risk Sciences Division, Susan Shepherd, remembers with admiration how Mike spent several weeks in Wareham really working to understand the business. He was dedicated to absorbing everything from what kind of testing the facility conducted to how seasonality impacted profit margins.

When Mike returned to the Akron headquarters, he was surprised to find that some of his Smithers team members were confused, frustrated, and even angry. They did not understand why Mike was making this venture into the life sciences. It seemed outlandish. Mike said, and maintains this position twenty years later, “Smithers is a science company.”



Pictured Left:
Mike Kelly, Medical Device Testing Division, Laboratory Manager, North America, performing an analysis on a syringe

Pictured Right:
A sign for Springborn Smithers Laboratories’ offshoot division, Smithers Synomics Pharma Services



Early Beginnings of Medical Device and Pharmaceutical Testing

Shortly after the acquisition of Springborn Laboratories, Smithers began conducting a lot of chemistry testing for medical combination products. A medical combination product is a device used to deliver a drug to a patient, such as a syringe, an intravenous (IV) bag, or an inhaler. The chemistry testing Springborn Laboratories was conducting was related to heart stents with a drug that helped slow the growth of scar tissue.

In 2005, based on clients’ demands, Smithers began investing in this service offering and even started an offshoot of Springborn Laboratories called Smithers Synomics Pharma Services. While recruiting a leader of Synomics Pharma Services, Mike met Ira DuBey. While Ira did not start working for Smithers at this time, it would not be long before he would prove instrumental in guiding Smithers into pharmaceutical bioanalytical testing services.

Pictured Left:
A photo of Herman Hochschwender, used in the program for his funeral



Leaving a Legacy

On April 28, 2005, Herman Hochschwender passed away in Naples, Florida. He had the opportunity to see Smithers begin to grow in the way he had always hoped it would, and that happened under his son's leadership.

Mike feels his father would be surprised at the Smithers of today, but, he adds, "My father would have also expected it."

"I remember when this picture (left) was taken."

It was in 1996, during a reception, when my father publicly turned over to me the day-to-day operations of the company. It was the culmination of a plan he sat down to prepare 10 years prior.

He put quite a bit of effort into developing that plan. He told me a few years back that he was quite satisfied with the management team that is in place and that all the appropriate steps had been taken to ensure the success of the organization after he was gone.

In business, my father strongly believed that a person's commitment and belief in a plan of action was more important than the perfection of the plan itself. He taught me that no plan goes exactly as expected and the effort and energy that went into developing the plan will carry the day. How right he was!

Yes, my father was a great teacher. It seemed I was constantly learning from him, and as my ability to learn changed, his approach to teaching changed with it.

He firmly believed in making a learning experience out of everything. And he was perfectly willing to take a hit in order to save me the pain of a valuable life's lesson. He made absolutely sure I was able to learn from the mistakes of others.

My father always made the best of whatever life dealt him. He was always looking forward and rarely looking back, except to recall a lesson and apply it to a current situation.

Now that he's gone, I will always cherish the many lessons I learned from him as a young man. He taught me things, not because he felt they were critical, but because he was passionate about my learning what he studied his entire life.

— MIKE HOCHSCHWENDER, HERMAN'S SON

06

A Flurry of Growth Activity: 2006–2011

The early 2000s stand out as a time of growth in Smithers history. During this five-year stretch, Smithers acquired two companies, opened its first facility in China, and started two new companies, which are known as divisions today.

“These moves have complemented our organic growth. Smithers is a technology-based service company. Supporting our clients often means adding capabilities and capacity, but it can also be investing in new technologies. Most important to our success is our people, and a key decision in any acquisition is our ability to add highly skilled staff.”²⁸

²⁸ *The Free Library*, “An interview with Michael Hochschwender.”



Pictured Above:
Testing the conduction of polymer

Expansion into Europe

In 2002, the RAPRA management team did a Management Buyout, commonly referred to as an MBO. The good news for Smithers was that it would now be possible to acquire the organization because RAPRA was no longer working as a limited-by-guarantee company. Even so, four years would pass before the acquisition would be complete. By that time, RAPRA had told its employees that it was now financially insolvent. Mike had to act fast if he wanted to make the purchase before everything was sold off. He left for England unclear how things would go. He told his family, “I may be gone for three days or three weeks.” After seventeen days of grueling meetings with lawyers and banks and long nights spent working on negotiations and plans, Smithers was finally able to purchase the company.

RAPRA brought several valuable assets to Smithers. It had the largest polymer research and testing data library in the world at the time. It offered polymer consultancy, analytical services, polymer product process development, training, conferences, and market research reports. As Mike noted in a Rubber World interview, “With RAPRA, we had the ability to expand our capabilities in existing and new technologies, to grow in terms of our global presence, and to add highly skilled staff.”

When Smithers acquired RAPRA, it was renamed Smithers RAPRA Ltd. and became the newest Smithers company. It significantly expanded Smithers services in expertise and geographic reach. The RAPRA facility remains a part of Smithers today, and it is a European hub for Smithers Materials Science and Engineering and Medical Device Testing Divisions.

With the acquisition of RAPRA, The Smithers Group now had five companies under its umbrella:

Smithers Scientific Services (USA)

Now a part of the Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Division

Smithers Quality Assessments (USA)

Auditing, Certification, and Cybersecurity services

Springborn Smithers Laboratories (USA)

Now a part of the Smithers Environmental Risk Sciences Division

Smithers Synomics Pharma Services (USA)

Now a part of the Smithers Pharmaceutical Development Services Division

Smithers RAPRA (Europe)

Now a part of Smithers Materials Science and Engineering, Information, and Medical Device Testing Divisions

New Leadership at Smithers Quality Assessments

In 2007, Smithers Quality Assessments was on the cusp of celebrating its fifteenth anniversary.

It had come a long way since the early days. Now, John Sedlak was ready to move on, and he knew exactly who he wanted to bring into the company. John had worked with Jeanette Preston through group work in two different trade organizations—the Independent Association of Accredited Registrars and the International Automotive Certification Body.

He had been asking her to come work for Smithers for years. In October 2007, Jeanette decided to make the move to Smithers Quality Assessments and began her journey as the Director of Operations. When John left in 2008, she was named Vice President of Smithers Quality Assessments.

Pictured Opposite Page, Left:
John Sedlak

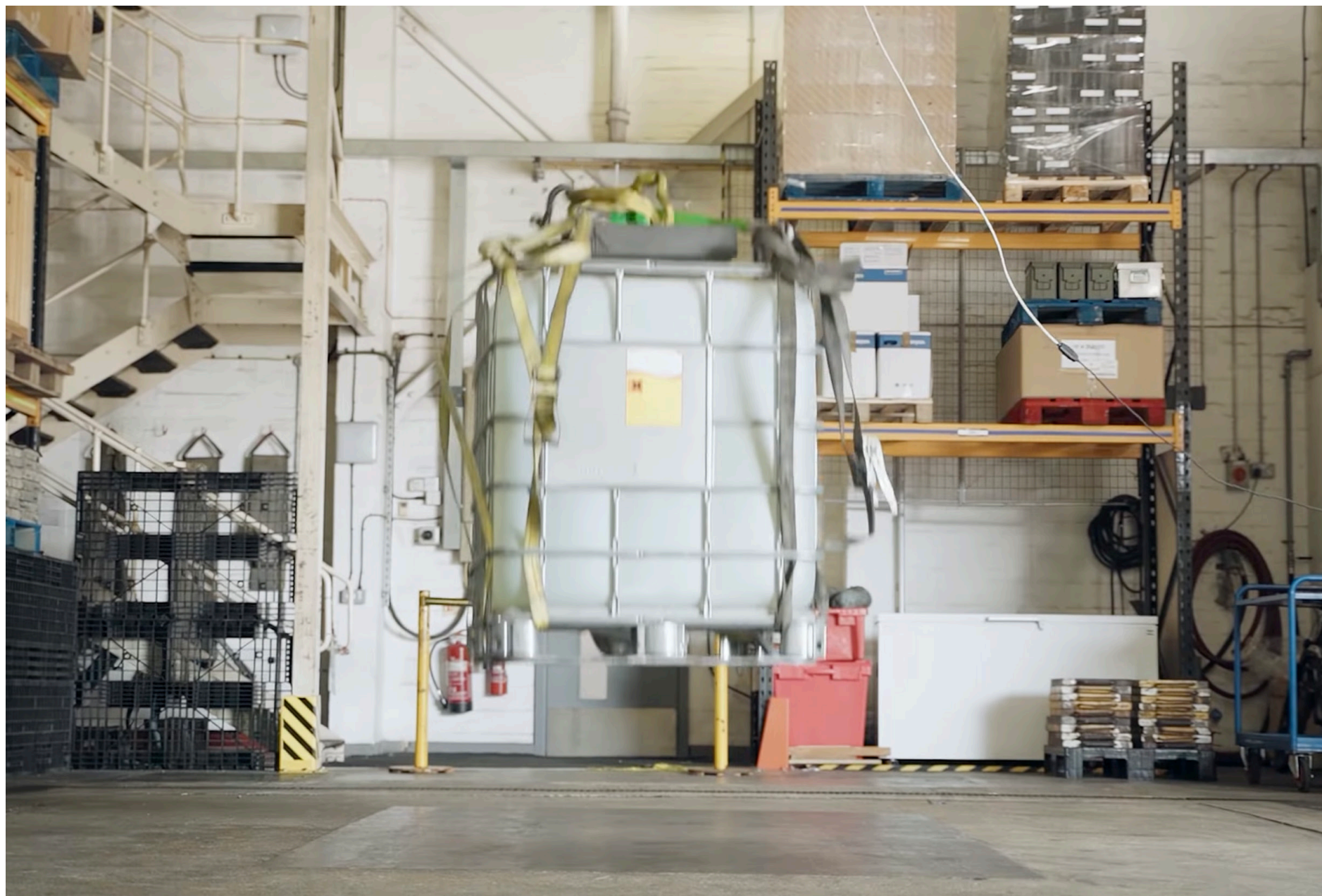
Pictured Opposite Page, Right:
Jeanette Preston

Pictured Opposite Page, Top:
Independent Association of Accredited Registrars logo, the trade organization where Jeanette Preston met John Sedlak. Preston continued her involvement in the IAAR after coming to Smithers.



Independent Association
of Accredited Registrars





Pictured Above:
Large scale drop test caught mid-fall at the Smithers Leatherhead location

Diversification into Packaging, Events, and Market Intelligence

The story of how the Printing Industries Research Association (PIRA) came to be part of the Smithers family is complex. As mentioned previously, PIRA was organized in 1930, just five years after Vernon Smithers started adding equipment to the garage on Sweitzer Avenue. Despite the organization's longevity, PIRA went through many changes before becoming the newest Smithers company in 2010.

March 2004 saw the acquisition of PIRA by CIBA Specialty Chemicals, at which time PIRA became part of CIBA Expert Services. The Expert Services business unit offered knowledge-based services for customers seeking professional, regulatory, environmental, safety, testing, and educational support. The global network of experts helped customers in highly regulated industries to achieve compliance, efficiency, and sustainable success. PIRA's primary goals were to provide business services to the packaging, printing, paper, and publishing industries. Later in the year, PIRA moved all its operations to a newly outfitted facility on Cleeve Road in Leatherhead.

In 2008, CIBA Expert Services was purchased by BASF, which did not have a need for the specific services PIRA offered.

Shortly after the purchase, BASF approached Smithers to see if there was an interest in purchasing portions of the company. Mike recalls it as a standard negotiation and acquisition. The additional complexity in the PIRA story is that while it was bought and sold three times in rapid succession, it was also making acquisitions of its own. In 2005, PIRA bought Intertech, an information provider in Portland, Maine. In 2007, PIRA acquired the distribution testing laboratories of Lansmont Testing Services Group, an American company with labs in Lansing, Michigan; Sunnyvale, California; and Huntington Beach, California. When Smithers purchased PIRA, it also acquired all these facilities. The California sites are no longer a part of Smithers. However, the Lansing, Michigan site is still a part of Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Division.

Today, the legacy of PIRA lives on as part of the packaging, distribution and materials testing, and information services provided by both the Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Division and the Smithers Information Division.

The Diversification Strategy Works

Until 2010, Smithers Scientific Services led the companies in profit. Indeed, for the first several decades it was Smithers. The Great Recession of 2008–2009 and the subsequent changes in the automotive industry made it hard for Smithers Scientific Services to continue to be the leader in profit. Showing the value of diversification, Smithers Springborn, in 2011 known as Smithers Viscient, stepped in as the profit leader during this time. Unfortunately, much of the work occurred in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, which happened on April 20, 2010.

Nonetheless, the adversity of that period showed that Smithers Scientific Services no longer had to carry the weight of the company on its own. The Smithers portfolio of services was now diversified, which inevitably has proven that a diverse portfolio can overcome and grow during economic downturns or unexpected changes in markets.



While Smithers was busy making acquisitions and expanding service lines, Ira DuBey was busy on the Atlantic Coast.

Ira helped sell Tandem Labs to LabCorp in 2009 and a year later moved on to his next venture, Avanza Labs, a mammalian toxicology Contract Research Organization (CRO) in Gaithersburg, Maryland. In 2011, Ira started the large molecule bioanalytical side of the business, and just a year later, all of this would become part of the Smithers story.



Pictured Above: Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation. Dr. Brian Stacy, NOAA veterinarian, prepares to clean an oiled Kemp's Ridley turtle after the BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill, 2010

Pictured Below:

The Smithers team poses for a photo at the celebration for the opening of the Smithers Suzhou, China site

**Pictured Top:**

Nancy Yao, one of the first hires at Smithers China headquarters; currently working for the Smithers Information Division

Pictured Bottom:

Henry He, one of the first hires at Smithers China headquarters; currently the General Manager for Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Asia Division

Smithers Expansion into Asia

“We’re executing our strategy to expand our expertise and capabilities for tire, rubber and polymer component testing in China.”

— Jim Dowey, President of Smithers RAPRA in the mid-2000s.²⁹

Smithers made another significant move in 2011. The first Smithers facility opened in Suzhou, China.

Smithers had been working with Chinese clients for several decades. In fact, Dave Williams used to visit clients in China so often he was referred to as “Mr. Smithers.” Derek Read, who was the General Manager at Smithers Tire and Wheel Testing laboratory in Ravenna, Ohio (formerly CTI), had been back and forth to China numerous times since the late 1990s. The success of the Wheel and Tire testing lab in Ravenna inspired the idea that a similar lab could also work in China, and the search began for a facility Smithers could utilize.

One day, Mike invited Derek out to lunch. Derek still remembers having a feeling he knew what the lunch was about. His gut instinct was correct. Mike asked Derek if he would like to start a Smithers testing lab in China. Derek did not know the Chinese language or much about the Chinese culture at the time. Nonetheless, he accepted the challenge.

Originally, the thought was to start the new business in the city of Qingdao, the “San Diego” of China. Ultimately, however, Derek and the Smithers team settled on Suzhou. The city is close to Shanghai, where many of the automotive companies are headquartered in China. Shipping from Suzhou to Shanghai is easy, so the city seemed like a perfect location.

As one might expect, there were some challenges. The equipment that was shipped to China did not work for several months, leaving Derek with no ability to actually get things started. Instead of testing, he used this time to understand the culture and build the China team. Henry He was an early hire and is now the General Manager for Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Asia Division. Nancy Yao, now a member of the Smithers Information Division, also joined the company at that time. Derek credits these early hires with much of the success the China business began to experience, and he credits the team in China with the success the facility still enjoys today.

The five-year period between 2006 and 2011 was productive despite the financial troubles that had nearly crippled the automotive market. In 2012, Smithers would match this five-year flurry of activity in a single year.



29. Retrieved from <https://www.smithers.com/news/2015/may/smithers-expands-capabilities-at-suzhou-laboratory>.

07

Expansion in the Life Sciences: 2012

By 2012, the National Institute of Health reported that biologics were dominating the pharmaceutical market.³⁰ Rooted in the genetic studies of the Human Genome Project, the combination of genetic research and biology has led to new cancer treatments, vaccines, and cell and gene therapies. To support the development of large-molecule drugs and therapies, bioanalytical contract research organizations (CROs) like Avanza Labs emerged. Smithers had entered this market in 2005 with Smithers Synomics Pharma with hopes to build out its capabilities and capacity. Businesses can expand organically or can expand by acquisitions. In this case, an acquisition would quickly increase the Smithers footprint and service offering in the life sciences industry.

30. Lindsley, Craig W. "The Top Prescription Drugs of 2012 Globally: Biologics Dominate, But Small Molecule CNS Drugs Hold on to Top Spots." ACS Chemical Science 4 (6), June 19, 2013, 905–907. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3689196/>



Smithers Expands Capabilities & Capacity for Large Molecule Pharmaceutical Development

In 2012, patent expirations were increasing, with more key medications losing patent protection toward the middle of the decade.

When a medication's patent expires, it leaves the door open for generic products to enter the market. This benefited the general public, especially economically, but resulted in lost income and market shares for pharmaceutical companies. Jobs and expenses were cut for survival. Although there was a lot of potential with genomic understanding and an aging population, financial security was the top priority for many of the largest pharmaceutical companies.

It was in this environment that Ira DuBey approached Mike about acquiring Avanza Labs, which was in need of funding. Avanza Labs had both a mammalian toxicology laboratory and a bioanalytical laboratory. Smithers acquired the entire business, and Smithers Synomics Pharma merged with the newly acquired company.

Avanza Labs was renamed Smithers Avanza and joined Smithers Scientific Services, Smithers Quality Assessments, Smithers Viscient, Smithers RAPRA, and Smithers PIRA under The Smithers Group.

The Human Genome Project (HGP) was one of the greatest scientific feats in history. This voyage of biological discovery was led by an international group of researchers looking to sequence the human genome. Launched in October 1990 and completed in April 2003, the Human Genome Project's signature accomplishment—generating the first sequence of the human genome—provided fundamental information about the human blueprint, which has since accelerated the study of human biology and improved the practice of medicine.³¹

Pictured Opposite Page:
Ira Dubey and Phyllis Conliffe,
Executive Director of the Lab at this
time, cutting the ribbon at the new
Avanza laboratory

31. Learn more about the Human Genome Project at <https://www.genome.gov/>

Smithers Establishes an Environmental Risk Sciences Laboratory in Europe

When Smithers acquired Springborn Laboratories in 2002, a Swiss facility in Horn, Switzerland, had been included in the deal. This location had been shuttered, however, Smithers wanted to return to having an environmental risk sciences laboratory in Europe.

The opportunity arose when Covance crossed paths with Smithers. Covance had a facility in Harrogate, UK, dedicated to environmental toxicology. Covance was expanding into nutritional chemistry and wanted to build that new service line in the facility that had housed the Environmental Science Group (ESG). Mike, working with Nigel Brown from Covance, crafted the deal. Smithers would acquire ESG but would have to find a new facility for the business within a year's time.

ESG had been establishing their expertise for more than three decades. By 2012, they were known as the scientific experts for plant and animal metabolism, environmental fate, ecotoxicology, and physical, analytical, and residue chemistry in Europe.

While perhaps not changing as rapidly as the pharmaceutical industry in 2012, the environmental sciences industry had a lot on their plate. The controversy over fracking— a methodology for extracting natural gas that was potentially extremely harmful to the environment— was in full swing. *The New York Times*, together with several universities, reported on the link between pesticides and the near extinction of honeybees in the United States. With a worldwide focus on global warming, there was also more research on plant metabolism, insecticides, pesticides, and more.

After the acquisition of ESG, Volker Bornemann, who was president of Smithers Viscient, worked with a team to find a new home for the latest Smithers acquisition. The top priority was finding a place close to the former Covance facility. There were many scientists with a broad depth of expertise that was extremely valuable. Many of them had been with Covance for ten to thirty years and lived near the former facility. Smithers wanted to avoid losing any of the team members due to a longer commute. So the hunt was on, and it was not an easy one, as Sharon Swales recalls. At the time, Sharon was transitioning from an Operational Manager position at Covance to Smithers.

Finally, a former Milk Marketing Board building, totally empty, was found in Harrogate. The Milk Marketing Board was founded by the National Farmers Union in England and Wales in 1933, in Scotland in 1933–34, and in Northern Ireland much later in 1955.³² Originally called the Milk Marketing Schemes, the Boards sold milk for farmers, paying farmers in proportion to the milk they provided. The Boards ceased operations in 1994. The building was located very close to the former Covance facility, and it represented an architectural blank slate. Sharon, along with the architects and other team members, built out state-of-the-art laboratories to support Smithers Environmental Risk Sciences Division in Europe.

32. The Museum of English Rural Life, "The Milk Marketing Board." <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/collections/milk-marketing-board/>.



“The smell of stale milk was still in the pipes, and I was apprehensive at the thought of building out an entire site.”

Sharon Swales (pictured left) recalls her misgivings about the new location. But in true Smithers style, she along with other team members rolled up their sleeves and began the work. She was truly impressed with Mike's willingness to invest not only in top-of-the-line instrumentation but in the people, as well.

Sharon began her journey at Smithers as the Director of Fate and Metabolism and is now the Managing Director of Smithers Environmental Risk Sciences Europe.



Pictured Above:
Celebration luncheon for the opening of the Smithers
Environmental Risk Sciences Harrogate Facility



Pictured Above:
Smithers Environmental Risk Sciences
Harrogate Facility

Global Expansion

The Harrogate Environmental Risk Sciences facility represented the third UK facility for Smithers, the other two being Leatherhead and Shawbury. At eighty-seven years old, Smithers had expanded from a garage on Sweitzer Avenue in Akron, Ohio, to a multinational company with locations in China, Europe, and throughout the United States.

The growth and expansion showed no signs of slowing down.



08

Organic Growth Period: 2013–2017

“Over the past three years, our businesses have listened to our clients and worked to create plans for increasing capabilities and capacity in order to be the best possible partners. Our businesses have done an excellent job of taking the time to work hand in hand with our clients to identify the best areas for both investment and reinvestment. The recent expansions and improvements that have taken place across the organization position the Smithers Group companies well....”³³

33. “Smithers Expands Capabilities at Suzhou Laboratory,” Smithers corporate website. Retrieved from <https://www.smithers.com/news/2015/may/smithers-expands-capabilites-at-suzhou-laboratory>.

Opening New Smithers Facilities

From 2013 through 2017, Smithers went through a “settling” period. After such a flurry of acquisitions, these years were spent integrating the acquisitions and strategizing on how the Smithers companies could grow. This should not give the impression that these four years were quiet. Smithers opened four new offices, moved one company to Akron, and expanded several different facilities either physically or through new service lines during this time.

In January 2017, a new laboratory dedicated to medical device testing, located at the Shawbury, UK, facility, was opened. The new facility focused on performance of pre-filled syringes, including mechanical performance and reliability, dosing, leakage, and more. Interestingly, this new service had been developed by the Smithers PIRA Materials Testing team at Leatherhead; initial expansion and scale-up of the service was undertaken at Shawbury because that is where available space existed at the time.

Just seven months later, in July 2017, a second medical device testing facility, an Extractables and Leachables Laboratory, opened at the Bounce Innovation Hub in

Akron. Prior to this time, medical device testing was only conducted in the UK. This laboratory was strategically located in the US to improve turnaround times and customer service for clients in North America. A sales team was hired, and a small laboratory team was established.

The third and final new facility to become active in October 2017 was a Smithers Quality Assessments office located in Shanghai, China. The office had opened in 2016, but certification services were not able to begin until 2017 because of the Chinese accreditation process. This was the ideal city, centrally located near clients in need of ISO certifications. The Shanghai office benefited from talented early hires, just as the Suzhou office, which opened in 2012, did. In this case, Owen Li was one of the earliest hires, and today he is the Head of Smithers Quality Assessments Asia Pacific. Smithers Quality Assessments was preparing to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary, and opening another location in China was an indication of how far the business had come in that time.

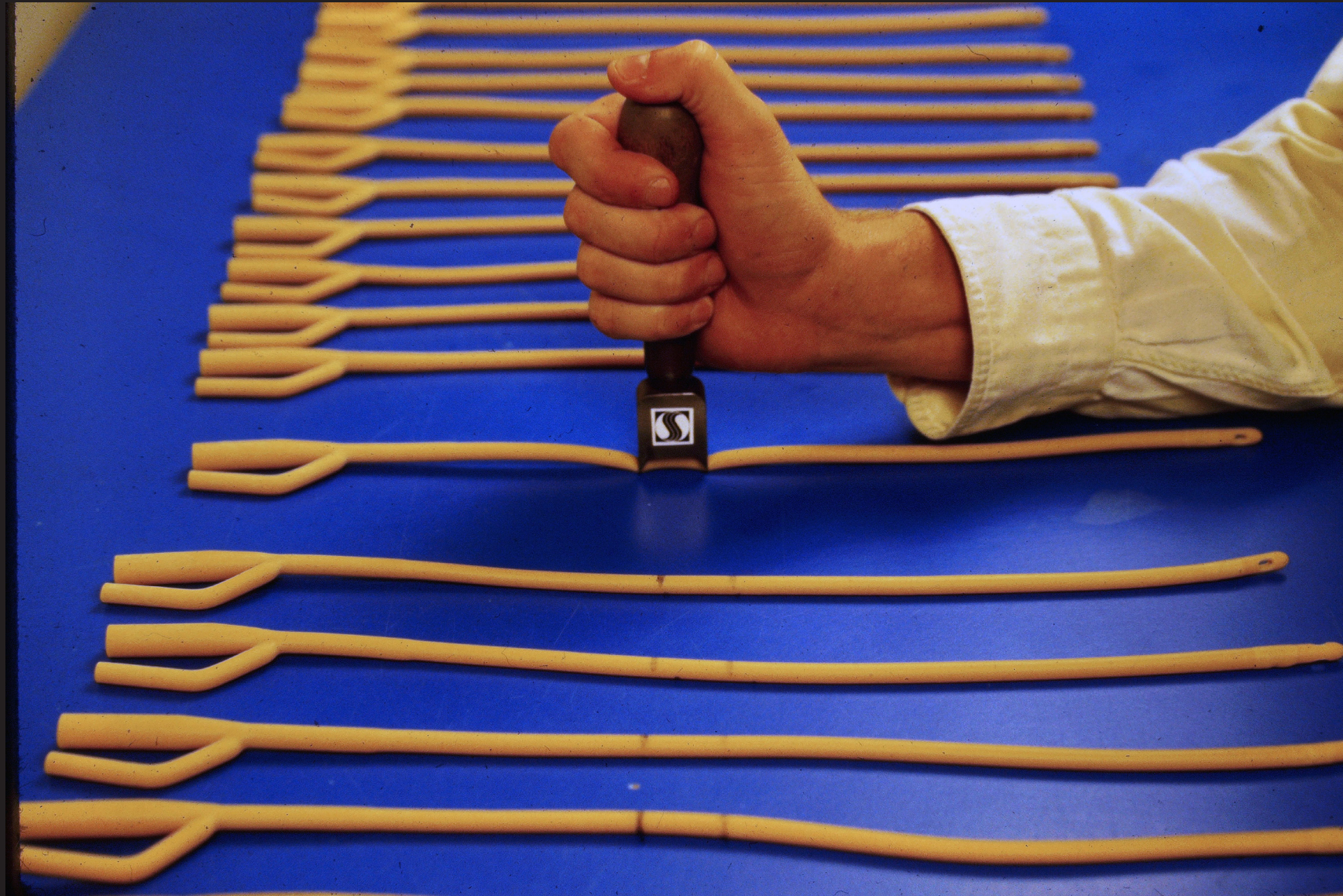
Also due to the ongoing success and growth of this company, Jeanette Preston was promoted to President of Smithers Quality Assessments and is still serving in this role today.

Pictured Opposite Page, Top:
In 2017, Smithers opened a new Extractables and Leachables lab at the Bounce Innovation Center in Akron, Ohio

Pictured Opposite Page, Bottom:
Owen Li, one of the earliest hires for Smithers Quality Assessments China. Owen remains a valuable team member today

Pictured Opposite Page, Right:
Bulletin announcing Jeanette Preston's promotion to President of Smithers Quality Assessments Division





Reflecting on the number of changes that PIRA and RAPRA team members experienced from the time of the Smithers acquisitions to the opening of the medical device testing lab at Shawbury, Sam Shepard Fidler, Regional Vice President, Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Europe Division, notes that the collaboration and strength the team showed over the years is especially noteworthy. “Everybody has a different smart,” he said.

Pictured Opposite Page:
Component testing, one of the new services that the Lansing expansion allowed Smithers to offer.

Expansions of Existing Smithers Facilities

The first notable expansion was in what is now the Materials and Science Engineering Division. When Smithers acquired PIRA, all of the acquisitions PIRA made prior were included. This included all of the laboratories that had once been part of Lansmont Testing Services Group. From the time of the purchase in 2010, Smithers had continued to operate packaging and distribution testing in the former Lansmont facility located in Lansing, Michigan. At the 2013 North America Automotive Testing Expo, Smithers announced a product testing lab would open in the same facility in January 2014. The addition of the product testing business, which included hose testing, automotive components, and more, was yet another independent lab, joining the labs in Akron, Ravenna, and Suzhou. The Lansing location was ideally located near many Smithers automotive clients, which enabled Smithers to provide more hands-on customer service.

In 2015, expansions occurred in both Suzhou, China, and Wareham, Massachusetts. The Suzhou expansions were primarily service based. The Suzhou facility added long-term oven aging and endurance tire testing, radial and cornering fatigue testing of passenger car and truck and bus radial tires,

and rolling resistance of truck and bus radial tires. Jim Dowey, who was president of Smithers RAPRA at the time, noted, “Our clients shared their needs and we listened.”³⁴

In Wareham, Massachusetts, the expansion was more physical. Construction began on an 11,500-square-foot facility expansion. The new space would allow enhancement of services tied to Environmental Fate and Ecotoxicology, both of which were growing quickly in volume and geographically.

The first of many expansions also got underway at the winter testing grounds in 2015. Additions included new testing areas as well as more garage space.

In 2017, the Smithers Avanza facility in Gaithersburg, Maryland, doubled in size with a 15,000-square-foot expansion and purchased several new pieces of equipment. In this same year the focus shifted to the winter testing grounds yet again, as Smithers added a conference center, a cafeteria, 130 acres of testing grounds, and two rental buildings.

34. “Smithers Expands Capabilities.”

Integrating Smithers Events, Consulting, and Market Intelligence Services in North America

When PIRA acquired Intertech in 2005, Intertech was known as an information provider specializing in conferences and market reports. Located in Portland, Maine, the business expanded PIRA's reach into new industries like organic electronics, minerals and fillers, color and pigments, and specialty chemicals. Moreover, PIRA's acquisition of Intertech gave the organization a global footprint as an event creator, market research publisher, and business consultation resource. Like the Lansmont Testing Service Group, Intertech was included in the Smithers acquisition of PIRA. Smithers wanted to maintain and grow the PIRA and Intertech legacies of trusted business consultation, respected conference events, and insightful market reports.

One of the most amazing things about the acquisitions of the early 2000s is that so many people who worked at the acquired companies are still with Smithers and have been promoted internally. Mike has always embraced the power of promoting team members from within the company. Upward movement, longevity, and the preservation of culture are pillars of Smithers leadership.

When Smithers acquires companies, it does so with the intent of retaining all personnel as well as all clients the business had relationships with. Smithers also approaches acquisitions with the goal of investing further into that company over a long period of time. This differs from competitors who may buy strictly to grow and sell. Despite all of these intentions, maintaining the Intertech office in Maine was difficult. The staff was far from the technical experts in other locations, and there was room in the Akron Market Street facility to bring everyone closer together. In 2015, the tough decision was made to move the former Intertech business to Akron. Eventually, the North America team was refocused and the market report, consultation, and event production business once again picked up.

With these changes, Smithers PIRA was automatically differentiated from other event and report companies because of the technical expertise it provided. This differentiator continues to serve the now Smithers Information Division today.

Pictured Below:

Smithers North America Events team around 2017. Pictured Left to Right: Veronica Wolf, Ashli Speed, Sean Walsh, Lauren Wolford, Keith Newsome, Brittany Onslow



09

Unity, Growth, and Resilience: 2018–2020

When Mike Hochschwender became Smithers President and CEO in 1996, he distributed a communication to clients and team members. “Success in each of our business units can always be realized by sticking to three basic principles: accurate data, on time, every time, and very efficiently,” he wrote. As Smithers moved toward the start of a new decade, all companies under The Smithers Group reached new pinnacles of success. The combination of providing accurate data or information, when the client expected it, with hands-on customer service was and still is a Smithers differentiator today.

The Power of One Smithers Brand

For many years, it was important for the Smithers companies to market a unique identity to each industry served. One way this was accomplished was by adding a unique name to “Smithers,” such as “Smithers Viscient.” This marketing approach reinforced the Smithers name and enabled the companies to be viewed as dedicated experts in their industry. This was a successful strategy for a long time.

However, with the advent of “Big Science,” the trend shifted toward the concept of multi-segment testing, inspection, and certification (TIC) companies. Public TIC companies emerged

and began acquiring smaller niche laboratories in different industries and began marketing the concept of a connected enterprise under one company name.

By 2019, through the company naming strategy, the Smithers brand became familiar across numerous industries around the world. With potential and existing customers feeling more comfortable about working with a diverse service portfolio company, the Smithers Executive Leadership Team determined the time was right for a significant rebranding as well as a restructuring of Smithers.

After countless client focus groups, months of research, and lively debates, the decision was made to market the companies as divisions that are a part of Smithers. The unique names were removed, and five divisions were formed and named:

Smithers Materials and Science Engineering

Tire and a variety of polymer-based materials, food contact, distribution, packaging, and medical device testing.

Smithers Information

Market intelligence, consulting, research, and reports along with event management.

Smithers Pharmaceutical Development Services

Bioanalytical testing for preclinical and clinical drug development services for large molecules, gene therapies, and vaccine development.

Smithers Quality Assessments

Auditing certification services for an array of Quality Management Systems.

Smithers Environmental Risk Sciences

Agriculture science testing to include physical chemistry, fate, metabolism and ecotoxicology package for a new conventional or biological active ingredient registration, gap-filling studies for product renewals, and a critical suite of tests for new formulation.



Dave Schwarz (pictured left), Smithers Vice President of Marketing and Business Development at this time, led this momentous initiative.

It was a major change for the organization not only visually, but also culturally. It took a little over a year to configure the divisions and launch a new brand. It was quite an undertaking, but Smithers emerged stronger and more united than ever.

Pictured Opposite Page, Top:
Smithers current logo and tagline

Pictured Opposite Page, Bottom:
From left to right: logos for Smithers Pira, Smithers Quality Assessments, Smithers Rapra, and Smithers Viscient

Today, the Smithers logo retains a few of its historical elements, such as the sphere, the three ribbons, and the blue and gold color scheme. Recently, Mike stated, “The ball represents ‘global.’ Smithers has served a global client base since the 1920s.”

Gone are the subdivisions beneath “Smithers,” now replaced with a tagline reading “Accurate Data, On Time, High Touch.” These qualities reflect Vernon Smithers’ mission at the company’s inception, and are still embodied today in every division.



SMITHERS
ACCURATE DATA • ON TIME • HIGH TOUCH





Pharmaceutical Development Services Evolves

In 2019, two major changes occurred for Smithers Pharmaceutical Development Services Division.

The first change came in May 2019. For the first time, Smithers divested a business. The toxicology service offering was sold to Bioanalytical Systems, Inc., (BASi). At the time, Mike noted, “Selling a business unit is never an easy decision, but we recognized that the scope and scale of BASi coupled with our team’s scientific expertise would benefit our clients and team tremendously. Operating as

a single site toxicology business presented operational efficiency challenges that could only be overcome with the added sites and in-house capabilities of BASi.”

A few months later, in July 2019, Smithers acquired a Ewing, New Jersey, facility from LabCorp. This new facility allowed Smithers to expand its existing bioanalytical capabilities and to build an ultraclean room to support the development of cell and gene therapies.

Pictured Opposite Page:
The new Ewing facility allowed the Pharmaceutical Development Services division to expand its offerings, including the use of a new ultra clean room.

Forming the Medical Device Testing Division Amid the Covid-19 Global Pandemic

In 2017, Smithers opened both a US-based and a UK-based dedicated laboratory for testing drug delivery devices with a particular specialty in combination delivery products. These products combine a drug delivery device, such as a syringe, with an associated medication. By 2019, it was obvious this department was large enough to be spun out into its own division.

Before this could occur, history once again stepped in. A new virus would emerge near the end of 2019, and in just a few months, it would shut down the world.

This new virus spread so quickly that by March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that there had been 118,000 deaths worldwide and that the newly named Covid-19 virus was now a pandemic.

Like many others, the global Smithers team immediately embarked on a steep learning curve to ensure everyone's safety. As a vital service, Smithers laboratory-based services globally remained open throughout the three-year shutdown. Significant remodeling of the lab spaces was executed rapidly to maintain six-foot distancing.

New safety protocols such as frequent hand washing and wearing a mask to stay safe while working were adopted.

On March 16, 2020, Smithers global office-based team members were sent home officially and had to learn how to work remotely, a first-time experience for most.



Interestingly, Gael Peron (pictured left), the vice president of the soon-to-be-announced Medical Device Testing Division, got to experience his first day at Smithers on Monday, March 2, 2020, just two weeks before the global shutdown.

It would be easy to assume that a global shutdown would slow Smithers down. In fact, as with every challenge from 1925 to 2020,

Smithers was not deterred at all, and despite a chaotic world, it continued to grow.

On July 20, 2020, Smithers announced its sixth division, Medical Device Testing.

Reflecting on the shutdown years later, most Smithers leaders feel that it generally improved overall communications at Smithers. Mike began releasing global company videos with updates on safety protocols, and division presidents hosted virtual town halls and other company-wide meetings. Global team members at all levels begin to better leverage virtual conferencing tools. In addition, the Smithers Information Division developed the expertise to manage virtual events and webinars. These new skills made Smithers stronger and more resilient.



Pictured Opposite Page, Top: Workers spraying sanitizer on the road during the Covid-19 pandemic

Pictured Opposite Page, Center: Conduction of no-contact temperature testing

Pictured Opposite Page, Bottom: Grocery store shelves left bare after citizens bulk-purchased essentials

Pictured Opposite Page, Right: The doctor Annalisa Silvestri during Covid-19 pandemic 2020 in Italy



10

Pushing the Boundaries of What is Possible: 2021–2024

The years from 2021 through 2024 marked the busiest three-year period in the history of Smithers thus far. During these thirty-six months, Smithers acquired seven companies and two facilities, moved a site to a new building, entered two partnerships, and began to work in three new industries.

During Covid-19, Smithers continued to invest in its future growth primarily through acquisitions. The acquisition process, like so many other business methodologies, had to adapt to the reality created by Covid-19, but Smithers remained undeterred.



A New Industry Emerges in the US

The cannabis industry began to take off in November of 1996 when California passed Proposition 215, which legalized the medical use of cannabis in the state.³⁵ For the first time, patients with medical conditions could get a prescription from doctors for medical cannabis use. This state law inspired other states to follow suit. By 2012, states were beginning to go one step further. In that year, Colorado and Washington legalized the recreational use of cannabis, and once again, many other states quickly followed suit. By 2014, more than ten states had made the recreational use of cannabis products legal for adults.

Whether cannabis is used for medical or recreational use, testing is essential, just as with any medication or food. In the cannabis industry, this includes screening for contaminants, foreign materials, pesticides and mycotoxins, heavy metals, and much more. The testing must not only be done accurately, but it has to be done with a quick turnaround in mind. This emerging market’s need for accurate testing, on time, with direct access to technical expertise to help them innovate with confidence, aligned well with the Smithers brand.

Smithers began planning the best entrance strategy. The Smithers Board of Directors approved the plan, and internally it was referred to as the “EZ-Pass Plan” because the goal was to begin in Wareham, Massachusetts, and expand westward through the Midwest like the turnpike. This plan would change as the market evolved over the busy three-year period.

There was excitement around building the first Smithers cannabis testing laboratory in Wareham. This was an entirely new industry, and Smithers was entering it organically. However, the Wareham lab opening experienced some delays, partly because of Covid-19. While Smithers awaited its opening, the acquisition of Origo Labs took place in December 2021. Origo was in a prime location in Chicago, Illinois, where many of the multi-state operators’ headquarters were located.

Ron Biever, who was the Vice President of Smithers Environmental Risk Sciences for North America, was getting ready to retire, but the idea of leading an entirely new start-up division intrigued him. He decided to postpone retirement by a few years to oversee the start of the newly formed Smithers Cannabis Testing Services Division.



Pictured Opposite Page:
Yuemin Wang Koveleff validating instrumentation at the Smithers Cannabis Testing Massachusetts Laboratory prior to its opening

Pictured Above:
Ron Biever as leader of the Cannabis Testing Services Division

35. Bonta, Rob, Attorney General. “Medical Cannabis Guidelines.” Retrieved from the State of California Department of Justice website at <https://oag.ca.gov/medicinal-cannabis>

Establishing Scale in Cannabis Testing Services

Smithers knew scale was needed to be considered a major player, so they sought to enter six states before the end of 2023, and that aggressive goal was met.

On February 14, 2022, the cannabis testing laboratory in Wareham, Massachusetts, received its license to operate. Shortly thereafter, in June 2022, Smithers announced a partnership with Phyto-Farma Labs in New York. By mid-year, Smithers was halfway to its goal of opening six facilities.



By 2023, Ron Biever was ready to retire, and Smithers announced its first president, AJ McCardell (pictured left), for the Cannabis Testing Services Division in March. Less than thirty days after starting in her role, AJ was on her way to Arizona to announce the upcoming acquisition of Green Scientific Labs Arizona, which officially occurred in May. Green

Scientific Labs not only opened the door to Arizona testing, but it also proved to be beneficial in two other states.

Although Smithers already had the former Origo Labs facility in Illinois, the facility was small and needed some updates. The Illinois site Green Scientific Labs offered had a much larger laboratory space and was better suited for cannabis testing.

Their New Jersey facility was an answer to a long-standing obstacle. Smithers had been seeking a lab there for a while, and even had a project team actively looking for a facility to build out. Once again, the Green Scientific Labs site was in an ideal location. The laboratory space was already built out, and Green Scientific Labs had already submitted their license to operate.

After months of negotiations, Smithers acquired Green Scientific Labs equipment and assumed responsibility for the Illinois and New Jersey leases. In September 2023, Smithers received the license to operate in New Jersey, and in January 2024 it officially moved to the new Darien, Illinois, site.

The sixth location added to the new Cannabis Testing Services Division was in Ohio, not far from the Akron offices. In August 2023, Smithers acquired Midway Lab in Columbus. Smithers achieved its goal of scale and was well positioned for future growth with AJ at the helm.

Pictured Opposite Page:
Ribbon cutting to celebrate the acquisition of Origo Labs. (Left to Right) Christine Stouffer, Michael Hollabaugh, Monica Elabed, Kevin Oxley, Nick Williams, Rachael Boryk, Landen Nickel, Malcolm Manning, Karim Khoja, Luis Contreras





Pictured Above:
June 5, 2023 ribbon cutting at the Smithers Cannabis Testing Arizona Laboratory when the acquisition was final. Pictured Left to right: Kevin Oxley, Gary Rivera, Derek Averill, Briana Hatfield, Ahmed Munshi, Joshua Lindley, Sara Dichkewich, Jerome Greuel, Eric Dykes, Mike Hochschwender, Glenn Goldney, Emily Wiener, Jason Schick, AJ McCardell, George Cline



Pictured Above:
Chase Needleman conducting micro testing at the Smithers Cannabis Testing Ohio Laboratory (previously Midway Lab).

ResChem

a Smithers company



Environmental Risk Sciences Service Portfolio Changes

On July 26, 2022, Susan Shepherd, Group President and President of Smithers Environmental Risk Sciences Division, announced that the division was discontinuing its avian testing service line and decommissioning the Snow Camp, North Carolina, facility. No matter how hard the division tried, there was no way to combat a shrinking market size and demand for avian testing while sustaining operation profitability. It was a hard decision, but the news shifted back to positive quickly.

On January 12, 2023, Smithers announced the acquisition of ResChem. Co-founded by Derek Brown and Gareth Watson in 2014, ResChem was headquartered in Derby, UK. By 2023, the company, with only a small staff, was respected for its sizable number of services, which included analytical support for residue studies.

Even more important to Smithers was the ResChem commitment to a client-first culture. Like Smithers, the ResChem culture was based on building trusted relationships and helping clients bring great products to market.

The services ResChem brought to Smithers allowed the Environmental Risk Sciences Division of Smithers to expand both its expertise and its footprint in the UK. Both ResChem and Smithers were enthusiastic about the expansion of the residue capabilities and global footprints. While Smithers had a global pesticide residue offering, ResChem added breadth and scope as well as a larger database of industry contacts which opened up new opportunities for Smithers to perform field studies. This match of culture and service offering expansion has proven to be some of the most rewarding acquisition relationships for Smithers.

Pictured Opposite Page:
The ResChem 2024 team standing in front of the facility. Pictured left to right: Stuart Brown, Gareth Watson, Duncan Brown, Matthew Allen, Thomas Dodsworth and Derek Brown

Formation of the Commodity Testing and Inspection Division

Before the flurry of acquisitions tied to the cannabis testing industry, Smithers acquired Stockpile Surveying and Protection (Ssp) on July 6, 2021. Headquartered in the Netherlands with a second site in Genoa, Italy, this acquisition marked another new chapter in Smithers history as it brought Smithers into the commodities market. It also was the first European-mainland footprint Smithers had possessed since the Horn, Switzerland, facility, which had been part of the Springborn acquisition.

Ssp, founded in 2002 (the same year Smithers acquired Springborn), was a highly respected and well-known service provider with a global network and an abundance of experience in solid fuels, metals, and minerals.

A broker based in Europe approached Smithers about acquiring the company. Mike recalls that, by this time, the Office of the Chief Executive (OCE) had been established, so instead of having to research the opportunity himself, he asked Rav Lally, a Group President and the President of the Smithers Information Division, to take a look. Since the Smithers Information Division had hosted a few events in the commodities market, it was not entirely new to Rav, and the opportunity was interesting.

The talks between Smithers and Ssp were not traditional. Customarily, before an acquisition, Smithers visits the site and meets the sellers in person. Because of Covid-19, all conversations surrounding the acquisition occurred virtually. Rav remembers that the teams did not meet in person until the paperwork was ready to be signed. When the teams finally met at a hotel in Amsterdam, they immediately knew this would be a successful endeavor. The cultures were so aligned between the companies, it felt as if they had been working together for some time. Since this was a new industry for Smithers and Ssp

was very well known, Ssp retained its name and was known as “Ssp, a Smithers company” for a few years until a new growth opportunity presented itself.

When Smithers acquired Ssp in 2021, the plan was always to grow it into a division with a buy-and-build strategy. This meant Dennis van der Burgh and Rav Lally would actively search for complementary companies to acquire in the commodities market. They found a good match from a cultural- and service-offering perspective in 2023. The company was Marine Inspection Logistics International Rotterdam B.V., commonly known as MIL International.

MIL International was founded by Ivo Dolk in 2006 in collaboration with Marine Inspection and Logistics LLC in the USA. The company grew quickly and soon expanded throughout Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East, including Southeast Asia. Rob van der Palm joined the company as managing partner in 2010.

Dennis van der Burgh approached MIL International regarding a possible partnership or acquisition. In late 2023, the acquisition was completed. MIL International expanded the Smithers global footprint to India and Malaysia, and the team, led by Ivo Dolk and Rob van der Palm, brought sixty years of combined experience. MIL International added new capabilities, including testing and inspection services for scrap steel, hot briquetted iron (HBI), and direct reduced iron (DRI).

In the final quarter of 2023, Ssp and MIL International formed the eighth Smithers division, Commodity Testing and Inspection, and Dennis van der Burgh was appointed its Managing Director.



Pictured Opposite Page, Top:
An Ssp team member collecting samples for testing

Pictured Opposite Page, Bottom:
Dennis van der Burgh (left) and Rav Lally (right) meeting for the first time at the acquisition deal signing meeting

Pictured Opposite Page, Right:
Ivo Dolk (left) and Rob van der Palm (right) standing in front of a pile of scrap metal



Pictured Left:
Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Suzhou facility

Pictured Right:
Smithers team members working together at the Smithers China Suzhou facility. Pictured left to right: Rick Zheng, Nancy Yao, Jason Geng, and Jack He



A New Building in Suzhou, China

In March 2021, the Asia Pacific region of Smithers Materials and Science Engineering Division moved into a new 7,200-square-meter facility in Suzhou. From the beginning, the Materials Science and Engineering Division’s departments were able to expand in this new Suzhou facility. Smithers also had the opportunity to launch a durability testing service, which is ideal for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). Conference rooms and classrooms also are peppered throughout the space. It is truly a world-class facility and effectively positions Smithers for growth in China.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, Mike couldn’t visit the new space until the Chinese New Year early in 2024. Derek Read, Vice President of Global Development for Asia Pacific, Smithers Materials Science and Engineering, lists this visit as one of his favorite moments during his 30-year tenure at Smithers and said seeing Mike’s humbled reaction to the new facility filled the entire Suzhou team with enormous pride.



A New Service for Smithers Quality Assessments

In May 2021, Smithers Quality Assessments launched a new service line, Information Security Services. This service assesses organizations against the ISO 27001 standard. In addition, Smithers will now be able to conduct Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) third-party assessments as an authorized C3PAO. The expansion of Smithers Quality Assessments also assists Smithers internally in staying ahead of cybersecurity issues and industry trends.

Pictured Left: Robert McVay teaching at an auditor training event in 2023

Pictured Opposite Page: Smithers exhibit at the 2024 CMMC Ecosystem Summit + CMMC Implementation Conference. Team members pictured left to right: Robert McVay, Scott McDonough, Jeanette Preston





Adding Warm Weather Testing to the Materials Science and Engineering Division

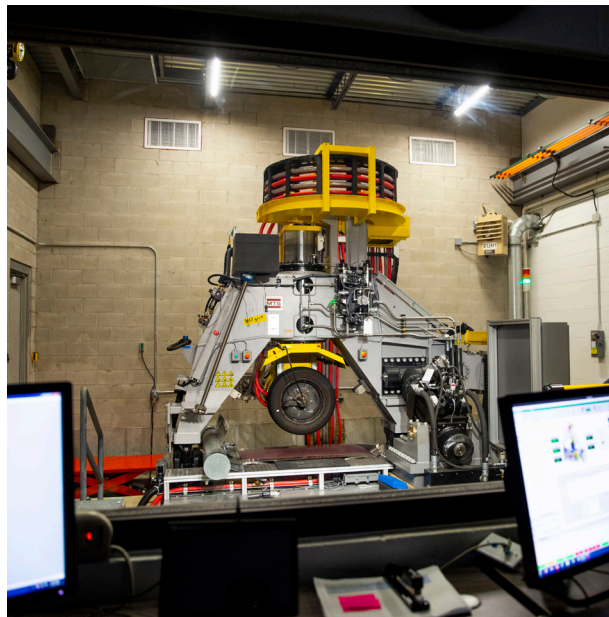
On June 7, 2021, Goodyear acquired Cooper Tire. Part of the acquisition was a warm-weather testing ground in Pearsall, Texas. Goodyear did not need the testing ground because it already owned one in Texas.

Discount Tire, a long-time Smithers client, was interested in purchasing the Pearsall facility and thought perhaps Smithers would want to partner with them. As a result, Mike Hochschwender, Dave Schwarz, Jim Popio, and Derek Read had a meeting with the top executives of Discount Tire. Mike

told his team before they entered the meeting, “Whatever happens, we aren’t here to sell ourselves to Discount Tire. We are here to help Discount Tire make an informed decision about owning a proving ground.”

The CEO of Discount Tire was impressed by their unselfish approach. Eventually, Discount Tire purchased the Pearsall facility and partnered with Smithers to operate the tracks, testing, and sales. It is a perfect symbiotic relationship between Smithers and a valued client.

The Pearsall complex is an 898-acre facility that has been used as a proving ground since 1999. Its location, both in terms of its relative proximity to San Antonio and consistent weather patterns, makes it a reliable warm-weather testing facility. The facility is used for testing acceleration, durability, lane change, lap time, noise and vibration, traction, wet and dry braking, and more. It also offers a centrally located office complex, garages close to testing locations for more immediate results, and a fleet of testing vehicles. There is even an on-site mechanic to assist when problems arise.



Becoming the #1 Indoor Tire and Wheel Testing Laboratory in North America

On October 3, 2023, the Smithers global team members received an exciting video message from Mike. On the heels of the acquisition of MIL International, Mike announced there had been yet another acquisition, closer to home. This was the purchase of Standards Testing Labs (STL) Indoor Testing Division.

“This friendly rivalry truly motivated Smithers to become a better service provider over the decades,” Mike stated. The acquisition was a significant victory for both Smithers and the tire industry. With the added expertise of STL, Smithers was now “without peer” as an independent testing lab in North America.

The purchase of STL enabled Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Division to be the number one indoor tire and wheel testing laboratory in North America. The service portfolio, immense scientific expertise, and the number of geographic locations the Smithers Materials Science and Engineering Division has grown into would likely be beyond what Vernon Smithers had ever imagined in 1925 when he founded the company.

Pictured Opposite Page, Left:
Wear test conducted at STL, Smithers indoor testing facility

Pictured Opposite Page, Top:
Wheel impact test

Pictured Opposite Page, Center:
CT plus F and M

Pictured Opposite Page, Bottom:
Rolling resistance test setup

One in a Thousand

On April 9, 2024, the Smithers global team members received another CEO communication, but this one did not focus on a new acquisition, a site move, or a new service. Instead, it was a kickoff of the countdown to the Smithers centennial anniversary on April 7, 2025.

“We began as a pioneering service company,” Mike reflected. “We have become a multinational provider of scientific and information-based services.”

Smithers now serves customers in transportation, the life sciences, components, chemical, cannabis, agrochemicals,

aerospace, and more. Smithers works to safeguard human health and the environment by promoting trust and confidence in products across many industries. “There are so many opportunities ahead of us. The only challenge is figuring out which ones to pursue,” Mike continued.

Up to this point, Smithers has never had much of a problem with making the right choices and exceeding expectations. Only one in one thousand companies stay in business for a century. Even beyond the longevity, Smithers is a “once in a century” company.

Here’s to the next hundred years of providing accurate data, on time, with high touch.

*An account of Smithers origins and evolution from
1925–2025 in celebration of its 100th anniversary.*