

Management Historians in the 1990s: A Review of Their Lives & Prime Contributions

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Abstract

The Management History Division (MHD) of the Academy of Management, NY records critical and scholarly discussion, reflection and research in the arena of management history. It supports the development of historically informed analyses and explorations of management practices and of management philosophy and thought. The authors aim at focusing on three key members of MHD i.e. Charles Deck Wrege, James C. Worthy, and Alfred A Bolton who have contributed a lot in the field of management history during 1990s. Each of them has significant contribution to the area of management history and each has proved himself a teacher and intellectual leader in matters of fundamental concern to management history.

Keywords

Academy of Management, Management History Division, Management Historian, Charles Deck Wrege, James C. Worthy, and Alfred A. Bolton.

1. Introduction

The Academy of Management (the Academy; AOM), NY is a leading professional association for scholars dedicated to creating and disseminating knowledge about management and organizations. Founded in 1936, this Academy is the oldest and largest scholarly management association in the world. Today, the Academy is the professional home for 16,664 members from 94 nations (AOM, 2006). Among the current members of the Management History Division (MHD) of the Academy of Management is a pool of experts who are exceptionally well qualified through study and experience to discuss, explain and put into perspective the history of the field. Through their participation in management research and willingness to share their knowledge, these experts have assumed the role of gurus, i.e. teachers of teachers. The individuals include: Charles Deck Wrege, James C. Worthy and Alfred A Bolton.

2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to focus on the lives and prime contributions of three key members of Management History Division of the Academy of Management: Charles Deck Wrege, James C. Worthy, and Alfred A. Bolton.

3. Methodology of the Study

The study is a desk-based work. Secondary data & information have been used to carry out this research. The data & information have been collected from various publications, proceedings and reports of Academy of Management and other scholarly institutions.

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Different research contributions of the eminent scholars in the area of management and administrative history have also been consulted.

4.1 Charles Deck Wrege: Historical Investigator

Charles (Chuck) Wrege was born in Newark, New Jersey on March 11, 1924. Wrege did all of his schooling in the New York Metropolitan area and then served with the Air Force in the South Pacific from 1943 to 1946. In 1947, he entered professional life as the owner-operator of Yearound Display Company in New York City, which he ran from 1947-1950. The latter was an important year for Wrege as he married Beulah Marion Cippel on May 28, 1950. In addition to running the display company and beginning married life, he entered Upsala College where he majored in psychology and history and graduated with a BA in 1952. After graduation, Wrege joined the Weston Electrical Instrument Company as an industrial engineer, training which, when coupled with his interest in history, was to make itself apparent in his future scholastic work. In 1955, Wrege graduated from the New School of Social Research with an MA in psychology and decided to complete an MBA at New York University. By the time he completed his MBA in 1956, he had secured an instructor's position at NYU and his academic career was launched. Wrege was to remain in that position, teaching management courses until 1961.

It was while at NYU that a serendipitous event was to point him in the future direction of his research - management history. In 1959, the chairman of the Management Department at NYU asked Wrege to develop a course in management history because he had a history major as an undergraduate. Concurrently with his growing interest in management history, Wrege was working on his PhD in management and psychology at NYU. He graduated in 1961 and joined the State University System of New Jersey taking a position as Assistant Professor in the Management Department of the School of Administrative Sciences at Rutgers University. Most of Wrege's subsequent academic career was spent at Rutgers until his retirement in 1986. His publications, beginning in the 1970s, focused on important figures in management history, especially Frederick Taylor. Examples include: "Taylor's pig tale: a historical analysis of Frederick W Taylor's pig-iron experiments," *Academy of Management Journal* (1974), "Cooke Creates a Classic: the Story - behind Frederick W Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management*," *Academy of Management Review* (1978), "Frederick W Taylor and Industrial Espionage: 1895-1897," *Business and Economic History*, Second Series, No. 15, 1986, and a book on Taylor co-written with Ronald G. Greenwood.

Many of Wrege's publications have been in conjunction with the Academy of Management where he has been a key member for over 20 years. Most notably, he has held the position of historian-archivist for the National Academy since 1979. He has also provided leadership for the Management History Division where he was program chair in 1983 and division chair in 1985. Wrege also represented the Academy of Management at a special Harvard Business School Conference on historical developments in organizational behavior in 1982, and was a consultant on the film, *A Question of Management*, the Academy's production celebrating 100 years of management thought and the 50th anniversary of the Academy of Management.

Wrege also edited the management history newsletter, the *N-Files* for a number of years and continues to act as the editor of the "Working Paper Series" for the MHD. For many years, Wrege was a key contributor to the Management History Annual Proceedings. Some of the more notable include: "Solving Mayo's Mystery: the First Complete Account of the Hawthorne Illumination Tests" (1976); "Antecedents of Organizational Behavior:

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Dr E.E. Southard and Mary Jarrett, the 'Mental Hygiene of Industry': 1913-1920," (1979); "The Efficient Management of Hospitals: Pioneer Work of Ernest Codman, Robert Dickinson and Frank B. Gilbreth: 1910-1918" (1980); "Who were Elton Mayo's 'many hands'?" (1981); "Hugo Munsterberg's Pioneer Studies of Managerial Decision Making" (1982); "A newly discovered Gilbreth Manuscript" (1983); and "Before Bales: Pioneer Studies in Analyzing Group Behavior, 1921-1930" (1984). While the Academy of Management has been Wrege's primary professional home for many years, he has also had many presentations and proceedings publications with regional divisions of the Academy. These include: "Chicago to Columbus, Ohio: The Influence of Industrial Illumination Tests on the Hawthorne Studies," *Proceedings*, Midwest Academy of Management, 1982; "Decisions at Hawthorne: A Neglected Factor of the Hawthorne Studies," *Proceedings*, Eastern Academy of Management, 1983; "Pioneer Work in Organizational Behavior: OB before 1920," *Proceedings*, Midwest Academy of Management, 1984; The Relay Assembly Test Room at Hawthorne: An Interview with Operator # 4 - Wanda Blazejak," *Proceedings*, Southern Management Association, 1985; "The Social Sciences, Scientific Management and the Hawthorne Studies: 1914-1933: Some New Insights," *Proceedings*, Southern Management Association, 1985; and "Consultants to Management: Two Different Approaches: 1912-1926," *Proceedings*, Eastern Academy of Management, 1986.

In the last few years, Wrege has been working on organizing the Academy's archives and sending voluminous material to Cornell University, where these archives are housed. He has also become involved with the Canal History and - Technology meetings at Lafayette College where he has had proceedings papers each year since 1992. These include "The Early History of Midvale Steel and the Work of Frederick W. Taylor," *Canal History and Technology Proceedings*, 1992, and "Frederick W Taylor's work at Bethlehem Steel, Phase II: the Discovery of High-Speed Tool Steel - Was it an Accident?", *Canal History and Technology Proceedings*, 1994.

4.2 Wrege's contribution to management history

Chuck Wrege has made many contributions to the Management History literature. The quality of these contributions is significant because of his dedication to primary sources as opposed to the books and writings of the historically significant management theorists. Wrege did not, for example, take for granted that Frederick Taylor originated the theories he espoused in *The Principles of Scientific Management (PSM)*. Instead he located and analyzed an unpublished manuscript by Morris L. Cooke entitled "Industrial Management" as well as the correspondence between Taylor and Cooke and concluded that Taylor used much of Cooke's work to prepare his own text:

"Our analysis has revealed that in PSM, Taylor attached his name to someone else's work. As a result, Chapter 2 of Cooke's IM was used as the basis of PSM, with Taylor, not Cooke, as the author... In summary, in writing PSM, Taylor followed what became for him (after 1900) the normal procedure of utilizing the efforts of others to write his articles, speeches, and books (Wrege and Stotka, 1978)."

Some of interesting contributions of Wrege are the following:

- 1) Discovering the original report on Taylor's pig-iron story and the true story of Henry Knoll at Bethlehem Steel in 1899.
- 2) Locating the original reports of the Hawthorne Illumination tests of 1924-1927 and the various individuals who actually conducted the Relay Assembly Test Room Studies credited to Elton Mayo.
- 3) Discovering the management activities of medical men in hospitals prior to 1920.

- 4) Uncovering the early organizational behavior work of psychiatrists Dr Ernest Southard and Dr Jan Don Ball prior to 1920.
- 5) Discovering the activities of the "inquiry" group that led to the measurement of group interaction in 1928 and the work of Bales.
- 6) Discovering that Edmund Lewis - not F.W. Taylor or M. White - discovered the high-speed steel process important in the development of time study (Wrege, 1996).

All of these contributions point to another significant contribution Wrege has made to the field - demonstrating ways to uncover new information through:

“Development of a set of methods to uncover original documents, reports and photographs related to management histories of obituaries, death certificates, cemetery records, deeds, plat maps, wills, court records, etc. (Wrege, 1996).”

Wrege has raised the level of consciousness of other management scholars regarding the fact that what is written regarding management history is not always accurate. He warns against over-reliance on published documents that themselves draw from other documents, and urges that we search for original documents instead. In his search for such material, Wrege uses three research categories:

- 1) where the historian does not know what the documents are, who created them, where they are, or how to find them;
- 2) where the material was known to exist but whose current location is unknown, and;
- 3) where the material played an important role in management thought, but is presently unknown to management historians.

Through these categories, he has discovered much original material related to Taylor and the Hawthorne studies. For example, Wrege discovered hundreds of Taylor-Sanford Thompson letters, books, and reports. He also used them to study the activities of the "inquiry" group and their influence on organizational research in the 1920s. A recent interest is the role of economic activities in the output results of the Relay Assembly Test Room. Quite clearly Charles Wrege's role as a historical investigator has helped make him a management guru for the 1990s.

5.1 James C. Worthy: A Perfect Combination

MHD members who have attended annual meetings in the last few decades are well aware of the contributions that James C. Worthy (Jim) has made and continues to make. A member of the academy for more than 40 years, he was elected Fellow of the Academy of Management in 1964, and in 1987 he was elected to a three-year term as Dean of the Fellows. But Jim Worthy had a fascinating history of his own even before he became well-known in the academy.

Worthy was born in Midland, Texas on January 8, 1910, the eldest of four children, and spent most of his childhood in Glenwood, Illinois. Long before he attended high school in nearby Chicago Heights, he held numerous jobs that included delivering daily papers and working on close-by farms. At school he was an exemplary student and participated in numerous outside activities including captain of the football team in his senior year of high school.

Unable to afford college, he worked for a year for the Public Service Company of

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Northern Illinois. A year later, he had the good fortune to be named one of the first ten recipients of the Frederick C. Austin scholarship at Northwestern University, then under the leadership of President Walter Dill Scott. One of the Northwestern faculty with whom he became especially close was Dr Earl Dean Howard, professor of economics and head of labor relations for the large Chicago-based clothing manufacturer, Hart, Schaffner and Marx. Howard was instrumental in drafting the National Industrial Recovery Act (NRA), and when he went to Washington as deputy administrator, Worthy went with him, first as a summer job and then as a full-time pinch hitter for Howard, who suffered a heart attack. In his early 20s, Worthy became assistant deputy administrator of the NRA. This job had a profound effect on Worthy, who noted in retrospect:

“What started as a great crusade to put the economy back on its feet became a nightmare. I emerged deeply skeptical of the capacity of government to manage the country's economy (Worthy, 1993).”

Worthy was one of the first to join the staff of NRA and, three and a half years later, one of the last to leave. Those years were in some important ways disillusioning; with respect to the NRA itself, he later observed:

“I learned a great deal from my NRA experience - most of it negative... I certainly learned a lot about how not to organize and manage an organization, and from this began to distill useful ideas about how they should be organized and managed (Worthy (1996), unpublished memoirs, Ch. 3).”

Another good thing happened during Worthy's NRA days - his courtship and subsequent marriage to Mildred Leritz. While they spent relatively little time together during the year of their courtship because of Worthy's duties in Washington and New York, Jim and Mildred began 63 years of married life (as of 1997) on June 20, 1934.

After leaving the Recovery Administration, Worthy worked for a year as director of personnel for a Milwaukee department store. Finding retailing of great interest from a people and management standpoint, he sought and obtained a position with Sears, Roebuck where he was to spend the next 23 years of his career (minus a two-year leave of absence as assistant secretary of commerce for administration in the Eisenhower administration), first as the organizer and head of the new research and planning function and later as vice president of personnel.

During his Sears years, Worthy initiated and supervised the development of an ambitious series of studies of employee attitudes and morale, much of it conducted in cooperation with the multi-disciplinary Committee on Human Relations in Industry of the University of Chicago. W Lloyd Warner, professor of cultural anthropology, chaired that committee and Burleigh B. Gardner, followed by William Foote Whyte, served successively as executive director. Warner had been closely associated with Elton Mayo in the Hawthorne studies where, among other things, he had designed the bank wiring room experiment, and Gardner had been manager of personnel research at the Hawthorne plant.

For his own immediate staff, Worthy recruited David G. Moore, who had worked with Gardner at Western Electric. This combination of Worthy Warner, Gardner, Whyte, and Moore designed and conducted an ambitious program of human relations research that Sears found eminently useful and that laid an important part of the foundation for what became the academic discipline of organization behavior.

In 1961, after finding life with Sears' new chief executive less than ideal, - Worthy left Sears to become a partner of Cresap, McCormick, and Paget, an international consulting firm, where he established a significant relationship with the chairman of Control Data Corporation, William C. Norris. In 1972, Worthy's desire to spend more time writing led him to retire from Cresap, but he could not resist accepting an invitation to join the faculty of Sangamon State University in Springfield, Illinois, especially since the offer carried with it the chairmanship of a committee to design a radically different undergraduate management major. When the state of Illinois mandated that Worthy retire at age 68 in 1978, he joined the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management of Northwestern University as Professor of Management and Senior Austin Fellow. In the latter position, Worthy served as advisor to the school's Austin Scholarship recipients, thus closing a loop started in 1929. Today, he serves as Emeritus but continues his close association with the university and the Austin program.

5.2 Worthy's Contribution to Management History

Identifying Jim Worthy's most significant contributions to the field of management history is no easy task. His business, government, academic, and civic experience have given him a broad base of hands-on knowledge to which few can aspire and, as he himself once observed, "Any contribution I may have made to the development of management thought has grown chiefly from efforts to understand and explain human behavior in complex organizations in whose management I was directly involved" (Worthy, 1993). Undeniably, however, his experience at Sears during the years 1938-1961 provided him and us with much of the core of his work.

Two aspects of his Sears experience were of special value. One was his initiation of and close involvement with the ambitious survey conducted during the 1940s at Sears. The other was the fact that he was in a position that permitted him to observe closely the work of Sears' chairman and chief executive, Robert E. Wood, whose commitment to decentralized management, is well documented. Worthy's writing reflects his intimate, long-time exposure to the highly successful operation of this mode of managerial thinking and practice.

While far less well known than the Hawthorne studies, the extensive employee surveys done at Sears during Worthy's tenure were rich in data that suggested the importance of leadership and morale to organizational effectiveness. And although academics were involved in the Sears surveys, books and articles did not immediately flow from the Sears research. What was eventually revealed to the public came mainly from Worthy's numerous lectures and publications such as "Democratic principles in business management" (*Advanced Management*, March 1949), "Factors influencing employee morale" (*Harvard Business Review*, January 1950), "Organizational structure and employee morale" (*American Sociological Review*, April 1980), and "The more things change the more they stay the same: the original Sears, Roebuck and Co. studies" (*Journal of Management Inquiry*, March 1992). Likewise, Worthy's book, *Shaping an American Institution: Robert E. Woods and Sears, Roebuck* (The University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1984) did much to chronicle the lessons learned at Sears.

An especially useful insight was the relationship between managerial attitudes, organizational structure, and worker productivity. In that connection, he was the first to recognize the special value of the broad, flat type of organization structure with broad spans of control and a minimal number of intermediate levels of management. His analysis of the dynamics of tall and flat structures anticipated the Burns and Stalker

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concept of organic versus mechanistic systems (Moore, 1991). Regarding Worthy's work in general, his Sears associate David Moore wrote:

“When Jim Worthy's natural philosophic bent and conceptual ability were coupled with the extensive survey program that he directed at Sears over a period of almost 15 years, he was able to bring together his considerable analytic skills with a great mass of live data about human behavior in diverse activities. It was a perfect combination and resulted ... in several hundred pages of analysis that together constitute a well-developed theory of organization and management (Moore, 1991).”

Moore's assessment of Worthy's contribution to management is echoed by William Foote Whyte (1991) who believes that Worthy refocused us from an inordinate amount of attention to the informal structure to a new appreciation of the importance of formal organization structure:

“He had a more complex and realistic model for studying the formal organization, the relationship between the formal and the informal organization, and the impact of those relationships on performance. The second point is that this focused attention on the relationships between formal structure and managerial philosophy. It seems to me that it really opened up an important new line of personality research (Whyte, 1991).”

Worthy's contributions were not limited to his theories about organization and management. Much of his first book, *Big Business and Free Men* (1959), was devoted to the subject of corporate social responsibility, and the theme was taken up from time to time thereafter, as for example in 1991, when he wrote that businessmen have an obligation to contribute significantly to the solution of social problems "... because as businessmen they have special competencies that need to be brought to bear if those problems are to be dealt with successfully" (Worthy, 1991).

Worthy's biographies of Wood and Norris deal in concrete terms with the manner in which two of the notable top corporate executives of twentieth century America dealt with social responsibility issues in the operations of their two companies. A later comment is worth noting:

“Wood was one of the first American businessmen to enunciate (and practice) a philosophy of corporate social responsibility, but Norris with his efforts to convert social needs into business opportunities carried that philosophy a long step forward (Worthy, 1993).”

Jim Worthy remains today the prototypical management scholar. He sees the challenge of management today as that of "building and maintaining the kind of teamwork and cooperation within the organization that will keep the wheels of industry turning smoothly and efficiently" (Worthy, 1991).

6.1 Alfred A. Bolton: Service by Example

Alfred A Bolton (Al) was born in Thorold, Ontario, Canada on November 12, 1962. His father, a journey man widow glass cutter for Pilkington Brothers Glass Company, St Helens, UK, came to Canada after spending four years in France during WWI. His mother was an elementary school teacher at Beaver Dam, now the site of Brock University at St Catherine, Ontario. Alfred's grandfather immigrated to Canada in 1916 to

manage the Pilkington factory at Thorold, and over a period of time the family of two sisters and two brothers settled there. Pilkington's closed the Thorold factory and Bolton's family moved to Clarksburg, West Virginia in 1930 where his father was employed as a cutter - in the Adamston factory of the Fourco Company. It was in West Virginia where Bolton went to public school, and during his junior year in high school, he entered into an apprenticeship contract to learn the trade of window glass cutting with the Fourco Company with his father as the master workman. Interestingly his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had entered into almost identical contracts dating back to 1886.

Bolton's completion of his three-year apprenticeship program was interrupted by his joining the Army Signal Corps in 1945. In Japan, where he was stationed from June to October of 1946, Bolton supervised a shift at the Eighth Army ship-to-shore radio station in Yokohama. He left the corps with the rank of sergeant. In 1950, he completed his glass cutter's apprenticeship. The following year the reserves recalled him. He returned to the Army Signal Corps as second lieutenant and was later promoted to first lieutenant. It was during this time that Bolton had his first management experience by supervising 250 government workers in Philadelphia.

Bolton completed his bachelor's degree in management in 1951 at West Virginia University (WVU) where his decision to major in management led to his focus on making a career with a large corporation. By 1953, the year he finished his MBA course work at WVU, Bolton had offers from Ford, American Electric, Bell Telephone, and others. He decided that the offer from Bell Telephone could not wait and left WVU before completing his thesis, thus beginning a 35-year career at the telephone company. Starting in 1954 as a management trainee, Bolton held various positions and then became a director (district manager) who supervised 400 long distance telephone operators. In 1970, he transferred to the Washington, DC area. In order to progress further in his job, Bolton completed an MA in management at Goddard College's center in Washington, graduating in 1979 as the recipient of the Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

In 1980 at the age of 54 Bolton began his doctoral work at Nova University (now Nova Southeastern University). As Bolton tells the story, it was the first day of his first class in administrative theory where an event occurred that was to ignite for him an interest in management history. On learning that Bolton worked for the telephone company, his instructor singled him out with the question, "Bolton, you work for the Bell Telephone Company. Tell us what you know about the Hawthorne Studies." Bolton's response was less than adequate. A different professor might have let him off the hook, but not Ron Greenwood, a man long known to the MHD for his passion about history. Greenwood stepped away and waved him off, saying, "Agghh..." Likewise, a different student might have let it drop there, but Bolton rose to the challenge. The very next Monday he wrote to his friend, Bill Ellinghaus, president of AT&T, and asked for his assistance in locating the Hawthorne participants. Within two weeks, Bolton was at the Western Electric headquarters in Chicago talking with Donald Chipman, the test room observer, and operators numbers three and four. Bolton wisely invited Greenwood to those interviews and thus started a professional relationship that produced much research and a lifelong friendship.

Bolton's participation with the Academy of Management also began in the - early 1980s. Since then, he has been a key contributor to the Management History Division where he has often served as a session chair, discussant, and reviewer. His papers and symposia at the academy have been numerous and include: "Emily Payson Osbourne - Mayo's assistant," (1985); "Bank Wiring Participants Remember" (1987); "Herman Hollerith,"

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(1988); "Angus A. MacDonald: Progenitor of the Bell Telephone System's spirit of service" (1990); and "John H. Patterson - National Cash Register Company" (1991). In 1986 at the annual academy meeting in Chicago, Bolton and Greenwood were responsible for organizing a major event commemorating the Hawthorne studies. The appearances of several of the original participants were largely due to the painstaking coaxing and relationship-building that Bolton had done in preparation to the invitation. In 1990, Bolton served as division chair for the MHD and today remains a member of the Executive Committee, serving as archivist.

As Bolton closed his career at Bell, he began a second career as an academic and scholar. His love of teaching first found expression at Trinity College, where he served as an adjunct professor in 1985. Bolton also taught at George Mason University and American University in the late 1980s before joining the full-time faculty of Everett College where he is now a professor of management.

6.2 Bolton's Contributions to Management History

For the last decade and a half, Bolton has contributed continuously to the literature of the field of management history. In addition to the conference papers mentioned above, some of his publications have included: "Relay Assembly Test Room Participants Remember" (with R.G. Greenwood), *Southern Management Journal* (Fall/Winter 1983); "Herman Hollerith" (with George E. Biles), *Journal of Management* (Vol. 15 No. 4, 1989); and "Chester I. Barnard: a Dimension of the Executive" (with G. E. Biles), *International Journal of Management* (March 1991). When asked recently what he considered his most significant contribution to the body of existing knowledge about management history, Bolton (1996) answered: "My most significant accomplishment where the body of existing knowledge about management history was my work with Ron Greenwood that resulted in the special issue of the *International Journal of Management*, "Relay Assembly Test Room Participants Remember: Hawthorne a Half Century Later." It was the culmination of several articles on Hawthorne that Ron and I worked on."

Bolton's commitment to the field has also been expressed through his service to numerous organizations in addition to the national Academy of Management. Over the years, he has been on the programs of the Eastern Academy of Management, the Southern Management Association, the Southwestern Academy of Management, the Economic and Business History Society and the Barnard Society.

In sum, Al Bolton is a man who has made a lasting contribution to management history through service and hard work. He sets an excellent example for doctoral students and junior faculty just starting out and he continues to be a valued resource and MHD colleague.

7. Concluding Remark

The MHD plays a vital role in documenting the profiles of management history. The management historians of MHD have linked the management scholars by disseminating documented information all over the world. The efforts of Charles Deck Wrege, James C. Worthy, and Alfred A. Bolton of the Academy, AOM are praiseworthy in this direction. They are the key members of MHD who have rectified literature of management history to a great extent and discovered many original materials related to eminent management scholars. It is evident from the study that each them have contributed significantly to the management history literature during 1990s.

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