

THE SELECT SOCIETY OF SANITARY SLUDGE SHOVELERS

According to information provided by Art Vondrick (Federation President 1970-71), there are nine chapters of this Select Society. They are loosely associated; each exists only within the jurisdiction of a member association of the Federation; each inducts a limited number of members at some time during the annual meeting of its parent association; each provides new members with a gold/silver tie bar in the shape of a round-nose shovel or a spade; and each is a fun group.

Different chapters use different initiation ceremonies; there is no formal written outline or set procedure. Some chapters make the ceremony a little more serious than others and eliminate the frivolity; others do it all in fun.

All the chapters except Pennsylvania, Texas, Florida, and Central States use identical gold shovels as their emblems. California engraves the year in the bowl of the shovel; Rocky Mountain engraves a large "R". The Texas shovel is smaller and has a 5-pointed star (the Lone Star) in the bowl with an "S" opposite each point of the star. The Central States shovel is larger than the rest; the Pennsylvania and Florida shovels are spade-like, but are silver or pot metal with different symbols embossed on them.

There has been considerable disagreement as to which group was created first. Pennsylvania started the High Hat Society in 1937; it used the words "Sludge Shovelers Society" in its initiation ceremony and later became known as the Ted Moses Sludge Shovelers Society.

The Arizona Association documents its history from October, 1940, when the idea was conceived by A.W. (Dusty) Miller* and F. Carlyle Roberts, Jr. "to recognize the fact that many members do not receive the coveted Bedell Award, the Fuller Award (of AWWA) or become an Arizona Association president, but nevertheless contribute in some outstanding measure."

According to information available at the time of compilation of this Appendix, the list of Select Societies of Sanitary Sludge Shovelers consisted of:

- Pennsylvania WPCA (1937)
- Arizona Wtr & Sew. Works Assn. (1940)
- Texas WPCA (1954)
- California (1955)
- Florida WPCA (1956)
- Rocky Mountain WPCA (1963-1972)
- Utah WPCA (1970)
- Central States WPCA (1971)
- Kansas WPCA (1972)
- Missouri WPCA (1973)

* A.W. Miller and his wife died in an airplane crash in the Canary Islands on March 27, 1977.

The Federation does not have information on all of these groups but some items about the older ones are of interest, as much perhaps for the men who started the organization as for the details of the group's operations.

The Ted Moses Sludge Shovelers Society

The budget for Pennsylvania Sewage Works Assn. meeting at State College, Pa. in Aug. 1937 was short of funds for paid entertainment at the banquet. As a substitute, L.D. Matter and Bernie Bush, both of Pennsylvania Health Dept., shopped the theater costume area of Philadelphia and found a high hat and leather carrying case. H.E. (Ted) Moses made the presentation at the banquet. The exact text of his presentation is not recorded, but the explanation still given at each banquet is a good approximation. It reads as follows:

"A word of explanation is due some of our guests here tonight as to just what the High Hat ceremony means.

"In 1937 a new method of recognition for outstanding service to the sewerage profession was devised in the Pennsylvania Sewage Works Association, whereby recipients of an award were nominated by the Executive Committee, but were actually elected by those present at the annual dinner—after the candidates had successfully passed the exacting tests which the award calls for—in the presence of the assemblage.

"The High Hat Award began as entertainment, but is no longer so; and the recipient of the award today can be assured that his performance in the waste control field has been recognized as being outstanding by his contemporaries.

"The rules are very simple but exact, and are well known to most of you. After the candidate is identified, he is called to the platform, and in your presence required to say the magic words, "Sludge Shovelers Society," three times, with variations: in a normal tone of voice; a whisper; yell it out.

"You, as the Judges, are requested to note any imperfections of pronunciations or clarity of diction as the candidate performs, and signify your decision as to his having met the test at the proper time."

After each candidate had recited the words "Sludge Shoveler's Society," Ted Moses always said, "I now crown you with the High-Hat." Moses made the presentations from 1937 through 1956; he was followed by Bernie Bush (1957-58), Deac Matter (1959-65), and John Yenchko after 1966.

Each man who is crowned with the High-Hat has his name inscribed on the Hat, which is kept in its case by the Association's Secretary. In recent years, each recipient has received a silver tie-bar spade with the words "Ted Moses Sludge Shovelers Society" on it, the award having been so named after Mr. Moses' death.