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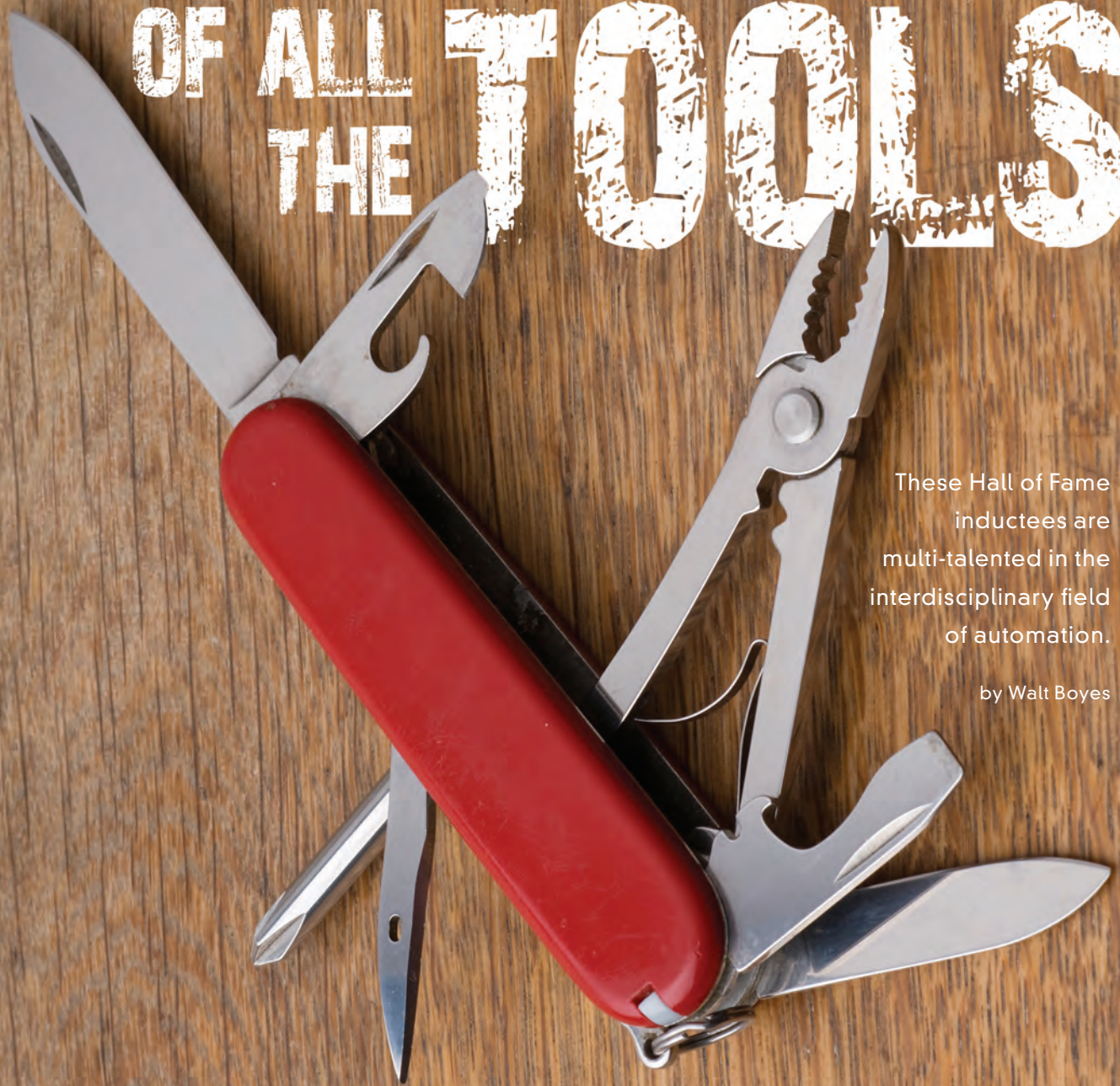
MASTERS OF ALL THE TOOLS



These Hall of Fame inductees are multi-talented in the interdisciplinary field of automation.

by Walt Boyes

It's time, once again, to introduce you to the new inductees into the Process Automation Hall of Fame. It's a truly international group this year. This year's inductees are John Berra, former chairman of Emerson Process Management, Sigurd Skogestad, professor of chemical engineering at NTNU, Trondheim, Norway, and Maurice Wilkins, former Honeywell fellow, WBF chairman and now vice-president for global marketing services at Yokogawa Electric Corp. It is a diverse and eclectic group, as you can see, but there are themes that run through the lives and careers of all three.

These masters of the process automation arts have come to the field in sometimes unusual ways. Automation is a multidisciplinary set of skills, and these skills are hard to acquire in any one place, be it university, trade school or on-the-job training. These three men managed to acquire their exemplary skills and then work their entire careers to extend the skills and the reach of automation in manufacturing and especially in the process industries.

THE BUSINESS VISIONARY
JOHN BERRA

"I graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with a degree in system science in June of 1969," says John Berra, former chairman of the board at Emerson Process Management. "At that time, there were two paths you could follow with this sort of degree—aerospace and process control. I interviewed with many companies and came to the conclusion that the space program wasn't going to be as active once a man walked on the moon. So I decided to join Monsanto as an instrument engineer."

Berra worked in the corporate engineering group at Monsanto and received excellent training in what process control was all about. Monsanto's training program of that era has produced a significant number of inductees into the Process Automation Hall of Fame. Berra's first projects were pneumatic instrumentation and some very early analog electronic control loops.

"Monsanto was good," he says, "but I wanted to move faster, so I took a job with J. F. Pritchard, an engineering contractor in Kansas City. I learned a lot there and got to spend time in the field on start-ups. I spent a lot of time ringing out wires!"

From there, Berra took a sales engineering job at Beckman Instruments (now Beckman Coulter Inc., www.beckmancoulter.com) and then joined a company called Rosemount (now the Rosemount Measurement Division of Emerson Process Management, www2.emersonprocess.com), which had some radical new pressure-sensing technology.

"The rest, as they say, is history," Berra recalls. "I grew up with the company and was promoted several times before becoming the president of Rosemount."

When Emerson, which had acquired Rosemount just a few months after Berra joined, decided to purchase Fisher Controls from Berra's alma mater, Monsanto,

THE PROCESS AUTOMATION HALL OF FAME

The Process Automation Hall of Fame was established in 2001 to honor pioneers of process automation technologies and luminaries of the discipline. Each year, the previously inducted members nominate and select three to five automation professionals whose contributions to the profession have made them significant. Anyone can propose a nominee, but only the inductees vote on the final selection.

Here are the members of the Process Automation Hall of Fame in the order of their induction:

Marion "Bud" Keyes
Béla Lipták
Greg McMillan
F. Greg Shinskey
Terry Tolliver
Harold Wade
Karl Astrom
Lynn Craig
Charles Cutler
Terry Blevins
Thomas M. Stout
Ted Williams
Richard H. Caro
William G. "Bill" Luyben
R. Russell Rhinehart
Edgar Bristol II
Richard E. Morley
Wyman "Cy" Rutledge
Kathleen Waters
James H. Christensen
Thomas F. Edgar
Angela Summers
Vernon Trevathan
William M. Hawkins
Dale E. Seborg
Hans D. Baumann
Renzo Dallimonti
J. Patrick Kennedy
Carroll Ryskamp
Cecil Smith
Joseph S. Alford
John Gerry
Willy Wojsznis
Yutaka Wakasa
John Berra
Sigurd Skogestad
Maurice Wilkins

Berra became head of the combined Fisher and Rosemount controls business, then called Fisher-Rosemount.

"We ultimately launched DeltaV during my time as president," Berra says modestly. Other Emerson employees, though, recount stories of his deep and intense involvement in the design and creation of DeltaV, which became the model for the second generation of DCS products worldwide, and one of the most successful.

At the same time, Berra was responsible for the development of two of the most successful digital communications busses in process automation. "I am a geek at heart," he says.

First, under his direction, Rosemount developed HART, which has now over 30 million devices installed. Then, after personally working with the ISA SP50 standard committee, he helped launch (and became chairman of) the Fieldbus Foundation (www.fieldbus.org)—which is, especially in the petrochemical industry, growing as a powerful vendor-non-specific communications and control platform.

Berra has been a champion of the independent standards movement, personally in his involvement in ISA standards, as well as in his role as business leader providing the impetus for Emerson's involvement in standards work.

After Rosemount developed the HART protocol as a proprietary technology, Berra led the development of the HART Communication Foundation (www.hartcomm.org), and deeded the patents on the HART technology over to this not-for-profit organization. "The HART protocol was conceived at an offsite meeting that I chaired," he says.

"OPC also began on my watch," Berra notes. "I remember going to Microsoft and meeting with Mike Maples, who was then head of technology there. We were trying to stir up some interest at Microsoft in process automation."

"More recently," he continues, "I was associated with wireless technology and was proud to launch wireless products and WirelessHART during my time as business leader."

"Clearly no single person does all of this, and I am not the engineer who did the technology," Berra says. "But I am very proud of my leading role in all of these things that changed our industry. Automation is better because of these innovations, and it is very gratifying to know that I have been a part of it. My other source of pride is the people that I've hired and developed over the years."

Berra has been married to his wife Charlotte for 41 years, and they have three children and three grandchildren. "The grandchildren are the highlight of our life," he says. "I was a pretty decent tennis and basketball player in my younger years, but now my sport is golf."

Berra's idea of retirement is typically busy. He sits on the board of directors of two public companies, Ryder and National Instruments, and is a trustee of the Dell Children's Medical Center in Austin, Texas. "I sponsor four scholarships each year at the Washington University School of Engineering, [where he and Charlotte did their undergraduate work, and where they met—ed.]," he said.

You can read more of the inductees comments on their careers and the future of automation in the process industries online at www.controlglobal.com/1102_coverextra.html.