

ROBERT BROWNING, ASSOCIATE

McConnell Co., Inc.
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Robert Browning, of Atlanta, Georgia, has over 25 years' experience in the design and engineering of single-sheet, twin-sheet, and pressure thermoformed products, tooling and processes. During this time he has had the opportunity to develop, refine and patent new processes in thermoforming and in the design of thermoforming tooling. For fifteen years, he was with one of the largest twin-sheet thermoforming companies in the U.S., as Director of Research, Development and Engineering. Currently an associate consultant with McConnell Co., Inc., Robert has had his own consulting firm, Isosceles, Inc., since 1984. With degrees in Industrial Design and Business Management, he has successfully worked with companies to define problems, develop alternatives and implement solutions. He is an active member of the Industrial Design Society of America and is a Senior Member of the Society of Plastics Engineers.

ARTHUR BUCKEL, ASSOCIATE

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Arthur Buckel spent over thirty-five years in the plastics job-shop world, twenty-eight years managing and operating his own companies. Art founded Specialty Manufacturing Inc. in San Diego, CA, in 1972. By the mid-1980s, SMI had become one of the nation's most sophisticated thermoforming and fabrication companies. He had a hands-on management style, supporting sales and directing tooling and manufacturing operations. He has organized, written, promoted and presented numerous seminars to acquaint customers, engineers and designers with the advantages of thermoforming. Art has lectured at numerous universities and seminars internationally. He is currently an associate with the McConnell Co., Inc. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Thermoforming Division of SPE. At the 1996 SPE Thermoforming Conference in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky, the Society of Plastics Engineers honored Art with the "Outstanding Achievement" award. Art received the 1999 "Thermoformer of the Year" award at the Thermoforming Conference in Chicago.

MICHELLE CURENTON, SALES PRODUCT ENGINEER

Facts, Inc.
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Michelle currently serves as a Sales/Product Engineer with Facts, Inc., a supplier of closed-loop control systems for extruders, mixers, calenders and thermoformers. She has spent 10 years with the company, exclusively serving the plastics and rubber industries. During this time she has worked as a project and process engineer, managed many startup projects in custom installations, and routinely helps clients with troubleshooting or diagnostic issues. She is often called upon to support the company with technical presentations and presented several papers at industry conferences and SPE meetings. Michelle holds an electrical engineering degree from the University of Akron.

KENNETH GRIEP, VP

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Ken Griep is a vice president at Portage Casting & Mold, Inc. An expert mold designer and builder, Ken is responsible for daily activities within the plant, managing and coordinating projects, CAD-CAM operations and customer sales. He has a bachelor's degree in Industrial Technology from Illinois State University. Ken is an active member in the Thermoforming Division of SPE and serves on the Board of Directors.

DONALD C. HYLTON, ASSOCIATE

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Don Hylton is a veteran in materials science, plastics processing & quality control. Since 1969 he has constantly expanded his knowledge in these fields. He was an analytical chemist for DuPont's Neoprene plant, developing new analytical test procedures for synthetic rubber. Then he worked at General Electric's Appliance Park Plastic Applications Center, where he was responsible for instrument and test method development. Don then joined Exxon Chemical Company for 17 years. He was instrumental in bringing Exxon's product testing lab from a one-room facility to a world-class operation specializing in testing sheet & film, physical properties and rheology. Also at Exxon, he helped develop a solid-phase pressure-forming (SPPF) grade of PP & developed laboratory techniques to measure the thermoformability of various materials. In 1995 Don became an Associate Director of the Science Research Center at Clark Atlanta University with responsibilities of conducting research in materials and process development, QA/QC & safety. Don has a BS in chemistry with a 2nd major in biology from Kentucky State University. Don joined McConnell Co. Inc., as an associate in June 2004, and still manages the lab at the Clark Atlanta University. He is a Fellow of the Society of Plastics Engineers and a very active member of the Board of Directors of the SPE Thermoforming Division.

JIM IRION, VP ENGINEERING

Texstars Inc.
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Jim has been an executive at Texstars since 1981 and has supervised many departments within this custom plastics manufacturer since 1973. Currently he is the sr. vice president of Engineering and Quality. Texstars' product lines include thermoplastic and thermoset materials. They specialize in vacuum forming, blow molding, injection molding, along with various other manufacturing support processes. One of Texstars' accomplishments involves the manufacture of windshields and canopies for commercial and military aircraft. Using polycarbonates, acrylics and stretched acrylics, and other clear materials, they are able to form compound curves while maintaining the base material's optical properties. Jim will speak about thermoforming optically clear parts and products with a class "A" finish.

DENNIS NORTHROP, TECHNICAL SERVICES MANAGER

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Dennis has over 35 years' experience in decorative processes for the plastics industry, which include hot stamp foil, paint applications, and laminates. He has been involved in thermoform applications with the automotive industry for the last 30 years. Current responsibilities include managing a customer technical support group, which provides equipment, material, tooling, design, and processing recommendations for decorative laminate applications on a worldwide basis.

He is a Senior Member of the Society of Plastics Engineers, having joined SPE in 1974. He currently serves on the Boards of Directors for both the Thermoforming Division and the Decorating & Assembly Division. He is also a senior member of the American Society of Quality.

Dennis has presented numerous papers, and has served as moderator at previous SPE events, such as ANTEC, RETECs, TopCons, and the annual Thermoforming Conference. He has been a guest speaker at the SPE Thermoforming Symposium and Workshop in Dallas for the past six years. He served as Technical Program Chair for the 2005 TF Conference in Indianapolis. Current positions include Nominating Committee Chair for the Thermoforming Division, and Councilor for the Decorating & Assembly Division.

JIM ROBBINS, VP MARKETING

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In his current role of Vice President Marketing of Brown Machine, Jim Robbins is responsible for all marketing activities at Brown as well as the sale of new equipment and upgrade systems within the United States. Jim spends considerable time within customers' facilities understanding their current and future needs leading to equipment configurations and the advancement of technology. He joined Brown in 1981 and has been involved in customer related-roles for over 20 years. He has been a member of Brown's management staff since 1990 and previously held positions of Director of Tooling, Manager of Spare Parts & Kits, and Vice President of Manufacturing from 1995 -1999. Jim has an MBA from Central Michigan University and a BA in Accounting from Saginaw Valley State University.

PAUL ROSS, VP OF PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

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Paul Ross is VP of product development at Solar Products, a manufacturer of electric infrared heaters used in the thermoforming industry. He has been a member of SPE since he joined the company in January 2004. Previously, he spent 15 years working for Radiant Energy Systems, an original equipment manufacturer of custom infrared ovens. He continues to be a very active member of the Infrared Equipment Division of the Industrial Heating Equipment Association.

BARRY SHEPHERD, PRESIDENT

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Barry Shepherd founded Shepherd Packaging Inc. in 1985. His two sons, Todd and Mark, joined the company after college, and today Shepherd Thermoforming and Packaging Inc. is a thriving design/manufacturing business supplying custom thermoformed parts to various markets in North America. Barry received his education in England and Canada and played pro soccer in Toronto. Prior to starting the business, Barry spent his entire professional career in package design and sales management. Thermoforming has become a big part of Barry's life, and he still enjoys getting involved in design projects and process innovations, using the latest technology with a practical approach. Besides keeping an eye on the "boys" and the business, he enjoys working with the Thermoforming Division Board, and when time permits, competing on the golf course.

RITA WEBB, SALES ENGINEER

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Rita Webb is a sales engineer with ODC Tooling and Molds, an industry leader in tool design and manufacture from Waterloo, Ontario. Her career with the company began some 20 years ago, upon completion of her studies in mechanical engineering at a local college. She began as a tool designer, specializing in thermoform trim tooling, and over the years, her responsibilities expanded and shifted to include manufacturing engineering, quality assurance, and sales. Rita has spoken previously at McConnell Seminars and SPE Conferences. She resides with her young family in Waterloo, Ontario.

MARK ZELNICK, PRESIDENT

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Mark Zelnick is the President of Zed Industries Inc., an Ohio-based company. Mark started in the plastics industry at age 6, attending the plastics show in New York City for Atlas Vac Machine Company. Now with 25 years of experience, Mark has a vast knowledge of the machinery, processes and materials utilized in the packaging industry. These processes include thermoforming, medical applications, skin packaging, automation, blister and clamshell sealing. Mark attended the University of Utah, where he received both a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Materials Science Engineering. He is involved with various church activities, youth activities, and the Boy Scouts of America.