AWCI in the Age of Aquarius

by Kathy B. Sedgwick

When the moon is in the seventh house and Jupiter aligns with Mars, then peace will guide the planets, and love will steer the stars.

Thus a popular song described the hopes and dreams of the 1960s generation. This was the decade of the “European Invasion” led by the Beatles. The nation’s youth were peace-nuts, hippies, yippies, and instead of hanging out at the soda shops and drive-ins so popular in the 1950s, they attended sit-ins. “Make love, not war” was the pop philosophy catch-phrase, finding its way from graffiti to bumper stickers. They were going to change the world and everything and everyone in it.

And the world certainly was changing.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected, and the United States launched its first weather satellite. One year later, Alan Shepard Jr. traveled on the first U.S.-manned suborbital space flight. The race for the moon-and exploration of space, the final frontier-had begun.

In 1961, the Berlin Wall was erected. The United States severed relations with Cuba, and by 1962 the Cuban missile crisis was a reality.

In 1962, Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring was published, planting the seeds of the environmental movement.

In 1963, JFK was assassinated, and Lyndon B. Johnson took office. A Supreme Court decision abolished repeating “The Lord’s Prayer” in public schools. Martin Luther King made his famed “I have a Dream” speech.

In 1964, Ed Sullivan hosted the Beatles on his show, LBJ was elected, and the Warren Commission determined that Oswald acted alone.

In 1965, The Watts Riots shook Los Angeles. Medicare and Medicaid programs were created at the same time that medical technology was making great strides.

In 1966, the first human artificial heart implant operation took place, followed a year later by the first human heart transplant.

In 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first black U.S. Supreme Court justice.

In 1968, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. Richard M. Nixon was elected.

In 1969, the United States won the race for the moon when Neil A. Armstrong took that “one step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

The end of the turbulent 1960s saw the peak of anti-Vietnam War demonstrations. And Woodstock, which became the quintessential rock experience, drew thousands of long-haired, sandal-wearing hippies with their lovebeads and drugs to hear their music.

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In the midst of this chaotic decade, CPLIA membership was growing. The organization had created its first chartered chapter, Oklahoma, in 1958. Two years later, CPLIA first brought in manufacturers as associate members.

At about the same time, regional conferences formed (at the urging of Bob Maidt) with the Southwest Conference and the Midwest (now Mid-Central) Conference, and this expanded to eight conferences. Later the Midwest and Great Lakes merged to form the Mid-Central, bringing the number of regions to seven. The regional conferences were intended to open communication between members on a regional level and to help stabilize wages within the defined geographical area of the conference. And, according to Past President Bob Maidt, “It worked!”

Working with the unions was a significant item on the CPLIA agenda. National agreements were written, starting with a laborers’ agreement in 1965 and then expanded to include the Plasterers. CPLIA opened relations with the Carpenters and Painters after that.

CPLIA celebrated its Golden Anniversary at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., Sept. 8-14, 1967.

By 1969 the volume of drywall and acoustical tile work being contracted by CPLIA members was so great that the association voted to change its name to the international association of Wall and Ceiling Contractors (iaWCC). Merger of the GDCI and iaWCC became a topic of conversation within both groups about this time.

Next Month: The 1970s