



50

Who Made a Difference

Leaders, Innovators and Pioneers Who Have Shaped the Self-Service Laundry Industry

As the Coin Laundry Association closes out its 50th year of serving the needs of the self-service laundry industry, we felt the best way to cap this milestone was with a very special anniversary feature article, saluting the men and women whose creative thinking, leadership and dedication have guided the laundry business from its early days to the \$5 billion industry it has become.

So, here (in alphabetical order) are the 50 who have made a difference:

Chris Balestracci



As a former stockbroker with a bachelor's degree in finance from Penn State University, Chris Balestracci represents the epitome of today's professional, progressive, tech-savvy laundry owner. Balestracci – president of Super Wash Laundry, a mega-store located in Connecticut – is a forward-thinking, aggressive promoter who has switched his store to card technology and has been among the first

to embrace online marketing for his business. In addition, the affable Balestracci is always willing to help fellow operators. The former member of the Coin Laundry Association's Board of Directors remains a popular and engaging speaker as many CLA-hosted educational events. Balestracci was named CLA Member of the Year in 2003 and also received the association's Outstanding Director Award last year at the Clean Show in New Orleans.

Lionel Bogut



With more than 50 years in the industry, Lionel Bogut's list of industry credentials is an impressive one, and his experience has run the gamut from multi-store ownership to owning his own commercial distributorship. Additionally, Bogut, who received the CLA's Founder's Award in 1997, has always given freely of his time and talent to the industry's associations at the local, state and national levels.

He has served as president of the now-defunct San Diego County Coin Laundry Association, as well as having been an active member of the CLA's Board of Directors. Also, as publisher of the regionally distributed *Coin Laundry News*, Bogut continues to distribute timely industry information and business-building ideas to laundry owners in the western region of the U.S.

Jeff Brothers



Jeff Brothers currently serves as senior vice president of sales-North America for Alliance Laundry Systems. With 33 years worth of experience in the laundry business, he has gained a unique perspective on the industry, as well as an uncanny ability to recognize and anticipate the changing needs of today's self-service laundry owners. Brothers has played a pivotal role in the strategic development and implementation of new Alliance Laundry System offerings to meet the needs of coin laundry operators, including extended warranties and popular energy-efficient laundry technologies.

Ruby Burch



In response to the specific needs of its members, the Coin Laundry Association formed CLA Insurance in 1988. Since then, CLA Insurance has been providing self-service laundry owners with property/liability and workers' compensation coverage for their businesses. And, for nearly as long, laundry owners in need of quality insurance have been turning to Ruby Burch for guidance. For more than 20 years, Burch, executive coordinator at CLA Insurance, has been handling coin laundry adjustments and claims, rating coin laundry policies, and educating CLA members on the finer points of loss control. Cynthia Neal also has served as a vital member of the CLA Insurance agency, overseeing policy endorsements and premium payment processing over the past 16 years.

Kenneth Cherry



Kenneth Cherry opened his first coin laundry in Livingston, Tenn., back when the self-service laundry industry was still in its infancy. Today, he owns three stores. Cherry has always been a price leader in the laundry business and was the first owner in Tennessee to offer tiered pricing for cold, warm or hot water. Cherry joined the Coin Laundry Association in 1961, and in 1969, he was elected to the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Coin Laundry Association, a position he still holds. Also in the 1960s, Cherry was instrumental in the passage of a sales tax exemption for laundry owners. He received the CLA's Leadership Award in 2002 and remains a strong leader, mentor and industry pioneer.

Sally Collins



Sally Collins has spent a lifetime breaking down barriers for women in business – particularly in the coin laundry business. She and her husband, Joe, currently own one laundry in Lakewood, N.J.; however, over the years, they have operated as many as three award-winning stores. She is a founding member and the first woman president of the New Jersey Coin Laundry Association, and also has served as chairman of the national CLA. Collins has published numerous articles on coin laundry management, conducted workshops, and has sat on various local and national panels during her career. She is the author of "Happiness is Owning a Laundromat: An Introduction to the Coin Laundry Industry" and was recently named Citizen of the Year by the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce.

Durwood Davis



Durwood Davis was one of the true pioneers and very first distributors in the coin laundry industry. He got involved in the industry in the late 1950s in Georgia as a distributor for American Laundry Machinery, Inc., which was the largest producer of commercial laundry equipment at that time. In 1958, Davis started his own business, known to this day as Star Distributing Co., currently one of the oldest laundry distributorships in the Southeast under the same family ownership. During his career, Davis established more than 3,000 laundry facilities as a distributor, while also owning and operating 25 laundries and drycleaners in the Atlanta area. In fact, Star developed perhaps the first concept stores back in the 1970s, decades before the rest of the industry. For 12 years, Davis served on the Board of Directors of the National Automatic Laundry and Cleaning Council and later the Coin Laundry Association, during which time he chaired the Distributor Conference Committee.

Jeff Deal



Jeff Deal – president and owner of Hamilton Engineering in Livonia, Mich. – spoke at his first Clean Show in Chicago in 1979, presenting to a group of several hundred on energy conservation, and he immediately committed himself to helping to educate laundry owners. Over the last 31 years, Deal has given dozens of presentations in the fields of utilities and energy at various workshops and Coin Laundry Association events. An active member of the CLA since 1981, Deal served on the association's Board of Directors for nine years, was elected its chairman in 2000, and was the first CLA member to be awarded the Dick Torp Memorial Award for Excellence in Education.

The secret of success is to do the common things uncommonly well.

John D. Rockefeller