



Remembering Charlie Bergman

A profile of the person who was instrumental in the founding of the Control System Integrators Association

By Ann Massie Nelson

The story of the Charlie Bergman “Remember Me” Award is, in essence, the genesis story of the Control System Integrators Association.

Formerly known as “systems houses” or simply “integrators,” control system integrator emerged as an independent profession in the 1960s, when computers first arrived on factory floors and inside industrial control houses. The people who developed the expertise to program and connect the technology that heralded a new industrial revolution came from various academic and professional lineages; no single forum existed for members of this emerging profession.

Charlie Bergman, recently retired from Ohio-based Bailey Controls, recognized the emergence of the control system integrator as an independent profession and began publishing a four-page newsletter in 1989. The primary purpose of *Control System Integrators Business/Marketing Report* was to support the evolving profession with information about running a successful business. The newsletter served as a means for subscribers to benchmark their progress by sharing sales trends and other key statistics.

Selling newsletter subscriptions wasn’t going to make Charlie wealthy – he personally folded the newsletters, licked the stamps, and dropped them in the mailbox, often with handwritten notes – but the newsletter did serve as an outlet for his energy and creativity, as well as a platform for expressing his outlook. Contemporaries of Charlie’s describe him as a “visionary,” “pioneer,” “thought leader.” In the same breath, they describe him as intelligent, persistent, opinionated, even “cantankerous.” It’s difficult to say which of these described traits he would have considered most flattering.

A vision of sharing

“Charlie had the vision, courage and commitment to see that the future of the controls industry could and would be shaped by the independent CSIs working together. He worked selflessly to promote and encourage emerging leaders in the industry,” said Jamie Jordan, a past Bergman award winner, now president of Stravicom, LLC.

Through the newsletter, Charlie encouraged independent CSIs to track sales, salaries, expenses and other statistics necessary to measure their performance. Subscribers

submitted their performance measures to him, which he compiled and published in the newsletter, establishing the first benchmarks for CSI business performance. "If you're not keeping score, you're only practicing," he often wrote.

Long before the invention of social media, "the newsletter also connected those of us who felt we were the lone pioneers in the emerging industry by showing us there were many other CSIs who were in the same situation," Jordan said.

In March 1993, subscribers met at the Shell Island Resort, a small hotel in Wrightsville Beach, N.C., near Charlie's home. To keep expenses low, Charlie and his wife, Donna, hosted cocktails and dinner in their backyard for about 30 people.

"At the 1994 CSIA conference, Charlie arranged a golf outing at the golf course in the private community where he lived. Always looking to be frugal and get a good deal, Charlie arranged this group outing with the club by telling them, as I learned when we checked in, that we were a group interested in buying real estate," recalled Jim Cummings, the 2006 award winner, TSD an Optimization Company.

Those in attendance at Charlie's early meetings were understandably apprehensive about hobnobbing with their competitors. "Most of us were guarded at best," said Jordan. "But Charlie encouraged us by telling us that those who share with others will be strengthened and will also strengthen the industry."

Industry partners played a vital role in spreading the word about the early conferences. "I was part of Rockwell at the time. We were encouraged to invite all

Rockwell- authorized system integrators, but cautioned against exerting any potential unfair influence. This was indicative of Charlie's clear perspective on protecting the integrator," said Raymond McKinney, Matrix Technologies, Inc. "Charlie's vision was to turn a group of integrators who often competed into a coordinated team of folks with interaction and support from the major control vendors."

Founding of the association

Profits from the first meeting provided seed money for a second conference the following year, when conference attendees voted on April 9, 1994, to form the association as an affiliate of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association. In a post-conference wrap-up, Charlie wrote, "And the good news is that CSIs kicked off their new organization, the CSI association...dedicated to enhancement of your growth industry. The CSIA will promote professionalism in all CSI business, build national recognition with the help of NEMA's prestigious recognition, and complete projects that CSIs alone could not afford to support."

From Charlie's vision came the key, defining concept of the future CSIA: Sharing – knowledge, best practices, key performance indicators – to advance the success of all. "Charlie told us to share ideas with one another, and it would come back tenfold," said Pat Miller, a 2002 award winner from Engineered Energy Solutions.

"CSIA is the embodiment of his vision of integrators working together to raise the bar of the industry, improving our ability to deliver good, reliable solutions to our customers," said Charlie Sheets, Matrix Technologies, Inc.

The origin of the award

The name of the Charlie Bergman “Remember Me” Award traces back to a January 1991 newsletter. Charlie, the father of two married daughters, wrote that he was the last descendant of his Swedish immigrant family to carry the Bergman name. “It struck me as a sad thought, and I said to my wife, ‘In a couple of generations no one will remember us. We leave no name to be.’ And my wife, in characteristic prudent thought, said, ‘The only thing that will endure is an idea; you must leave an idea.’ I guess that’s my engine now. So if I can help you with good ideas, maybe you will remember ‘Bergman’ for that.”

A decade later, CSIA leadership recognized Charlie’s contributions by creating and awarding the first Charlie Bergman “Remember Me” Award. The memorial award recognizes individuals who have actively participated in association activities, published articles in industry publications, and served in leadership of the association. By giving their time and leadership talent to the association, the “Remember Me” winners

exemplify the philosophy of sharing that Charlie upheld.

Charlie would no doubt want to have the last word, so this profile ends with the words he opened his newsletters with: “ROAM THE FIELD WITH ME AWHILE – There are so many sites to visit, so many things to create!”

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According to Charlie

“If you’re not keeping score, you’re only practicing.”

“Competition is good and will take you to higher profits.”

“Pricing professional services is not for amateurs.”

“Once users’ needs are met, wants explode.”

“People do business with those they like.”

Find the Core and Serving – in Charlie’s words

Even before graduating from engineering school, Charlie knew he was an anomaly – an engineer who liked to write. He tells his own story in an August 1992 issue of Technical Marketing.

It was 1949, and I was in my senior year at Clarkson College of Technology, Potsdam, N.Y. And as much as I wanted to get my degree in electronic engineering, I knew I’d never quite make it as an engineer. I was confused about the type of job I should go after. On top of that, there was a major excess of engineering graduates due on the market in June 1950.

By a stroke of fate, I met a man who spoke at a senior year convocation on *marketing* yourself. His name was Sidney Edlund, prior president of three major companies, Pine Bros. Cough Drops, Rogers Bros. Silverware and Life Savers. I was so struck by the word *marketing* and its principles, that I called him at his New York office for more advice and direction. A dinner was arranged at a 47th Street New York restaurant.

Within an hour of conversation, he advised me to couple my engineering education with my other consuming interests in writing, graphics and presentations; then go out and help a company sell its technical products. Then he gave me some pointers on landing an exciting job.

I went back to Clarkson after the Christmas break, selected a few companies I would like to work for, threw my resume in the wastebasket, and put together a 16-page portfolio to compete in a crowded market.

By March 1950, company recruiters started to appear on campus. The procedure was to sign interview schedule sheets...first come, first served. One sheet I signed was for Bailey Meter Co. (now Bailey Controls Co.) The message was that the Bailey recruiters would

visit 18 colleges, hiring one cadet engineer from each college.

Within a few days, all 20 slots on the sheet were filled. And 12 of those seniors were Tau Beta Pi honors. My first thought...*I don’t stand a chance!*

I polished my portfolio, aimed it at Bailey, typed every sheet, did some simple graphics, included clippings, letters, photos, etc., and \$5 (Wow!) for a hard-bound transparency brochure. The cover matched Bailey’s blue.

The interview lasted 20 minutes, and seemed to go well. Then the interviewer asked, “May I take your portfolio back with me?” *[I wasn’t ready for that. There were no Xerox machines then. I’d have to start again from scratch for the other interviews. And some of my exhibits were originals!]* I said, “I’d be flattered.” Within 20 days I had an offer, as did another senior.

A year later, in one of our cadet engineering classes, E.G. Bailey, the company’s founder, was addressing the 18+1 Bailey-trained engineers. During the Q&A portion, I commented that I had not seen, heard or received much information on Bailey’s competition.

This distinguished inventor and engineer, well into his 70s, replied, “Sir, you need never worry about competitors as long as you serve your customers.”

To this day I thank Sidney Edlund for the core of my marketing career and Mr. Bailey for impressing me with the importance of service in technology.

Nels Blog – A History of My Experience with Cancer

Saturday, March 24, 2007 – A True Story about the Power of Prayer

Nels Tyring was recognized posthumously with the Charlie Bergman “Remember Me” award in 2009. You can read his blog at <http://nelsblogs.blogspot.com>.

First let me say there is very little news this week other than the fact that on Wednesday I had a PET scan on my body and an MRI scan of my brain. These are standard and definitive tests that determine a course of treatment. I have an appointment with Dr. Sims, my oncologist, next Wednesday and should have an idea of what is going to be recommended as a course of treatment by the end of next week.

Now to the subject indicated in the title. This is a rather long story so bear with me. It starts in the mid eighties with a visit by an irascible old SOB (not meant to be construed as standing for Son Of Bob) and good friend named Charlie to Portsmouth.

Charlie Bergman was Vice President of Marketing for Bailey Controls, a large industrial controls company at the time. Charlie had contracted cancer, taken medical retirement and moved from Ohio, where Bailey was headquartered, to Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. Once there, he continued treatments until his cancer went into remission. Charlie, an active guy, looked around for something to do.

During his last few years with Bailey, Charlie had noticed a growing number of a new kind of service providers who put together the then relatively new, electronic industrial controls into functioning systems. These were most frequently one and two man companies, but some had gotten quite large. They all operated quite differently, they frequently

started up, grew for a while and then went out of business.

This phenomenon interested Charlie; he began to study it by getting in touch with some of the owners of these businesses, to interview them at first, then to collect and consolidate marketing data. This he began to publish in a monthly newsletter to a few of us. One of the things that Charlie noted was that no standards existed in this developing industry. Because of the lack of standards those practicing in it frequently got into technical, financial, personnel or business troubles that resulted in either the work they performed being unsatisfactory, going out of business or both.

Charlie arrived in Portsmouth to talk to me about these problems as we had dinner at the Oar House on the Portsmouth waterfront. During the evening Charlie and I devised a unique name for the fledgling industry that of “Control Systems Integrators” to differentiate us from the people who integrated data systems. Charlie, after getting into a beef with a waitress over getting him a pack of cigarettes, got us thrown out of the Oar House with a strong request by the management that we never return.

Charlie went on to call a group of integrators to a meeting in Wrightsville Beach later on that year and form our trade association, the Control Systems Integrators Association. I was off on something else at that point in time but a few years later I joined. When I got around to joining I told the executive director

that it was a shame that Charlie hadn't lived to see the association come into being. He told me he had spoken to Charlie that morning. I was surprised because I had heard that Charlie had died several years before. The Executive Director gave me Charlie's phone number and I called to ask why he wasn't dead.

Charlie then told me the following story. Three years before, his doctor had told Charlie that that he had only six weeks to two months to live because there was nothing more the medical profession could do for him. Charlie sought the opinion of other doctors, internet sites and a variety of other possible sources but kept getting the same discouraging opinion.

He then turned to the only remaining possibility of help that he could think of; that of a higher power. Charlie was not a religious man, didn't have much by way of belief but he didn't know where else to turn. He had made a friend in the Navy during World War Two of a man who became a Catholic priest in Chicago. This friend, who was by then retired, was asked by Charlie if he would do some "consulting" for him in the area of prayer because he didn't know how or where to start.

His friend came to Wrightsville Beach, moved into Charlie's guest room, and he and Charlie began to work on prayer. At the end of six months Charlie was well enough for his friend

to return to Chicago and for Charlie to take his wife for a long weekend trip to Washington.

On the plane coming back to North Carolina, Charlie struck up a conversation with his seat mate and told the man his story. The man had a sister in Nashville who had received the same fatal opinion that Charlie had been given six months before that very week. The man asked if Charlie could call her and counsel her. Charlie, always looking for a new challenge, did so and so became the center of a growing group who were pronounced beyond hope and had come to rely on prayer.

At the time I spoke with Charlie he had worked with 17 people over a period of three years and had lost only two. The remainder were praying and urging anyone who was interested to pray with them. If the people they asked didn't believe in prayer, then to think positive thoughts. Charlie finally died about 18 months later, having lived nearly five years after his doctors had given up any hope of his living past a couple of months.

At the time I heard the story I was impressed and thought it wonderful and inspiring but it had no immediate relevance to me. In the past few weeks it has come forcefully to the front of my consciousness. Perhaps a little more on this subject in a later post.