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Professor Richard A. Paselk
Humboldt University

via email: rap1@axe.humboldt.edu

July 30, 2009

Dear Professor Paselk:

I was very interested and gratified to see (finally) that you have not only cited and referenced, but published the entire text of my grandfather's book "The Use and Care of a Balance."¹

The 1880 US Census lists Peter J. Kraye as a 19-year old living with his father, a German immigrant identified in the census as a stone mason, in New Rochelle, New York and working in a "scale factory." That would be the Christopher Becker facility mentioned in the Shannon article on your web site, where my grandfather's education about laboratory balances began. Later he moved to New Providence, New Jersey and was engaged in the independent servicing of balances. My father, Nicholas H. Kraye, learned that vocation from him, taking it up in earnest after returning from fighting in France in 1918, and moving to Pittsburgh in the early twenties. There was no safety net for the self-employed in the depression, but my father was able, by building a loyal clientele and not shirking from difficult travel, to keep us relatively comfortable. In the early years of World War II, however, he was overworked and had a serious heart attack. In 2009, I'm sure his heart problems would have been readily handled, but there were long periods of recovery during which I, as a young teenager, was enlisted to carry his tool bags and perform some of the laborious cleanup work required for many balances in the Pittsburgh area and the industrial Midwest, during the summers and school recesses. We also contrived to repair and otherwise service all sorts of balances in our basement workshop. Traveling with my father to the many steel mill, research, university, hospital and industrial laboratories of the 1940's, I learned the vocation of itinerant analytical balance repair and maintenance from my father, who had learned it from his father.

I continued to work with my father until April 1948, near the end of my freshman year at the University of Pittsburgh, when a second heart attack was fatal. Beginning shortly afterward, still at the age of 18, I was able to take up the business, at first largely with his most loyal customers, and soon to many locations within hundreds of miles of Pittsburgh. As had been the case with my father, my business card and stationery identified me as an "Analytical Balance Expert." Frequently, having obtained a commitment from a laboratory in, for example, a particular area of Ohio, I would go to the library, find companies and other institutions in the

¹ Although, or perhaps because, I am intellectual property attorney, I forgive you for copyrighting it again.

area likely to have laboratories, and (having already learned how to type) address a letter simply to the "Chief Chemist" or a similar possible title. Thus I was able to economize on travel, meet new prospects (often they were the same or new personnel in a laboratory already acquainted with my father), and reserve the local clients for work during the school year. This unique legacy kept our family going (my Mother and I, my younger sister and even to an extent my older brother who had entered medical school under the GI bill). My work took me as far away from Pittsburgh as St. Louis and Dallas. After graduation in 1951, I worked for several more months before enlisting (the last stages of the Korean War), and, after my service obligations, resumed the work before enrolling in law school, during which I also continued while married and a new father. This specialty occupation had the great advantage that I could schedule the work more or less whenever it fit with my school schedule. During my second year of law school, among other engagements in Western Pennsylvania, I had a contract to recondition, to the extent necessary, all the balances (about 90) in the Mellon Institute of Industrial Research, which was located next door to the University.

I worked on all the makes of balances mentioned in your web site, and many not mentioned. They were made by Becker, Ainsworth, Volland, Troemner, Sartorius and others. Ainsworth and Becker models dominated.

As you no doubt know, Mettler's new style one-pan balances began to sweep the industry in the 1950's. It was immediately evident that the new design did indeed eliminate many of the problems of the double beam balance. The new balances were very well built to boot, and besides, Mettler had its own service people. My decision to become a patent attorney was vindicated. Although there may still be some independent balance service men even today, I would not envy their situation in the age of electronic sensors, digital readouts and the like. Beginning early in 1960, I worked as a patent attorney for Calgon Corporation, US Steel, and Aristech Chemical before retiring in 1995. Becoming self-employed again was not a challenge; at 79, I am glad to be able still to obtain patents for deserving inventors.

Suspecting that you will find the details of what I actually did in my work more relevant to your collection than my personal saga, I have attached some recollections of the kinds of tasks that were required when servicing the traditional analytical balance. You have my permission to preserve this letter and its attachment in your museum records and/or make it available to the public (or not) as you see fit.

I would be happy to hear from you and hope I can visit your commendable museum sometime in the future.

Yours truly,

/S/

William L. Kraye