IN MEMORY OF PAUL RIEDENER

by

Franz Moos

(Editor's note: Paul Riedener is the father of Lydia (Riedener) Gorman, who is the mother of Nancy Rudolph, Lin Blaskovich, and Sue Hepworth. Franz Moos (pronounced "Moss") was a close friend of Paul's, and this was written in 1975 or 1976. This was reproduced exactly as Mr. Moos wrote it.)

Even in the country of unlimited possibilities, it is rare that a first generation American becomes an industrialist. Riedener was to succeed in this with truly "Saint Gallen" spirit of enterprise in spite of the depression in America in the 1930's.

Paul Riedener, born near the city of Saint Gallen, Switzerland, went out into the world after concluding his apprenticeship as a merchant. Deep down inside he would never picture himself as a clerk, or even as the owner of a store. He was obsessed with an urge to become an industrialist through his own means. Set-backs, which did not fail to appear, were to harden him so that later on he would always be able to find a way out of the most difficult situations. Riedener went to Palermo and found a position as a clerk in a company owned by people from "Graubunden". The Graubunden people dominated the production of sweets in Sicily and immediately appreciated this young man from St. Gallen enough to promote him to a leading position. In Palermo, Riedener fell in love with the beautiful teacher Amalia whom he married soon thereafter and whom he introduced to his family during their honeymoon in St. Gallen. This harmonious marriage produced 3 daughters and one son. Driven by his desire to become independent, Riedener took over an alarm clock factory in Hergiswil together with his brother.

At first this firm prospered due to large amounts of orders from Great Britain. But their early success proved an illusion when the export into their only market outlet decreased as the result of the introduction of import taxes in London. The firm had to be shut down and, after this first set-back, Riedener returned to Italy with his wife and his infant children.

Paul Riedener was of not quite medium size build. Throughout his life he was wiry and full of energy. He wore an English mustache under his slightly bent nose. His full brown hair, which did not turn gray until later in life, lent him a distinguished appearance.

After returning to Italy, Riedener was appointed manager of the "Café Aragno". The owners of this establishment were convinced that this young Swiss man who had been successful in this field of business would be the right man in the right place. This Café Aragno, with its production of sweets, was and still is today, the favorite place of the Roman upper class. But in those years even opponents of fascism felt at ease in this place in spite of the fact that young fascists such as Dino Grande, the later secretary of foreign Affairs, Italo Balbo, the ace who was to lead an Italian air squadron to Chicago, and Duke Ciano, the later son-in-law of the "Duce", liked to walk around in the café in full uniform. At that time they wore well-groomed beards for a more mature look. Riedener, with his St. Gallen diplomatic skills, knew how to calm down their explosive confrontations, although he could sense the first signs of hostility directed towards him. This happened particularly during the exciting months in 1924 after Matteotti had been

kidnapped and murdered, and the opposition had attempted an unsuccessful attack against the parliament building Monte Citorio.

After this crisis, Mussolini obtained absolute power in Italy and the opposition had to disappear underground without a leader.

In spite of all this, Riedener continued to be successful in his managerial position until in 1927 when his spirit of enterprise urged him to become his own boss. Riedener opened a café with a bakery in Messina. Once again his knowledge of the country and of his profession allowed him to become successful in a short time. However, this striking success attracted the envy and enmity of the fascists. Mussolini himself bore an old grudge against Switzerland in general and particularly against Swiss people in Italy. In 1928, when he felt sure of being in absolute power, he wanted to strike against the Swiss. The dictator, still two decades away from his violent death, attempted to reestablish the Roman Empire, but instead lead Italy to ruin. In 1944 The Duce even had his own son-in-law Ciano executed on account of high treason. But in 1945, when he was escaping to Switzerland with his young mistress, he was seized and executed by partisans.

In the meantime, by 1928 Riedener had become fully aware of the fact that there was no hope for a successful future in Italy. He sold his business and decided to take the chance of emigrating to California with his family. He had been promised a position with Sussman, Wormser, Inc. (S & W) in San Francisco.

In 1920 California, like the rest of America, was blessed with overflowing prosperity because the USA had emerged from WWI not only as a nation of creditors, but also as the number one world power. However this boom, together with prohibition, lead to organized crime, especially in Chicago with Al Capone. Scrap metal dealers had worked their way up to film tycoons, and actors such as Valentino, Garbo and Chaplin suddenly became world famous. But these same film producers could later on not allow themselves to tolerate or recognize a genius like Max Reinhardt. Lindbergh had succeeded in flying to Paris alone and had thus promoted the American airplane industry significantly.

When Riedener came to San Francisco in the fall of 1928, this boom was already ending gradually. With the "Black Friday" everything disappeared like a mirage. The American sense of power had suddenly been suppressed by a loss of confidence. Hoover was incapable of fighting off the crisis effectively. In the face of these unexpected changes, Sussman, Wormser, Inc. had to abandon their plans of expansion and Riedener had no choice but to remain a kind of foreman in the company.

At first he lived in a rented apartment on Portrero Avenue with his family. In the mid thirties he was able to buy his own house on Brighton Avenue.

Although President Roosevelt revoked the alcohol law, this measure did not help the country to overcome the economical depression. Social measures which then went into effect helped to improve things, and the confidence of the Americans gradually returned. In the second half of the 1930's Riedener was made manager of Schuckl and Company, a cannery in Niles located in the agricultural area between Oakland and San Jose.

Before too long he decided to open a factory with his partner for the production of maraschino cherries (which are mainly used for cocktails). The gamble was successful ! Treasure Island Food Products suddenly received orders from all over North America. Riedener's partner soon died in an accident at work. The company flourished even

during WW II because Riedener had established a profitable network of markets, and had always made an effort to obtain the most modern equipment. With the USA as a lucrative market, and with the help of his own organizational skills, Riedener became a big industrialist.

In the post war years he was so successful that he had to keep expanding his plant. He found a suitable location in Hayward which provided space for a larger production as well as for storage buildings.

Now Riedener lost his life companion Amalia through a heart attack. With Hans Leuenberger as a reliable manager of the company, Riedener then left for a trip to Europe which he had planned together with his wife.

At the end of the 1950's, Riedener married a younger Italian-American woman who had a son from a former marriage whom she intended as an heir for the entire company. This marriage was soon dissolved. Meanwhile, the production as well as the sales had increased continuously because other products had been added next to the maraschino cherries.

Satisfied that he had fulfilled the dream of his youth, Riedener was able to enjoy his success for decades without making much ado about it. In the 1970's he started having problems with his health, and yet he kept presiding over his large company.

Some months ago he died at a very old age with all his full mental capabilities, surrounded by his family, his grand-children and great-grand-children. His body rests in California ground, which had become his second home. And yet, in his spirit, he always remained the man from St. Gallen, a man with great personality and vigor who greatly contributed to the fact that the Swiss people in California---the most populated state in this country---are highly respected by everyone.

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How the author and Paul Riedener met and knew each other.

Franz Moos (pronounced Moss), was born in 1905 in Schongau, Lucerne, Switzerland.

Around 1924 Paul Riedener was the manager of the large and very prestigious CAFÉ ARAGNO, (which still exists.)

"The Café happened to be one of our best customers in Rome for Sevres-and Limoges-Porcelains, which the Mazzarella Agency represented in Italy, as well as other articles of luxury and costly jewelry, " writes Moos.

"My boss with his wife took me to Rome to get acquainted with his many customers. And so it came about that we visited also the Café Aragno. Your father gave us a good order."

Moos worked in Italy, Peru and the USA and now lives in Victoria, B.C., Canada. From 1958 to 1971, he was a free-lance journalist and an Economic-Correspondent for various German and Swiss Newspapers and a Member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery in Ottawa. His wife passed away several years ago.

Riedener and Moos remained very good friends, seeing each other whenever possible.

In late 1986, Moos visited San Francisco and took Lydia *(Gorman)* to lunch at Schroeder's where they had a wonderful time reminiscing.