

# 117<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION — JUNE 20–23, 2023

## Opening Address

by Joseph Hoefler

Greetings, I would like to call to order the official opening of the American Leather Chemists Association's 117th Convention held at the Grand Geneva Resort and Spa in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. This marks our second conference after missing a few years due to the pandemic and looks to be well attended and hopefully as successful as last year's conference. As one might envision, it takes a lot of effort to pull off a convention as there are so many moving parts. Carol and Sarah and of course John and Steve and to a lesser extent myself worked hard to prepare for this moment and of course the next couple of days. As important I would also like to thank the many sponsors for supporting the conference that are on display next to the podium. There were two last minute sponsors that I will recognize now as they missed the poster, Eagle Ottawa by Lear and Twin City Hide.

We can look forward to a well esteemed speaker for the John Arthur Wilson Lecture, Mike Redwood, fifteen technical papers, lots of discussion related, lots of time getting reacquainted with old friends and meeting new ones. A great deal of this started yesterday on the golf course which is where so much business and fun takes place these days. Maybe I have this backwards, fun first. At least this is what all of the golfers I spoke with yesterday said to me when I asked how they did. The universal response was We Had Fun!

So, what is new with ALCA, well we have a new Executive Secretary Kristina Hall. Sad to say that Carol will be retiring shortly after so many years of dedicated service. We will partake in a cruise tonight to send Carol off on a high note as she sails away into retirement. In the meantime, please extend a hello to Kristina who will likely be very close to Carol throughout the convention, learning the ins and outs of what this conference and association is all about. Another new item is the attendance of many additional members of the Leather and Hides Council of America (LHCA). President Steve Sothmann and Vice President Kevin Latner along with approximately another dozen or so members are in attendance. First considered at last year's ALCA conference it seemed to make sense to extend an invite to the LHCA as we share so many interests, convictions, members as well as our new Executive Secretary.

A common theme at conferences focusing on Leather is sustainability which is very much the flavor of this year's conference and for good reason. The leather industry continues to be threatened as it is often unfavorably portrayed even though it truly begins as a byproduct of the meat industry. A majority of the papers directly or indirectly have sustainability in their titles. Other papers include a focus on specific concerns like alternatives to chemistries once thought to be safe and next generation chemistries developed to improve leather's performance. Lastly there are also a group of papers that examine the way leather is manufacture attempting to account for an improved overall process through traceability. I can't say that I was ever at a leather conference that did not have papers devoted to this important topic. Taken together all the papers can be considered to have the betterment of the leather industry as a focal point.

Are we preaching to the choir? I offer that good science makes for a strong defense and being informed about the critical nuances is something that needs to be continually reinforced since it can be very complicated and is always evolving. Positive, informed messaging is the minimum everyone dedicated to this industry should be able to do at every turn. Participating in conferences, whether speaking or listening is a great way to stay informed and the ensuing dialog is invaluable. As we did last year, let's have an open and lively dialog. Let's listen and ask questions. Thanks.