

Week Four (April 6, 2016)



J. Franklin Gelzer

The company limited itself to casualty and workers compensation claims in those days, with **Jim Crawford** working long hours as much from necessity as choice. He managed the Atlanta office, called on insurance companies, tracked each office's operations, solved problems and did all of the training himself. Eventually the growth continued and Birmingham, Alabama opened in 1947 followed by Miami, Tallahassee, and West Palm Beach in Florida. In 1947, **Frank Gelzer** was brought in to manage the Atlanta branch while Jim Crawford turned his attention to the company as a whole, beginning the company's first home office. Needing a way to guide his employees' decisions as the company grew, in 1948, Jim Crawford penned "General Memorandum No. 1," a concise document that powerfully set forth the guiding principles of the company and is still cited today. It has endured as the central document of the company's philosophy, giving employees the necessary insight to make unassisted correct decisions, making Jim Crawford's presence felt from afar. It contained two prime characteristics of service that Jim Crawford felt strongly about, "To turn out a top-quality job - always" followed by "To report promptly, accurately and concisely." From Crawford & Company, insurance companies got adjustments that were done thoroughly and correctly. Whether settled or denied, the adjusting was accurate, cases were worked doggedly, and matters were concluded in a timely manner. Accuracy and timeliness – top quality, promptly – were the watchwords of the early Crawford & Company. Jim Crawford knew these principles were the keys to his success, and he made "Top Quality, Promptly" his company's slogan for many years.

Growth continued into Tampa, Florida; and Columbia, South Carolina; then North Carolina added to the territory with Greensboro, Charlotte, and Raleigh opening in 1948. Pushing west to Mississippi in 1949, we opened Jackson, Mississippi and Montgomery, Alabama in the same year. By the end of the decade, Crawford & Company had 24 offices in seven states in the U.S.

The Wind in the Sails...

Jim Crawford did not invent the notion of independent claims adjusting, nor was his first office in Columbus the first independent adjusting firm. These facts raise the question of why Crawford & Company quickly grew and expanded, while other established firms did not. The answer speaks to Crawford's ambition, but more so, to his genius. Crawford found a vacuum waiting to be filled, and had the drive and confidence to fill it. Most independent claims services after WWII were apparently not thinking in national or even regional terms. Most seemed content to compete for business in their local communities, not seeking the benefits and difficulties of expansion.

The early success and quick growth of Crawford & Company can be attributed to the ambitions of Jim Crawford, his realization that quality case work needed to be given, his ground-breaking approach to compensating his managers and field adjusters, and his resourcefulness in making billing a fair and justifiable process. But there is another factor that helped fuel the company's progress. Part of the Jim Crawford genius was his realization that claims adjusters at that time did not enjoy a good reputation, and correcting that stigma was a path to success.

Claims adjusters then were seen by many as a kind of private eye for the insurance company, a character whose loyalties, intentions and ethics were subject to question. His remedy for the adjuster's image was a strong emphasis on professionalism and appearance. A fedora (hat) and briefcase would become required items for Crawford & Company adjusters. Also hiring good, sharp men who could project a professional appearance complemented the image he was building for his company – that of an exacting, accountable, eminently fair organization which had as its hallmark high quality service at a reasonable price. Although examined separately, none of these Crawford innovations seem particularly revolutionary, though for their times they were. But taken collectively, Jim Crawford's innovations created a synergy of disparate elements that set Crawford & Company apart from its competitors, giving the market it pursued a kind of service that was unparalleled.



The home office began expanding in the 1950s, but all personnel could still fit easily in one group photo!

This is the home office staff in 1953. Back row (l to r), Bob Chaffin, Gordon Dimagan, Jim Crawford, Ed Adams, Michael Lane, Leonard Hammond, Andy Robertson. Middle row: Mary Nell Sullivan, Gerry Bradshaw, Frances Strickland, Jean Williams, Charlie Freeman, William Whitsett. Front row: Merrill Rigsby, Virginia Crawford, Lorena Boss, Hazel Williams, Juanita Crawford and Louise Rigsby.

THE EARLY YEARS • THE EARLY YEARS • THE EARLY YEARS • THE EARLY YEARS • THE EARLY YEARS

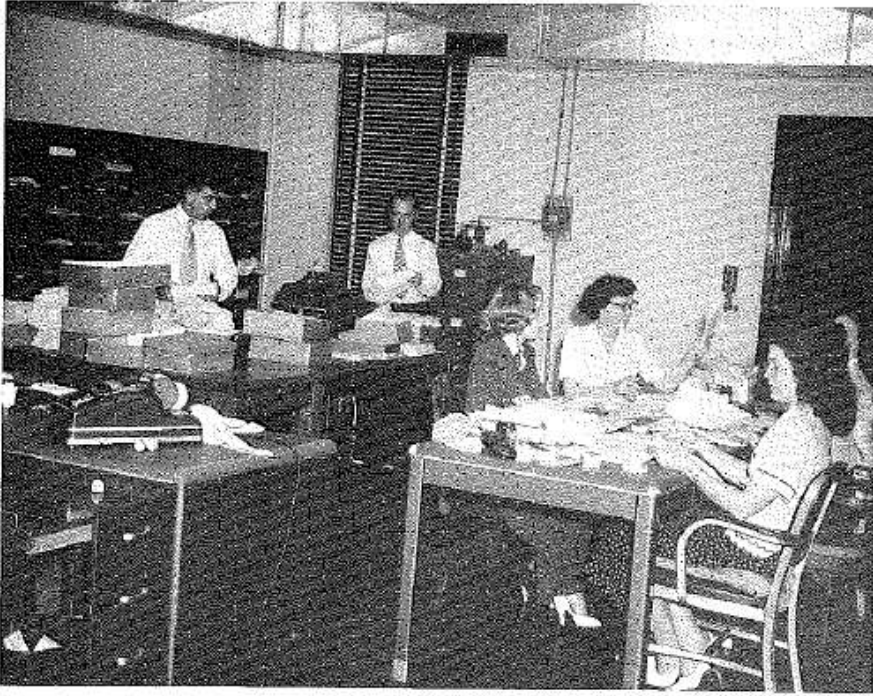
Building for the Future



This is what a company president looks like. Color him Andy Robertson.

ANDY ROBERTSON

Jim Crawford liked to see things happen almost as much as to make things happen, and his great resourcefulness always led him to make full use of any tools at his disposal. So, it is not surprising that **Andy Robertson**, Crawford's second in command at the time, soon learned that the down side of offering a good idea to Jim Crawford was that if it were accepted, he instantly had a new job responsibility. In 1950, while Andy and Jim were traveling by car to one of the field offices, Andy off-handedly remarked that with offices opening fairly regularly, the company might get more business if it provided customers with a small directory of all Crawford locations. "That's a great idea!" boomed Crawford. "Do it." The project evolved into Crawford's desire to include photographs of staff at each office, as well as phone numbers, addresses and (Jim) Crawford's Theory of Operation – a definitive statement of his business philosophy. In this manner the first "Red Book" came to be in 1950, so called because of its vibrantly red cover, designed so it would fit into the breast pocket of a man's suit coat. It turned out to be a huge success, "because we included our hourly and mileage rates, our principles – everything a prospective customer would want to know - it brought assignments from companies that had never used us before." Although not the plan at the time, the Red Book has been reprinted since 1950. The first Red Book had a press run of less than 1,000 copies. In 1991, the Red Book press run was 7,000; in 2008, it was 12,000; and in 2012, 15,000 Red Books were printed. Now, to keep up with moves, additions and changes, the company directories are also available on-line.



Top: That same year (1950) somebody had the bright idea of publishing a "Red Book", and we worked the whole staff 'til the wee small hours getting the darn things stuffed and stamped!

And, finally, at two o'clock in the morning, Freeman and Robertson started to the post office with the last load! (Andy's back still hurts when it rains.)



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- The first Red Book was designed to fit the breast pocket of a suit coat; the photographs of each branch office's staff included everyone, but only the managers and adjusters were identified.