



Famed Flashbacks

Ammer, Bradley feted by Crans

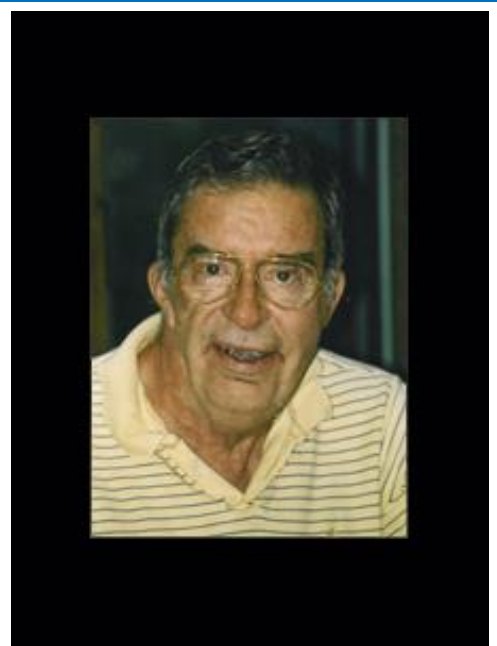
Call it the ABCs of mentoring healthcare supply chain excellence

By Fred W. Crans

SCHAUMBURG, IL (May 5, 2025) – Whether by alphabetical accident or operational design, the first person to be inducted into Bellwether League Foundation’s Healthcare Supply Chain Leadership Hall of Fame was Dr. Dean S. Ammer. His induction profile reads:

Dean S. Ammer, Ph.D., is regarded by many as the father of healthcare materials management. A prolific author, he wrote frequently about the issues confronting the healthcare industry.

As a professor at Northeastern University (NU) in Boston, Massachusetts, he served first as Acting Director in 1961 and then Director for the Bureau of Business and Economic Research from 1962 onwards, taking the BBER towards even larger projects involving long-term international economic studies, automation studies and the publication of a monthly newsletter for businesses involved in the NU Cooperative Education program. The Bureau was



Dean S. Ammer, Ph.D., Bellwether Class of 2008

created to "...make studies and conduct research into the problems of New England business development, expansion of the New England market for New England industry...and investigations into special problems of individual business concerns..." (NU Review, Nov/Dec. 1939, Vol. 1, No. 2).

Dr. Ammer developed his concepts for improving hospital purchasing and materials management from his work and early leadership to the BBER in the early 1960s. His efforts, writings and speaking engagements led to considerable management interest in purchasing effectiveness. In particular, he framed materials management as an organizational concept offering significant potential benefits to hospitals. He predicted that materials management would be viewed as a profit center for leading healthcare providers, and that new corporate positions would be created for materials managers. These supply chain executives would become a key part of the leadership for their organizations.

Dr. Ammer established and published "Hospital Purchasing Management" for many years as part of the activities of the Hospital Purchasing Institute, Inc., a healthcare consulting company he formed. The rationale for his Institute was based on the concepts of materials management advocated by Dr. Ammer. Specifically, his vision was that materials management should provide for the integration of related materials functions including purchasing, receiving, inventory control and management and distribution to provide cost-effective delivery of materials and services to customers throughout the organization.

Dr. Ammer's education was in industrial engineering and economics. These fields gave him a solid foundation for his evaluation of trends and impacts on rising healthcare costs and provided the basis for one of his early books titled: Hospital Materials Management – Neglect and Inefficiency Promote High Costs. Industry response to this treatise led Dean to actively promote hospital materials management as a profession. Dr. Ammer advocated that hospitals should centralize their purchasing, distribution and warehousing functions in a manner comparable to that followed by other industries to achieve operational efficiency. He recommended that hospitals should use standardized inventory control and receiving operations as a means to becoming more effective and efficient.

Although he died in late 1999, Dr. Ammer's publications and influence are still quoted today as many of his early works captured the attention of hospital administrators as foundations for optimizing supply chain management performance.

In 2020, a year defined by a devastating world-wide pandemic, Bellwether League Foundation implemented an award aimed at supply chain professionals in mid-career – beyond the realm of Future Famer consideration but not yet ready for a Hall-of-Fame Bellwether career reflection. *[Editor's Note: BLF's original Ammer award designation went to entire departments assessed by a team of Bellwether Hall of Famers themselves five years earlier before redirecting the honor to active supply chain professionals.]*

Well, it just so happened that around the latter half of the 2010 decade, a new comet was flashing across the Healthcare Supply Chain sky. His name was Dr. Randy V. Bradley. Like Ammer, he is a Ph.D., his degree being in Management of Information Technology and Innovation. Also, like Ammer, Bradley teaches at the university level as an Associate Professor of Supply Chain and Information Systems Management at the Haslam College of Business at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In 2020, Randy Bradley became the initial winner of the Bellwether League's Ammer Honoree Award.

I can't remember where I was when I first heard Dr. Bradley speak, but I do remember that he held my attention like a minister. His fact-filled delivery of information was laced with the spirit and energy of a Black evangelist. The things he spoke about were outside the 50-plus years of "same ole, same ole" that filled and shaped every conference every year. He talked about things from the non-healthcare world and the impact they had on it.

In short, he kicked open the cocoon and let the butterfly of new insights out. I was hooked from the start, just like the hundreds and thousands of others who heard him speak.



Randy V. Bradley, Ph.D., CPHIMS, FHIMSS,
Ammer Honoree Class of 2020

In the ensuing years, I have become very well acquainted with Dr. Bradley. I spend time with him whenever I can – often following him around like a shameless groupie. I have never seen the same presentation twice and I always learn something. He has been a guest on my company's podcast ("Taking the Supply Chain Pulse") on two occasions and he never disappoints.

In late February, I, along with my colleague Aimee Watson at the St. Onge Co., visited Dr. Bradley in two of his classes at the Haslam College of Business. One was a senior-level Supply Chain class, and the other was an MBA Consulting class. I was eager to attend for a few reasons. First, it had been several years since I had stepped foot on a university campus, much less one with the reputation of the Haslam College of Business. Second, I wanted to see what the next generation of supply chain leaders looked like and what I would have learned if I had actually studied Supply Chain Operations at the University of Miami instead of majoring in History. And, finally, I wanted to see Dr. Randy Bradley in action yet again.

I was not disappointed. We met with students in the undergraduate class preparing for an upcoming exam. Dr. Bradley told them exactly what to prepare for and warned them not to try to "write their way around" the questions, but to answer them directly. When given the opportunity to speak, I told the class that I was glad not to have had Dr. Bradley for a professor at "The U" since I wrote my way around virtually every exam while I was there. Of course, that skill and talent enable me to write this "Famed Flashbacks" column for BLF.

The MBA Consulting class was especially interesting. The group was working on a comprehensive analysis of a major foreign automaker. Dr. Bradley had them do a dry run of their upcoming team presentation for us and told them to save 5-10 minutes for questions from Aimee and me at the end. Like true graduate students, they made certain that their presentation ran to the end of the class so there was no time for questions.

I found the experience impressive.

At the end of both classes, Aimee and I got to connect with the students. Many came up to us and indicated a real interest in exploring a career in the healthcare supply chain.

All in all, it was an excellent experience – one that was highlighted by my inaugural presentation of the Fred Crans Excellence in Healthcare Supply Chain Pants Award. Keep your eyes peeled and you may see Dr. Bradley and me sporting our duds at a future event.

In the ensuing weeks, Dr. Bradley had announced that he will be accepting a new role as the Dean of the Jack C. Massey College of Business at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. Without a doubt, he will be putting his special stamp on several generations of business and supply chain leaders in the future ...

... and maybe he will wear his FCEHSCPA trousers to work every now and then. After all, Jack Massey also knew how to use branding to turn heads and influence behaviors for success.

Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020, has more than five decades of healthcare supply chain experience and service in a variety of executive leadership roles that spans military and private-sector communities as well as provider, supplier, group purchasing organization and consultant segments. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of Bellwether League Foundation as Outreach Ambassador and as Healthcare Business Development Executive for St. Onge Co. For more, visit Bellwether League Foundation's web site at <https://www.bellwetherleague.org/>.



Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020