

# EDITORIAL

## Olde Bokes

*Eric E. Ungar, Contributing Editor*

*For out of olde feldes, as men seith  
Cometh all this newe corn from yeer  
to yere;  
And out of olde bokes, in good faith  
Cometh all this newe science that men  
lere*

Here is my translation, unfortunately losing the rhyme:

*As out of old fields, as man sows  
Comes all this new grain from year to  
year,  
So out of old books, in good faith  
Comes all this new science that man  
learns.*

I have been intrigued by Chaucer's remarkable insight ever since I first encountered this poem and have had this quotation on my *ex libris* for many years, gracing the inside front pages of most of my books. I developed an affection for Chaucer in high school English literature class, where our teacher mentioned that our text book omitted the bawdy portions of the *Canterbury Tales*, causing me to borrow the complete *Tales* from the library and to delve into old English.

I expect that many of you and I are in the same boat in that you have a warm feeling for some of your old books – books from which you studied and books you used in your work – books with which you would like not to part. Let me tell you about a few of my favorites.

I am nostalgic about *Heat Transmission* (H. McAdams; McGraw-Hill 1942), which

served me well in my first paid consulting project while I was still in graduate school. This project dealt with petroleum refinery equipment, and the book was a font of data I needed on flows and heat transfer in pipes and on properties of fluids of many compositions, with much information given in nomogram form.

A nomogram, as the older readers of this magazine may know, consists of a number of lines (either straight or curved), each line graduated with numbers corresponding to a variable in a formula – and arranged so that by placing a straight-edge to connect the values of two variables one can read the values of other parameters along other lines. I later learned how such nomograms can be constructed from the rare *The Nomogram* (H. J. Allcock, J. R. Jones, J. G. J. Michel; Pitman, 1941).

And then there is *A Short Table of Integrals* (B. O. Peirce, Ginn and Co., 1929), whose rich and handy collection of formulas has helped me to carry out numerous analyses.


Another one of my favorites is *Theory of Mechanical Vibrations* (Kin N. Tong; Wiley 1960), which covers the principles of structural vibrations in great generality with beautiful mathematical elegance.

I could go on and on, but I'll limit myself to mentioning the very handy *Formulas for Stress and Strain* (Raymond J. Roark, McGraw-Hill), to my 1954 edition of which I have referred many times – and the much

enlarged 2012 edition of which (three times thicker and 20 times more expensive) is now on my shelf.

But what prompted me to write this editorial is that I am facing a dilemma. I am now more than two decades beyond having flunked retirement at the canonical retirement age of 65 and need to face the fact that I may soon reach the point where I'll really retire and need to downsize. Then I'll need to decide what do to with my books, as well as with my small collection of slide rules (of which I have one that is four inches long, one that is three ft long, and a circular one that I had long coveted).

I am inclined to hand books that include my work and books signed by their authors to members of my family, who most likely will have them collect dust on a shelf. And I'll offer the rest to my present colleagues. But I anticipate that neither they nor the few engineers in my family likely will have much interest in most of these books. After all, most are not new, may not be fully up to date, and primarily focus on vibration and related topics.

What could I do usefully with the remaining unclaimed books? I would dearly love to find a good home for these old friends (books and slide rules) – a home where they would be appreciated and, ideally, put to good use. I would appreciate any suggestions and advice. 

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