Larry Miles, Father Of Value Analysis
by Pat Bryan

How did a youngster from a Nebraska farm come to develop an engineering technique that is respected and practiced by his peers in the U.S. and a dozen foreign lands? Be the recipient of a whole bookshelf of medals of commendation; author a textbook that has been translated into twelve languages? Larry Miles of Royal Oak, this modest but impressive man, took a few turns his road of life during his early working days, but for the last 40 years has not deviated from his chosen course.

His premise that seems simple in theory but becomes complicated in practice, consists of analyzing in creative detail all possible means of reducing the manufacturing cost of a product while maintaining its quality and functioning ability. Too often manufacturers are willing to settle for cutting corners to put out cheapened products. Larry's credo stresses both quality and proper cost.

Not until he had tried out his early working wings as a high school principal, then as a bank manager, did Larry start his career in value analysis. He was impressed by Miles' early successes, his superiors assigned him twelve men whom he trained carefully in value analyzing techniques, and who, in turn, were to train 1,000 men a year. "Value analysis technique is not for everybody," Larry stresses. "It is a technique for smart, effective, productive people." The first training course that he taught after endless hours of planning, lasted one month of full working days. This was in 1952. Over the years it has been shortened to three, then two weeks and now is standardized to one intensive week of studying fundamentals. "We don't just train engineers, but business men, buyers, outstanding people in their respective departments."

Although Larry is still constantly invited to take part in various courses, he only occasionally makes a single presentation.

Trying to put across low cost, high quality ideas to any government official would have frustrated a less dedicated man than Miles, but he persevered, remembering always that the government is us, the taxpayers.

It did happen, however, that Admiral Legget, then Chief of the Bureau of Ships of the Navy, heard of Larry's concepts and asked to see him. The Admiral was so impressed by Miles' techniques, arrived soon after the Society of Value Engineers had been formed by Larry, who had long sensed the importance of gathering together a group of dedicated engineering authorities. Starting with about 50 members in 1950, the numbers have now swelled to over 1,500 members, most of whom have been trained in value engineering and all of whom want to spread knowledge of it. "It should be much larger," says its founder, "but not enough is known about it. We're a bunch of techni cians, not communicators. Of course, many practice it who are not members of the Society. At General Electric alone, we have trained 10,000."

Although he is now an alert and vigorous 79, Larry does not attend most of the Society's quarterly board meetings, but he always enjoys the annual September gathering that takes place at his home, "Sedgefield" in Royal Oak. The other members would miss it only if they had an unavoidable engagement in Timbuktu, or were combating a horrendous disease, because Larry's wife, Eleanor, an extraordinarily capable home and kitchen executive, lavishes gourmet meals and overflowing hospitality on the guests. The lady, a widow and successful business woman who when married her husband fifteen years ago, has, with mutual happiness,
value as a living concept." About
25 board members, many wives
and occasional international
visitors delight in their warm
hospitality.

Several prominent Japanese
industrialists who have visited
the Miles at "Sedgefield" have
become fast friends, nevertheless,
Larry was surprised and
touched last fall by an invitation
to visit Japan and bestow an
award on the companies or
managers of departments who
had been most successful in
cutting costs without sacrificing
quality during the preceding year.
This honor was named in
perpetuity, not for one of their
own country men, but for
Lawrence Delos Miles, the father
of value analysis in recompensation
of the enormous contributions
he had made to their present
day production of quality
products.

His eyes sparkle when he
describes how he and Eleanor
savored the feel of visiting
royalty. "They have customs
that just melt your heart. For
instance, at a beautiful reception
with food and drink of all kinds,
nobody could come in after us.
Everybody was standing, not
eating or shipping. Then, as we
entered, the host clapped his
hands once and the whole group
broke into a roar of applause.
It took my breath away. At the
end of the party nobody could
leave before us."

The award presentation was
also arranged with Japanese
finesse. "It took place on a
large stage where Eleanor and I,
the seven recipients and other
honored guests were seated. An
industrial leader introduced each
winner, then a beautiful young
girl dressed in the traditional
kimono, picked up the medal
from the table, bowed, gave it to
me, bowed to the recipient and I
presented it to him. Both Eleanor
and I were invited to give
speeches. Eleanor likes to add
the memory of another evening when
they were guests of the Japanese
Value Engineering Ass'n. at a
10 course "Japanese dinner",
sitting on the floor, eating with
chopsticks and served by ex-

never separated, the two of them
did journey to Brazil last spring
to take part in a value analysis
program. At the end of the
session, a telegram of thanks ex-
pressed the group's sentiment:
"We have not only learned a
lot about value analysis but also
about human relations, because
our people are unanimous to
say that you both are an example
to follow, as you are the nicest
couple they have met."

But not all of the voluminous
mail that comes to Larry at his
retirement Shangri La on Max-
more Creek, has to do with exotic
excursions. He receives and
publishes information about

Thus Larry Miles, who in his
youth stirred his finger in the
vortex of big industry, has ex-
perienced the enormous satisfac-
tion of seeing his efforts de-
velop into a self-perpetuating
lidal wave that has benefited
producers and consumers the
world over.

1 value analysis achievements
throughout his own land as well.
He points out that there is
now a U.S. law requiring that a
value analysis study must be
made of the accepted bid for very
large government expenditures.
Only recently he was sent
information about an enormous
dam building project near Walla
Walla, Washington, for which a
bid of $24,000,000 requiring
three years of work was secured,
but a team of value analysis
engineers studied the
specifications in minute detail and
finally "made a quantum for-
ward jump in the art of dam
construction by building it for
$14,000,000 in 20 months time
instead of three years.

10 At a banquet in Japan held in his
honor, Larry is fed with chopsticks.