

JAUME PUIGBÓ, PAST CHAIRMAN OF THE CONVERTER COMMITTEE

One of the first congresses in which I participated was held in Tunisia in 1979. Our company, which I believe was the first Spanish member of FINAT, had already joined a few years previously, but it was my brother Josep who usually attended the meetings. In my opinion, FINAT at that time was an English gentlemen's club and we always toasted "to the ladies". I remember having dinner at a restaurant with an English lady at my table and she almost fainted when a complete fish, including the head and tail, was served for dinner. She left the bones in another dish near a window and a cat came and got them. I was with my export manager, a frequent visitor to Arabic countries so, when the beautiful belly dancer asked for a partner, he volunteered promptly and he turned into the star of the congress.

Later I became an active member and served as chairman of the Converter committee and the Barcode committee and was also a member of the Technical and Marketing committees and a member of the Board. As someone has said, the more you put into FINAT, the more you get out. During those years, the Converters committee took place in different cities and we were invited by the member residing in that city to visit their factory, so we learnt from each other and had fun and good meals. Peter Schiller, Peter Lange and many others are still good friends from those meetings.

The EPSMA code that we helped to develop in the Barcode committee was one of the first implementations of the EAN 128 code used in logistics and it was very new then. In fact, one of the companies of our group, CYG, a supplier and also member of FINAT, was one of the first companies, if not the first, to establish the EPSMA code on its rolls and pallets. I also remember the FINAT tour of the US. Unfortunately a rare wildcat strike in Amsterdam left me

without my cases having to travel two weeks in the US from cold Vermont to warm Florida. The cases chased me all round the US as we kept moving from city to city at a frantic pace and I only got them three days after I returned to Barcelona. It was an experience of how to optimize the very few clothes I bought in the US. With the Olympics in Barcelona I was able to get some tickets and a small group of FINAT friends came to Barcelona.

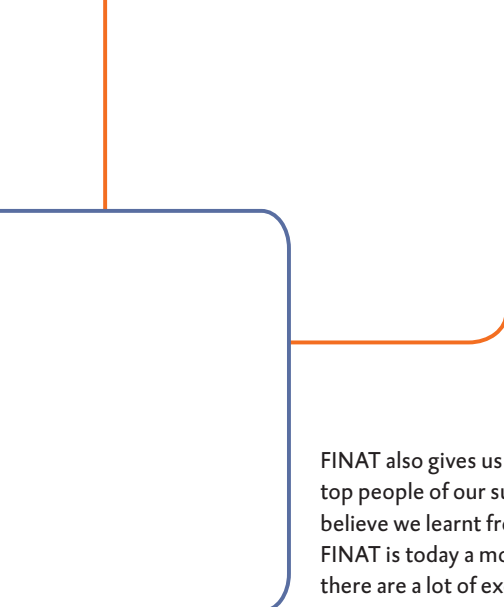
The several FINAT meetings in Spain must have helped to develop the Spanish membership. I remember the Congress in Barcelona where we had the gala dinner at a train station and I invited the Minister of Industry of the Catalan Government for the opening. Perhaps the audience didn't like his pun when he mentioned that FINAT in Catalan means dead person!

Well, 2008 will be the 50th anniversary of FINAT, but also the 10th anniversary of Anfec, the Spanish label association, which, with over 150 members, is one of the strongest national label associations in Europe. Iban Cid, José Luis Mercé and myself, among others, helped to found it. I am sure that if our association has enjoyed such success it is, in part, from the good lessons that we learnt from FINAT.

We at Sinel Systems (formerly Caposa), have got many new things from FINAT: friends, education, connections and business. We have had opportunities to distribute or license products thanks to being members. In 1993 we established the Concordia Group, an alliance currently of 5 companies (Arca, Auraprint, Bandfix, Labelpak and Sinel) within which we exchange technical and market information, we collaborate in some projects and we speak together to some common suppliers. Again, without FINAT, this would not have happened.



Harry van Eijk presents a labelling award to Jaume Puigbó



FINAT also gives us the opportunity to speak with the top people of our suppliers in a relaxed setting, I believe we learnt from them and they learnt from us. FINAT is today a more professional association and there are a lot of excellent people contributing in the various committees. By accident, I am back on the Board and enjoying it once more.

There are many challenges facing the industry and FINAT in particular. The world is becoming more global, the markets in the West are reaching maturity, the fast pace of technological development puts a heavy toll of continuous investment on converters, whose margins are each day lower. With constantly

increasing costs of labour, energy, etc. and the demands of end users for shorter runs, converters are forced to make their operations much more efficient with lean manufacturing techniques and new presses. The environment will be an important issue for the future, particularly in what concerns the liner. Some companies have already presented solutions that, so far, have not been successful, but I bet that, in the coming years, some new invention will appear in the market, or, at least, we will establish a good recycling scheme.

Jaume Puigbò
