Last May I attended a symposium at the Kellogg School of Business at Northwestern University, honoring James P. Worthy. Jim Worthy was the first Austin Scholar at Northwestern, later VP of Personnel (i.e., Human Resources) at Sears, and one of the founders of the consulting firm Cresap, McCormick and Paget in Chicago, as well as a professor at The Kellogg School.

Jim is a friend and colleague of over 25 years now, and also a generation older than I. So together we span a lot of years and a lot of experiences in human resource management.

It was a wonderful experience to be there and listen to Jim’s colleagues trace not only his contributions, but the evolution of thought and practice in management covering more than half a century. The final presentation was by Alfred Chandler, Professor Emeritus at Harvard and an eminent business historian. Dr. Chandler, spoke on “Future Challenges for Organizational Studies”.

It was especially fascinating to me that as the speakers traced over that period our evolutionary understanding of what represents the best in management practices, they were outlining basic principles that underpin the Total Quality Management concept. No one of these “Emeritii” ever used the phrase TQM -- not once -- for the simple reason that TQM is a recent (at least in the frame of reference of that group!) addition to our lexicon.

Well, I was bursting at the seams to make this point -- but it was a fairly formal occasion, and besides my wife Mary was on alert -- she could feel me twitching.

There is a God, however, because someone else asked Dr. Chandler if in the broad sweep of business history TQM was probably just another fad.

Dr. Chandler clearly wasn't versed in TQM and gave a somewhat ambiguous answer. I couldn't hold back any longer. I said that afternoon and I say to you this evening, that if there is any validity to the research, the knowledge and the
experience we have gained over the past half century in human resource management, TQM is not a fad -- it is, in fact, a unifying concept, the essence of what superior management is all about.

But if “TQM” is a mere fad in the eyes of U.S. business or we allow it to become so, we are in worse shape in the global economic competition that the most doleful forecasters would have us believe.

It is particularly noteworthy that the occasion of which I spoke was not a statistical symposium. TQM is more than measures -- MTFB or MTTR -- more than tools such as PFA or techniques such as SQC. TQM is a way of managing an approach to the process of managing, resources, particularly human resources.

Let me tell you just a little bit about Control Data’s TQM experiences.

Control Data’s first formal quality effort started the same year the company was founded in 1957. The Quality program was largely a matter of inspection and rework to assure compliance with a contract with the U.S. navy.

Over the years we probably made all the mistakes in quality it’s possible to make. We had involvement teams, quotas on management to perform PFA’s, zero defect propaganda campaigns, a campaign called “Bright Ideas”, we even had a mandatory minimum of 40 hours of training every year for every employee -- which wasn’t a bad idea of course. But it also wasn’t Total Quality. In short we were taking what someone has called the “Happy Meal approach -- everything tied up in a neat little box, quickly consumed, totally satisfying. By 1984, with Dr. Deming’s help -- not consulting help -- just pointing out how hopeless we were seriously embarked on our TQM journey.

What did it do for my company? It turned a billion dollar loser into a valuable asset. In 1985 we identified our disk drive business as one we did not wish to pursue long term. The problem was we couldn’t sell it -- it was too big to just shut down and lost $300 million that year, had missed a crucial step in the industry MDD product evolution and had reliability factors half that of its competitors’ products. Thanks to TQM, four years later it was the leader in the
OEM MDD industry in profitability and quality and realized more than 500 million dollars for Control Data.

One other story -- a little over a year ago Control Data's GSG was awarded an $850M contract by the Canadian government to upgrade the country's national emergency and military communication system. There was a note of surprise in the media coverage of that award. There would not have been had they known that this organization was one of the earliest and most aggressive in embracing TQM.

Consider these brief vignettes from the "Quality Journey" of GSG over the six years from 1984 to 1990.

*AYK -14 Mean Time Between Failures of 1100 to 1800 hours compared to a contractual agreement of 250 hours, while product cost dropped 40%, and the number of shipments increased an order of magnitude. The Navy set this computer as the Navy Standard Airborne computer and publicly claims this computer to be the most reliable system in the entire fleet.

*Gov't Systems worked very closely with the Dept. of Defense in developing the DoD's TQM; Jack Strickland, Dr. Richard Stimson, Frank Dourghty and a team of others responsible for the development of TQM for application within the Federal Government as well as Federal Government contractors used CD's TQMP as their model. In his many hundreds of presentations across the country over the past several years, Jack Strickland has held Control Data Gov't Systems up as an example of the result of taking quality seriously, even in the face of financial difficulties.

*Monthly TQMP reviews were held at all levels in the company, from the Management Board (The President's Staff), to a review that crossed the Strategic Business Units, to reviews held internal to each SBU. The purpose of these sessions when they first began in 1985, was to act as a disciplinary step to make sure that everyone was picking up the flag and carrying it .... in very short order however, the organizations had success stories to tell and these sessions became a place to share and get positive recognition and support.
TQM works -- as a concept and as a practical management tool.

Unless and until you understand, have practiced and experienced TQM, your MBA, (if you want management success) is about as useful to you as an automobile without an engine.

We don't want that, not the Dean, not the faculty, not the Board of Visitors. That's why we're inaugurating this session -- which by the way is just one step in what will be an evolving TQM journey at Fuqua.

And to help give us our start on that journey, we are truly fortunate to have Mitch Manning with us.
BIOGRAPHY: Mitchell W. Manning

Mitch Manning is Section Head of Employee Involvement Administration for Burroughs Wellcome Co. in Greenville, North Carolina. Mitch holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from East Carolina University. Mitch has been with Burroughs Wellcome for 21 years, working first in chemical processing and instrumentation validation.

As an Employee Involvement Manager, Mitch has become very involved in issues of Total Quality Management, both in North Carolina and nationally. He is a Charter Member of the Program Committee for the North Carolina Annual Quality Conference, Charter Member of the North Carolina Quality Leadership Awards Committee, and First Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Association for Quality and Participation, headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Mitch has also become one of the country's leading promoters (and best speakers) on the subject of quality. Mitch was a Guest of the Secretary of Commerce at the Presentation Ceremony for the 1990 and 1991 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Winners. He was a Presenter and Panelist for the Fourth Annual Conference on Federal Quality Improvement sponsored by the President's Council on Management Improvement and the Federal Quality Institute. Mitch was Program Chair for the 1990 North Carolina Annual Quality Conference. He's a member of the faculty of the Association for Quality and Participation. These represent but a few of Mitch Manning's contributions to quality management.