

Our Whole Civilization's Now Wound Up in Tape

By HAL BOYLE

NEW YORK (AP) — Everybody complains about the red tape in government.

But we're getting to the point where our entire civilization seems to be held together by one type of tape or another.

In slightly more than a quarter of a century tape making has undergone a tremendous revolution, becoming a 200 million dollar a year business. Some 300 kinds of tape are now made for household, shop and industrial use, not including the legendary red tape of bureaucracy.

"Some 150 kinds have been developed since the end of the second world war," said W. E. Zimmerman, an executive of the Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing Co., which last year turned out 2½ million miles of tape. "This is enough to reach five times to the moon and back, although, of course, this hasn't been done yet."

"But, whether he realizes it or not," said Zimmerman, "the average man now uses some kind of specialized tape from the cradle to the grave."

He isn't kidding. Before a mother-to-be enters a delivery room, the nurses use autoclaving tape to mark bundles of towels and dressings.

The hospital employs acetate film tape to cover and preserve

the baby's footprints on his birth record. There is shoe tape in his first footgear.

An acetate fibre tape helps bind his school writing pads. Tape is used to seal the box of candy he buys his first girl.

The rest of his life he is surrounded by multiplying types of tape. They are in his home, his car, his television set, his golf clubs. The insurance agent even uses a mending tape to attach riders to his policies.

When he dies, he is buried in clothes made with the help of textile tapes. The florist uses cellophane tape to fashion his funeral

sprays and bouquets. The hearse in which he makes his last journey has electrical tape around its wiring. And when the tombstone maker gets around to making his headstone he uses a rubberized stencil tape as he sandblasts the name and epitaph.

The tape industry began to come out of the doldrums in 1927 with the development of a masking tape used for painting automobiles. But it hit its real stride when modern cellophane tape appeared on the scene in 1930.

"The only limit to the field we can see is the imagination," said Zimmerman. "We're looking forward now to a time when we'll have at least 500 specialized kinds of tape, but we may go on from there."

"Most of the ideas come from customers. They use a tape for something it isn't suitable for, then ask us if we can't develop a kind that is."



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