

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

April 2002

## Industry Veterans Speak

### On the Past, Present & Future of the Components Industry: A Look at the History of the Industry by Melinda Caldwell

Some have quipped that one studies history in order to avoid repeating it. While this may be true to some degree, in the case of component industry history, another important reason to study it is to celebrate its progress and success, and to use it as a foundation for considering the future. One reason for January's meeting with Abner Yoder, Don Hershey, Roy Schiferl, Rip Rogers and Staton Douthit was to do just that. (See sidebar for more history on these industry veterans.)

All agreed that the industry would have never gotten off the ground without the leadership of the industry's plate suppliers. "When most of us got started, if it hadn't been for a big

#### HISTORY MEETING PARTICIPANTS:

Rip Rogers is a WTCA Past President (1989) and a 1992 WTCA Hall of Fame inductee. Rogers holds a degree in civil engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington. He began in the truss industry at Barns Lumber Company in 1960 and was made president of the company in 1980. When he retired in 2000, Rogers was a vice president of Trussway Ltd.

In 1963 Abner Yoder was a carpenter. He moved into the truss industry that year by purchasing a Gang-Nail franchise and starting Stark Truss Company. Yoder was President of Stark until 1999, when his son Steve took over the position. He is now the Chairman of the Board and CEO of the company.

Roy Schiferl started in the truss industry in 1965 by building trusses at night with a partner. The business grew rapidly and soon it became a full time operation. Schiferl is currently the operations manager for Woodinville Lumber, Inc., and the representative to the WTCA Board of Directors for the Northwest Truss Fabricators Association (NWTFA).

Don Hershey, the CEO of the Imperial Group, Inc. is a WTCA Past President (1992-93) and 1995 WTCA Hall of Fame inductee. In 1962 Hershey was a general contractor. He began working nights at Imperial Components doing the cut lists and soon he became the night shift supervisor. Hershey eventually bought the company.

Staton Douthit was the first President of WTCA (1983) and is a 1986 WTCA Hall of Fame inductee. He began his career at Kemp Lumber Co. as a bookkeeper. In 1962, he and two partners started Associated Truss Co. He became President/CEO of Associated Truss in 1969 and held that position until 1992 when he sold his interest and became a District Sales Manager for MiTek Industries Inc. until 1999. He now owns Douthit Consulting Services and was appointed Vice President General Manager and COO of Timber Tech Engineered Products on Feb. 1, 2002.

plate company, we probably wouldn't be in business," recalled Rogers.

Hershey agreed, "The salespeople from the different plate suppliers were the best teachers for me in the industry....I always looked at an interview with a salesman as an education....I felt I took more from the conversation than they took from me."

As the industry grew and organizations formed, value was also found in the forums that associations provide. Yoder commented that, "The Truss Plate Institute (TPI) was very instrumental in the beginning of our industry. The plate companies, because they controlled the software development and the engineering requirements, were a great source for us to draw from."

Likewise, the emergence of the Wood Truss Council of America (WTCA) in the early 1980s has also played an important role in the growth of the industry.

"WTCA is all of us working together and sharing ideas in order to further the advancement of each of our individual companies and our industry," Yoder explained.

"You have an obligation to put something back into the industry—the bigger you are, the bigger the obligation," remarked Rogers on the importance of involvement in an association. "You don't have the right to complain if you don't participate."

Hershey's memories of his involvement with WTCA hinge on the value of those who willingly participated: "I was impressed with those I worked with in WTCA because almost all of them were givers. They were successful in their own businesses and they wanted to give back to the industry that had made them successful."

Yoder summed up the success of the component industry quite accurately: "This industry has grown and become strong because of many great component companies working with many great plate suppliers. The joint effort of all of these people has made our industry what it is today."

It is this spirit of cooperation that will continue to make this industry great.

---

Look for more articles of this nature in future issues of SBC Magazine. This group provided us with valuable information on the development of the industry and the lessons they learned as participants in that development. SBC Staff looks forward to sharing more of their insights with our readers.

---

Copyright © 2002 by Truss Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. For permission to reprint materials from SBC Magazine, call 608/310-6706 or email [editor@sbcmag.info](mailto:editor@sbcmag.info).

The mission of Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC) is to increase the knowledge of and to promote the common interests of those engaged in manufacturing and distributing of structural building components to ensure growth and continuity, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. SBC will take a leadership role on behalf of the component industry in disseminating technical and marketplace information, and will maintain advisory committees consisting of the most knowledgeable professionals in the industry. The opinions expressed in SBC are those of the authors and those quoted solely, and are not necessarily the opinions of any of the affiliated associations (SBCC, WTCA, SCDA & STCA).