

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

April 2003

Editor's Message



The Incredible Value of Membership by Scott Arquilla

This issue of SBC Magazine includes the annual listing of the membership of WTCA, STCA and SCDA. I thank each of those companies, from the largest to the smallest, and everything in between, for supporting all of our industry organizations by renewing their membership again this year.

I have been attending Membership Committee meetings for the past seven years. Each year we review the members who have not renewed. Based on that meeting, the committee chair divides up the list for each committee member to make calls encouraging membership renewal. Taking on this task, we have found that peer-to-peer communication is the best approach to ensure people understand what our goals are. Still, there are companies that do not renew for their own reasons, including financial considerations or the recent sale of the company. In all the calls I have made, I have yet to hear a company say that our organization is not doing a good job for the industry or hasn't provided valuable publications for use by members or their customers. I feel quite strongly that we are doing our best to advance the engineered wood components industry and provide the best education for all manufacturers and ultimate users of components.

As I am writing this article, I have just returned from WTCA's Regional Workshop and Conference in Orlando, FL. While it didn't take much effort to convince me to attend, as I live in Chicago and the weather was far better in Florida, I was pleasantly surprised by the interest shown by those in attendance on the current issues facing component manufacturers. Staff member Stan Sias led group discussions on the many current issues. These included:

- Updates on the TPI Litmus Test and our partnership efforts.
- The status of the Lockton commercial insurance program.
- Sealed placement plan issues in Florida, North Carolina and Riverside County, CA.
- Our revised Truss Technology in Building (TTB) document, "Facts Regarding Mold on Wood Structural Building Components" and the new TTB "Builder Advisory Checklist for Minimizing Mold on Structural Building Components."
- ANSI/TPI/WTCA 4-2002, the newly updated design responsibilities document.
- Fire service education via the Carbeck Fire Performance of Wood Trusses CD.
- ANSI/TPI 1-2002, the new quality standard and its May 1, 2002 implementation date.
- IBC/IRC Code work with TPI (the bottom chord live load issue).
- Updates on the growing industry use of the new Truss Knowledge Online (TKO) technician training system and the new Truss Technology Workshops online for industry CEU's, available since August 1, 2002.

The group was lucky to have a number of individuals who were very familiar with these topics in attendance. They added tremendous perspective to the discussions with their personal

experiences and gave everyone new ideas to operate their businesses better. This is one reason why I enjoy participating with this organization; everyone I have met at all of our gatherings is very willing to share their wealth of knowledge and help make my business work better and be more profitable.

The primary value of membership for all of us is to provide a forum in which we can share our experiences. Annual dues go to fighting the many issues that attempt to tackle and handcuff our businesses both locally and nationally. Having attended WTCA board meetings for the past seven years and having served on the Executive Committee since 2000, I can't begin to tell you the list of activities that our membership's dues have allowed our staff to attend to and fight for on our behalf. In every matter, whether we've won or lost, we have expressed our industry's concerns, views and facts on these issues. We have always made our point and even those that have disagreed with us have sought out our opinion because of the professional manner in which we have told our story.

The most recent Softwood Lumber Agreement with Canada expired in March 2001. During its five-year existence, lumber prices rose and fell like the wind. Our industry was hurt when rapidly rising prices affected the fixed selling prices that our customers had contracts for. While most people on our side of the border were thankful the lumber quota went away, the countervailing duty and anti-dumping suit filed in April 2001 and resulting tariff brought Canadians into our component manufacturing markets with more incentive than ever before. This is due to their ability to circumvent the lumber tariff as the trade actions do not apply to value-added lumber products like trusses, wall panels, cabinets, windows or pallets that can be shipped into the U.S. tariff-free. Last summer, we helped form the U.S. Value-Added Wood Products Alliance, which sought to get the U.S. and Canada back to the bargaining table to resolve differences on the lumber issue and arrive at a long term solution.

As I write this, the Department of Commerce (DOC) and several Canadian provinces are engaged in intense meetings to solve this decades-old difference in U.S. and Canadian lumber policies. While we still prefer to have free trade rule, we recognize we are not the only ones at the bargaining table and dealing with that reality. Everyone present has his or her own opinions as to how we can come away with a satisfactory, long-term solution. The DOC now knows who we are because of our effort to promote the fact that U.S. value-added manufacturers were suffering because of this important loophole allowing Canadian manufacturers to avoid the tariff when shipping value-added products into the U.S. At the invitation of the DOC, WTCA Executive Committee member Dan Holland attended the initial CEO meeting and expressed our points of view. The ultimate resolution will hopefully aid our border state manufacturers, who have been hardest hit by the lumber dispute. Getting to the end result may not be perfect with an interim agreement that may still contain competitive advantages and disadvantages, but we are confident that our industry's voice has been heard. There now exists an understanding of our situation within the DOC and USTR as well as a concern in Congress over what will happen to the value-added market segment if these inequities continue unabated. My point in this discussion is that our component manufacturer and supplier members enabled us to engage and participate in the process through the continued support provided by annual dues, exhibiting and attending BCMC, purchasing publications and educational programs, and advertising in SBC Magazine. Without this continuous support, nothing would get accomplished.

Our membership dues allow staff to provide unyielding support services for those that desire assistance and allow us to pursue our industry's interests locally and nationally. We need membership to be engaged in educational activities, like promoting our online TTW's in the marketplace. We need membership to request the development of new TTBs to help advance their interests.

We need membership to empower individual manufacturers in the national, state and local political arena to ensure a strong voice in the process. We encourage our membership to share their formula for success with all manufacturers across the country by coming to meetings, sharing your experience in the articles we write in SBC, and by attending BCMC, our national networking activity. Being successful in an industry requires that each of us give a little back to that industry that prospered our lives. I hope each member gets far more back from WTCA than he or she currently pays in dues and time volunteered to help our industry grow and succeed.

Again, I thank each of our members for helping to make us better by renewing your membership this year. My sincere thanks go out to each and every member: regular, associate and professional, for their continued support. You have all allowed us to rally for improvements within our industry each and every day.

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