



Wtca Update

Birth & Re-birth: New Life at WTCA

by Kirk Grundahl, WTCA Executive Director

"All knowledge comes from experimentation."

—Richard Feynman, Nobel Prize winning physicist, 1961



In January, my wife Suzi will be giving birth to our first child together, joining our almost 22-year-old son Arik. I will be 49 years old when this baby is born and have had to "re-birth" quite a few of my plans and expectations for the next several years, knowing that this completely surprising new life will have a great impact on our lives.

WTCA is at the identical stage of its life—a renaissance for the third time. Over the last 14 years, we have had a very wise group of Board and Committee members who have overseen the significant change and growth of WTCA. Watching this, it is clear that WTCA's success is due to a singular focus of leadership who considers whether the work the association has undertaken is being done in the best interest of our industry and whether this work provides benefits to all member companies, big and small.

This has led to the following successful activities and products that have contributed in significant ways to the association's success:

- Significant membership growth and support
- Online training programs like Truss Technician Training and Operation Safety Certification
- JOBSITE PACKAGES
- TPI/WTCA joint publications agreement and BCSI 1-03
- BCMC
- *SBC Magazine*

Each of these high profile items and a myriad of little details have provided WTCA with a financial foundation that is better than any if us ever imagined it would be when I was named Executive Director in 1992. We now have a golden opportunity to invest in our organization so that we provide the most valuable support we can for the future of our industry. To that end, under President Kendall Hoyd and the Executive Committee's guidance, the Board of Directors has voted to invest in two activities:

- Staff attendance at chapter meetings at least once per quarter.
- The development of a full-scale research and truss testing program.

at a glance

- ❑ WTCA is currently experiencing a major growth spurt, the third of its kind.
- ❑ There are many reasons for the recent growth: increased membership, online training programs, new publications like BCSI 1-03, BCMC and *SBC Magazine*.
- ❑ Based on this surge in growth, the Board of Directors has approved the following: staff attendance at chapter meetings at least once per quarter and the development of a full-scale research and truss testing program.

Staff Attendance at WTCA Chapter Meetings

There is absolutely no doubt that one of the best things we have done as an association is to send staff to WTCA Chapter meetings. We have found the experience and interactions valuable because it has allowed us to be much more in tune with what is happening in local markets. Not surprisingly, we've found that the issues plaguing one chapter are the same that another is experiencing. The activities that we have found valuable to be involved with on a chapter level include:

- Local and state building code changes
- Professional Engineering and sealed truss placement diagram issues
- Off-loading and hoisting trusses
- Fire performance of trusses and building labeling problems
- Permanent truss bracing concerns

Our work with our chapters has yielded positive industry outcomes like:

- A strong relationship with the National Council of Structural Engineers Association (NCSEA).
- A voice in the Florida Building Code development process and the Florida Building Code Commentary.
- A voice in the building labeling law process in New York.
- A new relationship with the Firefighters Association of the State of New York.
- A voice in the IBC and IRC code development process.
- A relationship with the Association of Minnesota Building Officials.
- An evolving relationship with the Building Officials Association of Florida.
- A seat on the HR 425 Task Force on a Uniform Building Code for the State of Illinois.
- A project with the State of Michigan on school framing issues amid concerns over permanent bracing.
- A relationship with the Safety Council of the Palm Beaches to discuss Operation Safety, opportunities for third party auditing and educating local members.
- A blanket variance in Rhode Island on the IRC 2004 Supplement language on bottom chord live loads.
- A regional pilot program for Work Force Development (WFD) with technical campuses in Arizona.
- A relationship with the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. (ABC) Framing Council as they draft requirements for pre-engineered and pre-manufactured roof trusses in the State of Washington.
- Progress on making electronic seals and signatures a reality in Florida and Virginia.

WTCA Research & Testing Initiative

The Executive Committee and President Hoyd in particular have a passion for our association to undertake more fundamental research and testing than has been done in the past. As American inventor Charles Kettering said, "There is a great difference between knowing and understanding: you can know a lot about something and not really understand it." As an association, we know as much as there is to know about trusses, but do we fully understand all their performance characteristics? Based on our homework on testing for ANSI/TPI 1 standard changes, the Executive Committee believes our industry does not have the level and depth of understanding to ensure we are making the best possible decisions on behalf of our industry.

To that end, the Board of Directors has committed \$250,000 to get our research and testing program underway. They have further approved the following allocation of those funds:

- University of Wisconsin Professor Steve Cramer is working on a project to test and report on truss buckling to complete our current knowledge in this technical area.
- We will develop a two- or three-year research plan with the goal of tackling issues that are having a direct impact on component manufacturers and the cost of building trusses. One of the most urgent issues is the new ANSI/TPI 1 "chunk-out" standard change that has caused chords and webs to be doubled in cases where they did not need to be in the past, which has in turn caused increased truss costs.
- We have planned to set up a testing facility near our headquarters here in Madison to test single trusses spanning up to 80' or 90'. We are also planning the possibility of testing truss systems up to 20' in width by 80' to 90' in length.

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Our goal is to have the facility in place as soon as possible; either by the fourth quarter of 2005 or the first quarter of 2006. This means building a structure and setting up testing equipment. Next, we'll implement the 2006 testing plan and mobilize the staff to carry it out. At that point, we will develop a long-term research plan. We will seek guidance from our Engineering and Technology (E&T) Committee in concert with the Truss Plate Institute Technical Advisory Committee (TPI TAC), and the Executive Committee and Board of Directors to ensure that the research and testing has maximum immediate value to everyone in our industry.

I am happy to share with each of you this is a very exciting time for WTCA. Anyone who desires to have a voice in this re-birth and growth of our association can help to significantly shape our industry's future. We have always believed that "knowledge is power" and all the programs the WTCA Board has created and implemented have this concept at their core. We are now embarking on developing a very powerful engine that WTCA membership can use to tackle issues and make changes to our codes, standards and governmental regulations like never before. At the same time, our work in this area should provide significant improvements in the economics of the structural building components industry. I believe this renaissance will have immense value for our entire membership.

I'll close with a modified Charles Kettering quote that applies well to WTCA at the current time: "My definition of an educated association is the group who knows the right thing to do at the time it has to be done." **SBC**

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Should you have any questions or like more detailed information on this topic please contact Kendall Hoyd at khoyd@sbcmag.info or Kirk Grundahl at kgrundahl@qualtim.com.*

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Sandpoint, ID 83864
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67 King St East
Oshawa, ON L1H 1B5
905/579-4454
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Chandler, AZ 85226
480/627-1140
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1850 Koppers Bldg
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OMG

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