



# Editor's Message

## QC: A Lifeline to Continued Success in Our Industry

by Don Groom

Find out what the incoming WTCA President has to say about getting caught wearing white tennis shoes and making a commitment to quality.

I'm excited to begin my term as WTCA President during a time when the industry is experiencing such growth and change. First, I'd like to thank outgoing President Kendall Hoyd for all of his hard work over the past 12 months. This has certainly been a year of positive and unprecedented growth for WTCA, much to his credit. I'm sure that everyone on the Board of Directors appreciated his efficient use of our time by running some of the fastest and most well-organized board meetings and conference calls in history. Given my slow Texas drawl, it will be a challenge for me to continue the trend.

For those of you who don't know me yet, you may have seen my svelte profile in the August issue's installment of **Parting Shots** wearing blindingly white sneakers—a hot new trend—on Capitol Hill. But there's much more to my life than dodging the intrusive Washington, DC tabloid press, so let me introduce myself. I started working at Stark Truss in the shop almost 20 years ago. Over the years, I've held many positions in the company, from night shift supervisor to production manager to plant manager to my current position as VP of Operations. Having viewed the business from so many angles, I know how fortunate I am to be a part of this industry. My experience with Stark has also given me the passion to do everything in my power to ensure that the entrepreneurs and family-owned businesses that built this industry flourish. I know that, through its many programs such as ORisk, Truss Technician Training and the updated handling, installing and bracing guidelines in BCSI 1-03, our association supports each and every business that makes up this industry, and in the coming year, we'll continue to develop new ways to help component manufacturers strive for excellence.

The theme of this, my first column, is quality control (QC)—an issue that I'm a strong believer in. Of course, quality control is a major issue in the structural building components industry. When we take a job, we know that we owe our customers a quality product—it's simply good business. But while an effective QC program helps to keep our customers satisfied, it also reaches much further than that, touching every segment of our businesses. From the pride we have in the job we do to protecting ourselves against risk and possible litigation to staying up to date with marketplace demands, QC is the lifeline to success in our industry.

More than half of our 16 plants at Stark Truss are certified with the **In-Plant WTCA QC** program, and we're working diligently to get all of our plants certified. Ever since our first plant became certified in March 2000, we've seen the benefits on a number of fronts: in the shop, the marketplace and our bottom line. The **In-Plant WTCA QC** program takes building components beyond the design drawings. It's all about putting real meaning behind the "rules and procedures." As Plant Manager Duane Miller, one of the first to embrace the program here at Stark, tells me, "You can tell guys not to beat the plates with a hammer, but when you use the inspectors' knowledge and experience as a resource in the QC program to show them how doing that bends the teeth, then they really understand." We quickly found that when you give people information and take the time to explain why things are done a certain way, they do a better job, have more pride in their work and they're very appreciative.

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### at a glance

- ❑ An in-plant quality control program helps you quickly identify issues with a press or how someone is doing their job through the management information that the data provides.
- ❑ The program may take an investment in time and money, but monitoring the benchmarks and charts and catching a problem and solving it in a timely manner is well worth it.
- ❑ Proof of such a program can potentially help lower your insurance premiums.
- ❑ Certain U.S. markets are starting to see more and more building inspectors and architects who require manufacturers to have a written QC program in place.

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It seems that one of the biggest concerns component manufacturers have when they're deciding whether or not to implement an in-plant QC program like WTCA's is that it will be too time consuming. If an employee is doing inspections, he or she isn't building components. It's true, running a program will take some time that would otherwise be devoted to building components, but the benefits of a QC program far outweigh the lost time. An in-plant QC program helps you quickly identify if there's an issue with a press or how someone is doing their job through the management information that the data provides to us. The program may take an investment in time and money, but monitoring the benchmarks and charts and catching a problem and solving it in a timely manner makes it very well worth it.

Beyond our own businesses, QC speaks volumes about our industry's commitment and dedication to delivering a product that meets the highest standards. **In-Plant WTCA QC** was developed with the help of component manufacturers across the country. Don't recreate the wheel; WTCA has already created an in-plant QC program that complies with the industry design standard (ANSI/TPI 1). What better way to ensure that we're consistently delivering a quality product to our customers than through **In-Plant WTCA QC**?

The program is important not only from a production standpoint where we focus on getting a quality product to our customers, it is also crucial from a liability standpoint. Obtaining adequate insurance coverage at affordable premium rates is a major challenge for this industry. The presence of **In-Plant WTCA QC** gives you something you can present to your underwriters and insurers. It's your way of showing an insurance company that you've made the investment to ensure the quality of the products you manufacture. Plus, proof of such a program can potentially help lower your insurance premiums.

A couple of years ago when Stark was facing steep premium hikes, we put together a presentation for a panel of potential underwriters that showed all the measures—the **In-Plant WTCA QC** program in combination with Truss Technician Training, our In-Plant Safety Program and Risk Management Department, and the use of JOBSITE PACKAGES and Third Party Inspections—we were taking to minimize our exposure to risk. The presentation paid off; we received two bids with a double-digit percentage decrease in our insurance premiums. For more information about how Stark reduced its insurance premiums, see the **SBC** August 2003 article "Building a Fence of Risk Management Around Our Company," written by Steve Yoder, President of Stark Truss.

If someone does make a claim that they experienced a problem with your components, **In-Plant WTCA QC** gives you something to stand behind because you have documentation that your trusses have been manufactured to a set standardized criteria. The data from regular inspections shows the quality of your product, and if an inspection was done on the specific trusses in question, all the better. You have all the periodic in-plant inspection data you need to back up your company and your work.

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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 structural building components. Further, SBC strives to ensure growth, continuity and increased professionalism in our industry, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. SBC's editorial focus is geared toward the entire structural building component industry, which includes the membership of the Wood Truss Council of America (WTCA), the Steel Truss and Component Association (STCA) and the Structural Component Distributors Association (SCDA). These associations make up an industry strategic planning committee called the Structural Building Components Council (SBCC). The opinions expressed in SBC are those of the authors and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of the associations listed above.

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Another matter to consider is the way QC affects how the engineering community looks at our industry. Often, engineers ask component manufacturers, "How can you ensure that your products are built to the specification?" There's no better way to answer this question with confidence than by telling them that you have a solid, daily QC program in place. What's better—you can show them the true value of your program by walking them through it and showing them how your program works.

Looking into the future, QC is sure to play an even larger role in the structural building components industry. Even today, we're beginning to see more and more building inspectors and architects who require manufacturers to have a written QC program in place. The people who inspect and design buildings want to know that the products going into that building are built to the proper specifications. Moving forward, this issue is sure to become even more prevalent, to the point where maintaining a QC program won't just be to the manufacturer's benefit, it will be in response to the demand of the customer. Having a quality control program won't be a choice, it will be a necessity to maintain a competitive edge and stay up to date with marketplace demands.

We can play a pivotal role in advancing QC and defining the place it holds in our industry by taking the reins and making the quality control of our products a priority. The key is to establish a well-rounded QC program. It's one of the best things you can do for your business today—and tomorrow. **SBC**

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