

In Memoriam

Ted Watkins

Theodore (Ted) Watkins, 63, of Longs, VA, passed away on Dec. 5, 2006. He was born on April 18, 1943 in New Brunswick, NJ. He was a founding member of the Wood Truss Council of the Capital Area and served as president.



After attending accounting school in Baltimore, MD, Ted got his start in the truss industry by becoming the accountant for a fledgling company, Ryland Homes in Columbia, MD. Ted then spent several years as a manager for Shelter Systems both in Fredericksburg, VA and Houston, working with Lenny Sylk, where computer-aided job costing and innovative material handling systems were pioneered.

Dwight Hikel of Shelter Systems Limited recalls what made Ted such an asset to the industry: "Ted was very committed to the industry. He was interested in pursuing new ideas and was a very practical and sincere person."

Later in his career, Ted took a job at Blue Ridge Truss, a rather remote truss plant in the mountains of Virginia, where he would spend the next 15 years. There he distinguished himself as one of the finest managers in the truss business, according to owners Mr. and Mrs. Willard Fansler. Ted displayed a "minute-by-minute" attention to both sales and profitability—pricing literally every job in a \$1 million per month facility.

During his employment at Blue Ridge Truss, Ted worked with Daren Lam, then design department manager. Lam remembers Ted for "taking a small company and turning it into what it is today. He loved chess and he applied his winning strategy to business. He knew numbers better than anyone I've ever worked with in the industry."

Ted encouraged his peers in the truss business to get together and form an association, which became the Capital Area Chapter of WTCA. After training his successor for a full year, Ted enjoyed a very short retirement, working in the library at James Madison University.

During a personnel drain at a neighboring plant from 2001 to 2002, Ted came back to the industry as President of Glaize Components in Winchester, VA. He successfully rebuilt the staff, and prepared the three-plant operation for record growth.

Lam recalls that Ted was known to be unwavering when he believed in something: "One of the funniest things I remember about him was his reaction in sales meetings. Every time a salesman would complain about prices being too high, Ted stuck his fingers in his ears and shut his eyes as if to say 'I'm not listening.'" Lam says that was just Ted's style: "He was a very stubborn guy, and when he knew what he wanted, he wouldn't relent."

In 2002, Ted retired to Myrtle Beach, SC where he enjoyed playing chess and taking walks on the beach. Ted is survived by his wife of 40 years, Christina, his two sons, Theodore Watkins III and Brian Scott Watkins, and seven grandchildren. He will be remembered for the trust he earned from several prominent truss plant owners, and the high praise he received from them. **SBC**

Thanks to Joe Kannapell of MiTek Industries, Wilson Ryman and Scott Garber of Glaize Components and Dwight Hikel of Shelter Systems Limited for contributing to this piece.

Submissions to "In Memoriam" can be emailed to editor@sbcmag.info. Photos are encouraged and will run as space allows. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.

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6300 Enterprise Lane • Suite 200 • Madison, WI 53719
608/310-6706 phone • 608/271-7006 fax
www.sbcmag.info • admgr@sbcmag.info