I was reading archived material about our organization recently and thought I would share some interesting facts and thoughts about our organization.

The roots of the American Society of Concrete Contractors go back to July 10, 1957. On that date an organization called the National Concrete Contractors Association (NCCA) was formed at a meeting at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. The purpose of the newly formed organization was “to maintain a national trade association of concrete contractors; to promote the advancement of the concrete industry by collecting, correlating and disseminating information of value to concrete contractors; to establish and promote high standards of workmanship in concrete construction and to work for the general good of the public and members of the industry to promotion of quality concrete construction work.” That organization later disbanded with the creation of a new organization in 1964 called the American Society of Concrete Constructors (ASCC). The first meeting of this organization was held in November 1964 and it was agreed the new ASCC would “provide an ardent and articulate spokesman for the contractor who would be dedicated to the development of quality in concrete construction and would accept as its first job that of working on ways and means of setting up proper industry standards for the qualification of competent contractors who work with concrete.”

The name of the organization was modified in later years to our current name - - American Society of Concrete Contractors - - but our focus continues to be consistent with the original intentions of the NCCA and ASCC of the 50’s and 60’s. Our current mission is to be “The Voice of the Concrete Contractor” and we are “Dedicated to Enhancing the Capabilities of Those Who Build With Concrete.” It is encouraging that our organization has a mission so close to the one that began almost 60 years ago with the NCCA. We do so many things that those mission statements define, through our various committees and the outstanding leadership of members and staff. We have a strategic plan that quantifies these broad goals into tangible results and are systematically executing our strategic plan – all adding benefit to our membership.

I know that we here at Keystone Concrete are a better company due in large part to the help our membership in ASCC has provided. I am proud to be a member and I hope you are too! You have a tremendous resource available to you with your membership in the American Society of Concrete Contractors. I hope you take advantage of that resource………but I hope more that you will take the time to be active within our organization. As with all things that have significance in our lives, we get out of them proportionally to the effort we put into them. If you participate actively, you will be rewarded. I look forward to seeing you at our many opportunities to be active in this great organization.
Executive Director’s Message

Bev Garnant

It dawned on me that instead of writing a column on reading recommendations in the summer, when you’re pulling your hair out trying to get work done, I should offer this up in the winter months.

It dawned on me… but I didn’t pay attention. With almost everything available as an audio book these days, driving from job to job is the perfect opportunity to listen and learn, or listen and be entertained. Therefore, I recommend…

Business: “Setting the Table: The Transforming Power of Hospitality in Business” by Danny Meyer, a St. Louisan who’s made it big as a NYC restauranteur. While the book uses the creation of Meyer’s famous eating establishment as its basis, its full of insight, wisdom and common sense applicable to any business.

My favorite of Meyer’s ideas is that for the majority of stories that will be told about our businesses, we have the ability to write “the last paragraph.” If a customer has a bad experience with you, how will he tell the story? Will the bad experience and his resultant anger or frustration be the ending, or will you do your best, within reason, to take care of the problem and the customer – the last paragraph.

What drew me to “The One-Page Financial Plan: A Simple Way to be Smart About Your Money,” Carl Richards, were the drawings that accompany the text. Again, often these simple but eye-opening sketches help to not only simplify financial matters, but other of life’s conundrums as well.

Non-Fiction: I just started “In Defense of Food,” Michael Pollan. I have to be able to hold up my end of the conversation with the paleos.

Mystery/History: In “The Alphabet House,” Jussi Adler-Olson, after being shot down, two British pilots manage to board a train taking Nazi officers to a mental institution behind enemy lines. They must manage to fake insanity to survive.

Sports: “October 1964,” David Halberstam, relives the Cards and Yankees ’64 season, culminating with the World Series that featured Lou Brock, Bob Gibson, Mickey Mantle, and Roger Maris among others. They become much more than ballplayers in a great sports book that appeals to more than fans of these two teams.

Finally, as she prepares for high school next month, I’m reading my granddaughter’s summer homework along with her. Grace does not particularly like to read, so I thought maybe the extra encouragement and someone to discuss with would make it easier. I loved the first book, “The Nightingale,” Kristin Hannah, another WWII story, this time about two amazingly strong French sisters. To go: the “Secret Life of Bees” and “I Am Malala.” Sensing the strong woman theme?

Whatever your interest, I hope you have the opportunity to find a good book or two this summer.

Decorative Concrete Council

Neil Roach, DCC Council Director

The decorative concrete industry provides many opportunities. People from different fields can come together to make beautiful products and provide career opportunities.

Many rugged craftsmen have expressed their artistic side by implementing decorative techniques into their concrete projects. Some have adapted their artistic abilities to the structure of the building process, through stretching the boundaries of product lines beyond normal recommendations. Some have been fortunate enough to create a competitive edge through decorative concrete to advance them beyond the competition. Some have become technical trainers. Others have created custom tools and followed their inventions into the distribution marketplace. Whatever your path within this great industry; we can all be challenged for personal growth. There are so many opportunities within the decorative concrete industry. Whatever your competitive edge; focus on your strengths and capitalize on them.

Don’t forget the Annual Conference, September 15-18, as it has numerous offerings for the decorative contractor. Many of us have implemented polished concrete into our repertoire. This year you can get educated on proper placement of a concrete slab meant to be polished. The classroom portion will be Creating the Canvas for Polished Concrete. Contractors, consultants and producers will address: • Creating a specification that is definable, measurable and achievable • Outlining responsibilities at all levels of a project • How placement and finishing affect the polished floor • Creating a reality check for the owner, architect and GC • How the ASCC, CPAA and other industry professionals can help

A floor will be placed and finished with both acceptable and unacceptable methods to highlight the effect on finished polished concrete. Polishing levels and methods will showcase the issues contractors face when trying to meet owners’ expectations.
Hand Jewelry in the Workplace

It does not sound like it would be a big deal, but how many of you have climbed a ladder or moved material and felt your wedding or Super Bowl ring snag? While the majority of us have been lucky to get away without an injury, there are those who don’t. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) states that in 2012 there were 48,000 hand injuries or traumas in the construction industry alone. Of those, 190 were related to rings either getting crushed on the finger from getting pinched, or a tool and the force of the movement or the weight of the body caused the ring to either cut or tear into the finger. In the worst cases the ring will actually tear the skin of the finger clean off the bone.

Injuries to fingers from wearing rings and wedding bands are among the most severe hand accidents and are some of the hardest to treat. A finger sheared by a sharp object causes only local vascular lesions that can be repaired by mere suture; success rate is roughly 70%. Ring traction on a finger causes tissue avulsion. Nerves, vessels, tendons and the osteo-articular system do not have the same tear level, leading to partial or total “de-gloving” of the finger depending on what the ring is made of, how it fits the finger, the degree of violence and angle of movement.

The potential for this type of injury is great in our industry as we work with our hands every minute of the day. Many companies have instituted a 100% glove policy which requires everyone performing work, whether pushing a broom finishing concrete or erecting a wall form, to have proper hand protection. It’s important we ensure that there is no potential for rings to get caught on anything whether wearing gloves or not.

Another option are rings made of silicone. This is a good alternative to those who must wear a ring on their hand. The material, should it get snagged on an object, tears off of the finger rather than tearing into the finger. Please take the time to look at hand jewelry exposures at your company, remove all hand jewelry that may get caught or snagged on any material, leave it at home or put it in your lunch pail. It’s not worth the risk.

Media Blasting

Although CNN and Fox News give us plenty of reasons to blast them, what I want to talk about is coating removal with the use of media such as sand, soda, water, or dry ice. A recent surge in calls to the Decorative Hotline have dealt with the removal of sealers or epoxy coatings by means other than chemical strippers. Whether it’s a worn patio saturated with numerous coats of sealer, or an industrial epoxy floor needing a contained and quick turnaround, contractors have numerous options for the first step in their restoration. With limitations to the length of this article, I am going to focus on coatings being removed from textured or stamped concrete.

Sand blasting is typically too aggressive for use on a textured surface, and only seasoned professionals can remove the coating without greatly affecting the texture. The spent media also raises environmental flags and in many areas is no longer allowed. Soda blasting, which became best known for being the media used to clean the Statue of Liberty in the 1980s, has proven a very effective means of sealer removal. Baking soda is just hard enough to remove the coating but too soft to damage the concrete or stamped texture during the process. It is not effective on epoxies, and leaves a tremendous amount of dust, but it can be easily rinsed away with little or no impact to the environment. Most states are well represented by contractors providing soda blasting services, offering coating removal for approximately $1.00 per square foot.

I have personal experience using a 4,000 PSI hot water pressure washer to effectively remove sealer. It is not a quick process, and requires a lot of protection of the surrounding surfaces to keep sealer from sticking to your brick or siding, but it does work. The equipment is affordable and comes in electric, gas, and propane versions making it versatile. Finally dry ice seems to be the new fad. The demonstration I watched was useful, the end result being a clean surface with no sealer, but the process was incredibly slow. Dry ice blasting has a promising future, but the speed currently lends itself to a higher cost due to it being labor intensive. No matter what your media choice, be sure to take equipment cost, media cost, environmental concerns, and speed of removal into consideration.

Safety & Risk Management Council

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Beware of Structural Designs that Use Reinforcing Steel for Shrinkage and Temperature Crack Control

Bruce Suprenant, Technical Director

Shrinkage and temperature reinforcement requirements for design of reinforced concrete structures have been included in the ACI building code since 1928, and haven’t changed much in nearly 85 years. The ACI 318-14 Commentary states that the amounts of shrinkage and temperature reinforcement specified for deformed bars and welded-wire fabric are empirical, but have been used satisfactorily for many years.

Reinforcing steel to control cracks due to shrinkage and temperature is used for structural slabs and walls. For Grade 60 reinforcement, the minimum ratio of reinforcement area to gross concrete area is 0.0018. So for a 12-inch thick by 12-inch wall or slab section, the amount of steel needed to control shrinkage and temperature cracks is 0.0018 x 12 x 12 = 0.26 in². Thus a #5 bars which provide an area of 0.31 in², would be needed.

While the Code says this has long been used satisfactorily – contractors are finding that current owners aren’t satisfied with this level of crack control. When the owner isn’t satisfied, he asks the engineer for an explanation, and the engineer replies that he designed it according to Code. This explanation seems reasonable to the owner as he believes the Code wouldn’t allow this level of cracking. Thus the owner believes that the contractor is responsible for his lack of satisfaction, and seeks remediation.

We are seeing more and more of this issue between what is being designed for crack control – to the Code, and what owners expect crack control to be. Contractors are stuck in the middle. Fortunately, there is an ACI document that contractors can show the owner to extract themselves from the middle. ACI 224R-01 “Control of Cracking of Concrete Structures” states:

“The minimum amount and spacing of reinforcement to be used in structural floors, roof slabs, and walls for control of temperature and shrinkage cracking is given in ACI 318 or in ACI 350. The minimum-reinforcement percentage, which is between 0.18 and 0.20%, does not normally control cracks to within generally acceptable design limits. To control cracks to a more acceptable level, the percentage requirement needs to exceed about 0.60%”.

This document says that the shrinkage and temperature reinforcement needs to be about three times more than the Code minimum to obtain acceptable crack widths. This can be eye-opening to the owner. The engineer should discuss with the owner the crack expectations and the cost of meeting those expectations during the design phase. When the discussion doesn’t take place, irritation during construction is directed at the contractor.

Based on my experience over the last 10 years, I agree with ACI 224. Owners are now consistently demanding more serviceable concrete structures – better control of cracking and deflections. What may have satisfied owners in the past with respect to the Code minimum reinforcing for crack control--- is certainly not satisfying them today. It’s time to reconsider “Code Minimum” designs.

Annual Conference – Rocky Geans’ Concrete Construction Business School

Rocky Geans, L.L. Geans Construction Co.

Conference registration mandatory

A fee of $125 for materials is required to attend this workshop.

With over 40 years of experience in concrete contracting, Rocky shares his hard-learned lessons with inspiring and motivating style. Seminars cover marketing, proposals, job site management, bidding, timesheets, inventory control, job scheduling boards, yard management, communication with the field, job close-out sheets, information management, billing, collections, financial statements, construction equipment, and more. You will leave with a thorough understanding of each of the 24 training topics. You’ll receive a comprehensive CD and 160-page workbook with the forms and checklists needed to implement what you’ve learned.