Another Boyd at the Helm

J. Patrick Boyd becomes the 2002-2003 president of the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries—International on July 1. Boyd is vice president of KHS&S-Dallas, in Garland, Texas. In February of this year, KHS&S Contractors, a national specialty contractor, joined with the Boyd family company, Ray Boyd Plaster & Drywall, Inc., to form KHS&S-Dallas, the ninth permanent office of KHS&S and its first located in the South Central United States.

A hearty welcome to Pat Boyd, AWCI’s new president. In case “Boyd” sounds familiar in connection with the AWCI president’s seat, old-timers will know that his brother, Mike, held the presidency 11 years.
ago. And the folks who are even longer in the tooth may remember that 11 years before that, their father, Ray, was AWCI’s president. As Pat points out, “We, as a family, have given a lot to this association over the years, but we have received much more in return in the way of satisfaction as well as assistance and guidance as members.”

The following interview was conducted to find out how Boyd sees the industry, AWCI and its membership, and the challenges in the year ahead for all of us.

CD: How would you describe the state of the industry at present?

PB: By watching the factors in our market and listening to people in every other market that I’ve talked to, I think everybody thinks commercial construction is in a mild recession.

Even though construction is up, buoyed by strong residential construction, the wall and ceiling industry is in a recession at this point, a mild recession for the next 6 to 12 months, because commercial construction is taking a bit of a hit right now. Interest rates are driving the residential market, and it’s going to pull the rest of us out.

CD: That’s hopeful. what areas do you see as pivotal for the future welfare of the industry?

PB: Insurance is the Number One problem area: the ability to obtain insurance as a contractor, or as a building or homeowner that uses our products. There has been some trouble already with homeowners not being able to get insurance for houses made of EIFS. If for some reason insurance companies quit insuring owners as our end-users, it will affect us.
The mold issue is the second most crucial issue on our plate. It is also a function of tort reform. If we don’t get tort reform of some kind, we’ll have problems. But the giant crisis right in front of the entire construction industry right now is this mold issue.

CD: It seems like it all goes back to lawyers in some way or another.

PB: Always! Like a disease goes back to rats! And my son is a plaintiff attorney, so . . .

CD: You speak from the heart! So what do you think the resolution is to this issue?

PB: Well, the insurance companies need to become better educated in our products and not just react to what they hear on TV or the news or whatever. They hear something bad and run and hide under a bush. One or two bad cases can sour a whole industry, but I don’t think they can walk away from construction entirely.

But they are trying to, they really are! In some cases they are trying to say: “Construction is not a good market for us, we’re going to walk away,” and if enough people do it, there will be a big enough
market, that somebody will jump back in and take it. But in the meantime, it is becoming difficult for our members to get insurance.

Now, AWCI has its CAP (Contractor’s Advantage Program) insurance program, group insurance to provide members with a viable carrier to handle their insurance, so they won’t be left hanging with nothing. Steve Etkin, AWCI’s executive vice president, has been extremely proactive in this market, and AWCI is trying to make sure that we have an option for our contractors.

CD: Got it. So what about mold?

PB: Well, the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry has published its first study on mold. The Foundation’s next step is to undertake some proposed construction scheduling and work flow sequencing guidelines to prevent mold occurring in new construction. It’s a scheduling fur, to bring about some acceptance that if you put gypsum board in before the roof is on, you’re going to
get mold. Hopefully, that will cut us out of some of the liability.

CD: That sounds good. How do you see the membership best acting individually to deal with these two issues of mold and the insurance?

PB: Mainly they need to watch the industry, particularly staying in touch with AWCI, because we’re taking the lead in both matters. That’s what I want to stress. Many people don’t understand what the association does for them. This is what we, as an association, do for our members. If they have a problem, call the association office and we will try to help you in any way we can.

CD: OK. Is there anything else they can do themselves?

PB: Common sense mostly. Try to make sure-if you’re in a position where you’ve been asked to install board out of sequence and which you’re pretty sure will create a mold problem-that you obtain some kind of notification to the owner and the general contractor that they are creating a problem. Not that it’s going to absolve you of it, but it will at least give you some ammunition if and when problems arise.

Don’t just roll over and take it. And on the insurance issue, the main thing is to watch your safety programs and to watch your loss ratios. If you have a substantial loss, they pretty much cancel your insurance, so you’ve got to watch yourself on what you do, make sure you do your job properly and learn the systems that you’re installing.

CD: That’s rough! Like saying, “looks like you’re drowning, we’ll definitely take away the rope!”
PB: That’s right. Basically, what the insurance industry is telling us is, “We’re only geared to take your premiums, not to pay your claim.”

CD: That’s terrible. Switching subjects, how would you describe the way AWC1 has evolved over the years?

PB: I’ve been involved with the association for more than 30 years now, during which time it has grown and become stronger in its support of the chapters, and the chapters’ support of it. We have more chapters that are involved, and they are stronger and do more for us. And we do more for them. The individual member is receiving, in my opinion right now, a lot more for their dues than ever before in the association’s history. There are too many hot items out there that we are working on, such as the EIFS—Doing It Right program, and the insurance and the mold and all those issues that are out there in front of our contractors. And we saw them coming—in some cases before they did, and
CD: Excellent. How does AWCI look to you today?

PB: We are stronger than ever financially, membership-wise and staff-wise. We actually have a better staff working harder, working smarter, than we’ve ever had before. We have financial resources we never had before and a strong, growing membership, even in a down market.

CD: Sounds like the AWCI administrators are doing a good job. Any other specific value you see AWCI bringing to its membership?

PB: Mainly education and the ability to network with your peers. These are the two major benefits that I have received about a tenth of the cost on the commercial market, so as to strengthen our members’ ability to work properly, work safely and also give them a benefit of membership.
“We cannot survive without member participation.”

from AWCI ever since I’ve been involved.

CD: How do you see the members best enhancing AWCI’s survival and its goals?

PB: Participation! We cannot survive without member participation. They have got to show up, come to the meetings and become involved in the committees. They’ve got to understand what the association does for them to get the maximum benefit and for the association itself to get the maximum benefit.

CD: What are your objectives for the association over the next year?

PB: My two biggest priorities are the insurance and the mold issues. Those are the two things I’m going to stress and try to make sure we have completed, or at least a program in place by the end of my term.

CD: Good enough. Any other message for the membership?

PB: The biggest thing I can tell them is that they cannot get the value of the association if they don’t participate. It’s a wonderful association that my family has been involved with for at least four decades, and I wouldn’t have had it any other way.

CD: Thank you and good luck! 

About the Author
Steven Ferry is a free-lance writer based in Clearwater, Fla.