He didn’t come as a stranger.

When Theodore J. Vogle, Chairman of the Board of Subcon, Inc., of Tulsa, Okla., and President of the Gypsum Drywall Contractors International, eased up to the podium during the iaWCC Board of Directors meeting in London last March the contractors assembled there knew of him.

They knew him as a successful contractor who with soft-spoken relentlessness in pursuit of a goal can prove that a step back or sideways is often as valuable as a step forward.

About the proposed Plan for Consolidation between iaWCC and GDCI, T. J. reviewed the deliberations by GDCI at its San Diego convention earlier in the month and how they had decided overwhelmingly to approve combining the two associations. When questioned, he ducked no issues and fielded the matter of the first try’s failure two years ago with the same easy directness that he provided to other queries.

When T. J. and iaWCC’s Frank J. Krafft, who had been president of iaWCC when the first consolidation attempt failed, had completed their reports, the iaWCC directors approved the consolidation unanimously. A few days later, the entire iaWCC convention extended its unanimous approval.

When a necessary mail ballot among iaWCC’s membership was counted, the approval was nearly 97 percent in favor. By May 15, the consolidation was formalized at a special meeting in Reston, Va., and this July 2, 1976, the consolidation between the two associations became effective.

For T. J. Vogle and the leaders of both associations, the achievement of a consolidation that had long been sought and encouraged by all segments in the industry was but further proof that fragmentation is losing its grip in the construction industry.

And for T. J., it was also additional proof that success doesn’t always come at the end of a straight, undeviating line. That was evident not only in his efforts to achieve a consolidation that would be beneficial to the wall and ceiling industry but also in his own business career.

There were a number of starts, steps, and strategies involved before Subcon became the biggest diversified drywall construction firm in the Tulsa area with some $4,000,000 annual volume in drywall, acoustics, and painting.

Born in Snyder, Okla., the 65-year-old construction executive in 1930 left the Oklahoma A&M campus where he was studying engineering and in 1936 went to work with the state highway department as a rodaman.

In 1939 he joined the Corps of Engineers, and the following year went back to the highway depart-

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T. J. is also a national representative on the National Joint Painting, Decorating and Drywall Apprentice Training Committee, a member of the Tulsa Executives Association, and the Elks Lodge.

He and his wife, the former Miss Lily Grozier, a native of Southwest Oklahoma, live in Tulsa in a contemporary ranch type home. There Ted can tend to his vegetable garden and, when the mood strikes him, travel a short distance to the McClelland-Kerr Waterway for a bit of his favorite bass fishing.

For T. J. Vogle it has been a long, sometimes circuitous trek from the hardware store and wheat and cotton farm of his father. By his own admission, had there been no Great Depression he perhaps would still be in the hardware business where he worked during high school.

But now he is committed to his industry. He will be a member of the iaWCC/GDCI Executive Committee, and his goal now will be to see that the consolidation will become the industry benefit that he and the others have worked so hard to realize.

In his office recently, Ted Vogle took some time out to talk to **CONSTRUCTION DIMENSIONS** about the consolidation... and a few other things that keep a construction man busy.

### DIMENSIONS: Ted, as one of the leading proponents of the consolidation between iaWCC and GDCI, what is it that you see being accomplished by this move?

VOGLE: There are a number of things that this consolidation is capable of accomplishing. But the big thing, I believe, is that it will produce a much stronger association for the diversified interior contractor than could ever be achieved by the separate organizations.

Certainly, by having one association now we should be able to stop most of the unnecessary duplication and, let’s be fair about it, some of the animosity between contractors who are really moving toward the same type of business.

### DIMENSIONS: How do you see that consolidation between two organizations producing benefits for the individual iaWCC or GDCI member?

VOGLE: Well, we all have pretty much the same problems and same questions. So it would be
unity, I think. It’s rather difficult for me to understand why business people want to fragment themselves because we’re all in the same business—and that’s what it’s all about.

Our common adversaries—big government, big labor and the united approach of general contractors, architects, engineers, and some others—allow them to take advantage of their unity. Our added strength will now help us against these groups.

DIMENSIONS: Where do you see a specific example of this additional strength applying itself?

VOGLE: Well, for example, the general contractor’s contract has clauses written in there—and this is perfectly understandable from their viewpoint—that are primarily advantageous to the general contractor.

In some instances, even though many of these clauses are generally accepted in the industry, I think they are very unfair to subcontractors. The conditions of payment is a major one. Lots of work has been done in this area by iaWCC, GDCI, CISCA, and the ASA to rectify these so-called inequities.

Today, the general contractors and the architects are much more aware of what we consider to be fair treatment. There is movement being made, and with a stronger organization we can greatly add to the effort.

DIMENSIONS: While these objectives are desirable ones, there is still the challenge of forming an effective, viable organization. Where do you see the principle obstacles to a successful consolidation?

VOGLE: I’m very strong on this, and my own feelings have to be one of complete optimism about this consolidation. I think that perhaps it will take a little time for the consolidation to become firm, but I do want to express the feeling that we have to make a go of this opportunity.

The crux of the problem is simply this: we’re all business people and we should act like responsible businessmen and begin going after the problems that are common to us all. Again our common adversaries.

The only legitimate thing that can hurt is the fear and misunderstanding that one organization may have for the other. If nothing else, there are no grounds for anyone to feel that one organization has “taken over” or that anyone is getting the short end of a deal. We all tried to make this consolidation as fair and as equitable as possible, and now I’d like to see the two bodies get together and have a much better association than either has had on its own at the present time.

DIMENSIONS: Earlier, you mentioned that contractors are all in the same type of business. Was that an interior systems concept you were using?

VOGLE: That’s right. There are
many contractors who can continue indefinitely to exist on one line or one service. But the contractor who will be enjoying overall success is the one who is more diversified.

DIMENSIONS: Why do you say that?

VOGEL: Every contractor realizes that any of these particular lines run in cycles. If you diversify, you can take advantage of the different cycles and fill in your business flow, smooth it out, and keep a healthy cash flow.

In drywall and painting, there’s a diversified relationship. And there are other compatible interior lines—demountable partitions, acousticals—that would also follow this line of thinking.

Subcon is not in some interior finishes—not because we don’t believe they’re compatible—but simply because we’ve never become involved in such services as flooring, tile, or plastering.

DIMENSIONS: The general contractors are encouraging this movement, too, aren’t they?

VOGEL: Oh, yes. The general contractor feels that more and more it’s to his advantage to place greater responsibility on one firm. And they’re doing this as much as possible. This quite often contributes to better scheduling, smoother flow of work.

DIMENSIONS: Such a shift obviously means a greater cash outlay and financing strain on the subcontractor. Not all specialty contractors have the resources to assume this extra responsibility, do they?

VOGEL: Not all of them, no, but subcontractors are already the financial backbone of the construction industry. We finance a big portion of the industry—and the trend is apparently to finance more of it.

And that’s in addition to being an employment agency and doing a lot of other things for a lot of people in this industry. I sometimes wonder how many of our employees recognize the agony that we subcontractors go through just to keep them employed.

DIMENSIONS: Do you see any other trends or developments that will be effecting wall and ceiling contractors?

VOGEL: If I knew for sure what new innovations or developments are coming up I could retire as a millionaire on the answers. But we all must be receptive to new innovations.

The trend today, I think, is clearly to drywall. Even here, though, we must remain flexible enough to take advantage of new trends. Now that could be a stronger move to pre-finished walls. The steadily increasing labor rate is virtually forcing a rapid development in this area.

DIMENSIONS: The other side of the coin on labor rates is productivity. What does your firm do to get maximum productivity?

VOGEL: We get our productivity through our field superintendents and that’s Benny Benge in painting, and Fred Martin in drywall and acousticals. They are both acutely aware of production and they are given the complete information they need to bring the job in profitably.

We hold staff meetings here in the office when my son, Ted, calls them and we keep published minutes. Unlike some others, we don’t hold meetings on a regular schedule or just for the sake of holding a meeting.

DIMENSIONS: Many areas of the country are experiencing an acute shortage of job prospects. Do you see a need for more selling by subcontractors?

VOGEL: Well, in Tulsa, we haven’t been hit as hard as some other areas. Work has pretty well held up. But if subcontractors have a weakness it’s in selling. Contractors aren’t salesmen like some other professions because we prefer that our work sell itself.

But when you’ve done a good job and you’ve satisfied your customer the opportunities will be there for more work. Work is coming back—slowly maybe—and the good contractors, bid or sell, are going after it.