A Must in Foreign Construction

When the Job is in Foreign Lands; Pre-Planning and Pre-Engineering Protect the Profits

The possibility of bidding on a foreign project became a reality at Halsey-Tevis' Topeka office in 1976, with the project calling for a total interior package for a new four story office building in Lagos, Nigeria. The project was similar in products and construction to two buildings which had recently been completed by the Topeka firm, but to consider the undertaking of a project some 7,500 miles away would take additional planning, engineering, financing, and bonding, not to mention the risks involved.

Floyd Johnson, Vice President and Project Manager for the foreign venture, and Paul Halsey, Chairman of Halsey-Tevis, flew to Lagos, Nigeria in February of 1977 to investigate the site and establish a solid idea of what the pre-planning and pre-engineering phase would involve.

During their visit to the site, Floyd and Paul systematically plotted out emigration procedures, methods for unloading incoming sea containers, transportation of Halsey-Tevis personnel, housing accommodations (food and laundry facilities), local equipment and supplies availability, local labor availability and experience, arrangements for local monetary needs, and costs related to all these items. Floyd and Paul also got acquainted with other contractors working on the project, as well as the project engineer and the local project inspector. Through a number of informal conferences, plans were made more concrete.

With the preliminary plans completed, Floyd and Paul returned to Topeka, Kansas to organize the project with the entire staff. Halsey-Tevis was required to provide sprayed fireproofing for the steel structures, interior outer wall Styrofoam insulation, vinyl faced demountable partitions, door frames, doors, and hardware. They, also, had to supply materials for acoustical and drywall ceilings, shaftwalls for elevators and stairways, toilet partitions and vanities for restrooms (including all accessories), vinyl asbestos tile and cast terrazo floor tile for the floors, retractable rolling grill for entrance, visa counters and security detection walls, including all millwork and interior glass. Because of contractual agreements, Halsey-Tevis was responsible for gathering all materials and equipment into their Topeka warehouse and then loading supplies aboard sea containers for shipment to the port in New Orleans.

To facilitate operations, Paul Halsey drew up a story board of the overseas project on the wall in his office outlining the various segments of the interior construction package, materials needed, the purchasing and receipt of materials, and the purchasing and receipt of tools needed for the job. The story board was also highly efficient for organizing transportation and housing information. The entire staff had availability to the story board for any input or modification.

While Floyd was busy organizing the estimates, materials, and purchases for the project, Paul was busy making arrangements for the separate financing of the project and securing bonding. By late February of 1977, the fireproofing was on its way to Lagos in two sea containers. The containers had been piggy-backed on rail from New Orleans to

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Topeka, then brought to the warehouse by truck. Within 24 hours the sea containers were carefully loaded, and on their way back to New Orleans by the way of railroad. The Halsey-Tevis staff had to take extreme caution to insure an ample supply of materials for their people in Lagos. Any lack of materials, or any delays in shipment, would have proven costly.

With the pre-planning and shipments started on their way, the Halsey-Tevis staff set about organizing a group of Halsey-Tevis Topeka carpenters that would be willing to leave their families for a three month period in Africa. Passports and visas had to be arranged for, as well as an endless number of immunization shots.

Floyd Johnson and three carpenters traveled to Lagos early in January of 1978. By that time, three sea containers of materials and equipment had been received in Lagos for the initial start of the project. After organizing the beginning phase, Floyd returned to Topeka.

Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, is a thriving city of 3 million people. The Lagos port is one of the busiest in the world, and the coordination of harbor traffic is highly complex. Nigerian workers unloaded the Halsey-Tevis sea containers, and at times men lifted packages of sheetrock and actually carried them on their heads up four floors of stairs. As materials were unloaded, they were stored on the various floors of the office building in accordance with the plans that had been provided by the Halsey-Tevis office. Equipment was carried up to the fourth floor of the building where the project was to begin. Halsey-Tevis had to supply its own portable generators for power because the local electric supply was 50 HZ rather than the U.S. standard of 60 HZ, which would properly supply all of the standard tools sent to the job.

Additional Topeka based carpenters were sent to the project once all of the materials had arrived at the project. Local African carpenters and laborers were also employed and trained in the various phases of interior construction. The building owner will utilize these trained Africans to provide any changes which may be required. With the use of movable partitions, changes have already been possible. Halsey-Tevis left all of their equipment and tools on the project for use by the owner in these changes.

Additional visits were made during the course of the project by Paul Halsey, and near the completion of the project Floyd Johnson and Dan Tevis, President of Halsey-Tevis from the Wichita office, visited the project to finalize completion. The Halsey-Tevis interior construction package was completed in July of 1978.

Floyd Johnson recently reflected on Halsey-Tevis' first overseas project, and said that the job was an invaluable learning experience for all involved. The staff had discovered how to systemize the administration and work techniques which could be readily applied to other potential overseas projects.

He also noted that to his knowledge Halsey-Tevis had helped to construct the first building in West Africa to use movable partitions, and was pleased to see the firm break new ground for interior construction techniques in that part of the world.

Halsey-Tevis has grown rapidly in experience and knowledge of specialized interior construction applications, and thanks to their unique accomplishment in Lagos, Halsey-Tevis now feels an additional sense of pride. The staff eagerly looks forward to additional challenges both home and abroad.