Each year it gets bigger and better. The 1985 annual convention of the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries - International maintained the yearly trend in Kansas City, MO, last March.

More than 1,800 wall and ceiling contractors, their wives, guests, visitors, manufacturers and suppliers, and friends of the industry showed up for the wall and ceiling industry’s once-a-year get together.

By the time the convention had pulled to a close, average attendance for the record breaking exhibit ran well over 1,200 daily. In the exhibit hall itself, some 190 exhibitors — another record, up from 150 last year — presented their products and services.

As for Kansas City, it lived up to advance billing as a typical middle American city and proved just as capable of attracting wall and ceiling contractors as any other city. The tours were packed as usual, and convention goers found that cities with a cattle-town reputation are indeed capable of producing fine steak dinners.

For those who made the journey to be with their industry in Kansas City, the trip was worthwhile. The theme, “It All Happens Here,” was significant because the convention maintained a solid pace from the beginning.

With famous industrialist J. Peter Grace, chairman of the board of the
"... Kansas City, lived up to advance billing as a typical middle American city and proved just as capable of attracting wall and ceiling contractors as any other city. The seminars were packed as usual, and convention goers found that cities with a cattle-town reputation are indeed capable of producing fine steak dinners."

W.R. Grace & Company, Cambridge, MA, serving as keynote speaker, contractors were treated to a solid schedule of education, technology, and social events.

The day before the formal convention program got underway was given over to AWCI committee meetings, and a major organizing session of the association’s new Asbestos Abatement Council.

At least 19 AWCI committees got work done prior to the opening of formal convention activities. The Board of Directors for the Wall and Ceiling Foundation also met. For the most part, the AWCI committees holding meetings at the convention site involved manufacturer and supplier representative participation and the convention provided a convenient opportunity for these individuals to take part in association activities.

Once specific association business was completed, the convention got underway in earnest. Carolyn C. Mason, chairman of the AWCI Convention Committee, extended welcoming remarks at the opening general session—with more than 1,000 attending—and the 1985 wall and ceiling industry’s convention was off and winging.
AWCI President William A. Marek spoke briefly, extending a welcome to the industry, followed by Robert F. Watkins, chairman of the Wall and Ceiling Political Action Committee, who addressed the question of “PACs Under Fire.”

AWCI General Counsel McNeill Stokes, Atlanta, GA, spoke on the subject of “Where Will We Draw the Line?” and then introduced the keynote speaker, J. Peter Grace.

Grace, who headed up a special businessman’s committee which sought out government waste, described his experiences with government bureaus and agencies. He emphasized the flippancy with which the trillion level of dollars in budgets has penetrated officials’ minds. “They talk about a ‘trill’ here and a ‘trill’ there,” Grace said, “and after awhile it becomes easy to discuss these trillions of dollars being spent.”

The Grace Commission came up with more than 2,000 recommendations capable of eliminating billions of dollars in expenditures. To assure that the commission’s findings are not filed away and forgotten, Grace has organized a marketing and advertising program designed to build grass roots support for the reforms.
More Scenes From AWCI's 1985 Annual Convention in Kansas City

The afternoon of the opening day also featured exhibit hours plus the fast series of concurrent educational seminars.

At the same time, the spouse program got underway promptly as Nonnie Whittle, St. Louis, MO, introduced Kansas City convention bureau sales manager Marti Harrison, who extended an official welcome to Kansas City.

Asbestos Convention . . .

One of the new wrinkles to an AWCI convention was the convention-within-a-convention involving the asbestos abatement industry.

Here, asbestos abatement contractors—along with AWCI contractors interested in investigating the prospects in asbestos abatement—were provided a comprehensive asbestos program. The program, of course, contained its own unique programming and was then supplemented with the many management and technological sessions contained in the standard convention program.

More than 200 asbestos abatement contractors took part in the program and the special asbestos abatement training seminar was jam-packed with interested people. The special asbestos estimating seminar conducted by Harry Carter, of the Carter School of Estimating, was likewise filled from beginning to end with contractors anxious to sharpen skills in this new burgeoning market area.

The annual Regional Vice Presidents’ Forum proved again its popularity with an audience of some 150 contractors on hand to grill AWCI’s vice presidents about business conditions, opportunities, etc., in their respective areas. This forum was shoulder-to-shoulder last year but the abrupt, expanded attendance of the asbestos training program during the same time slot may have withered some of the potential attendance away.

AWCI Executive Director Rob Lederer served as moderator for the vice presidents whose comments ranged far and wide in the affairs of
the wall and ceiling industry. What makes the regional vice presidents’ forum the popular convention program that it is revolves around the audience’s opportunity to participate. Contractors from all over the world got their chance to exchange viewpoints and data with the vice presidents and with other contractors attending the session.

Another highlight of the convention program was the annual Awards Breakfast, sponsored and presented by Dryvit Systems, Inc., of West Warwick, RI. Dryvit President Frank Morsilli personally served as moderator and master of ceremonies for the presentation of awards and recognition to outstanding companies and individuals in the wall and ceiling industry.

Second Vice President Bill Scott, of Houston, Texas, opened the Awards breakfast, and introduced Morsilli who extended a multi-lingual welcome to everyone in the ballroom, including foreign visitors.

A highlight of the breakfast was a stimulating address by Rev. Lester Kinsolving, of Vienna, VA, who spoke on “Big Media Morality — and Other Mysteries.” Kinsolving is a controversial radio announcer and writer on the east coast and has been responsible for unveiling some of the bigger political stories in the nation’s capital. When he’d completed his talk, the audience gave him a standing ovation.
The Tuesday schedule also featured the annual Wall and Ceiling Foundation banquet and auction where the auctioneer’s gavel came down on more than $73,000 worth of bid items. More than 30 items—including the new “silent auction”—were contributed by AWCI members with income to go to the Foundation and its work.

P. Kenneth Hampshire, president of the Foundation, reported on the most successful auction held to date. The master of ceremonies and the chairman of the auction committee was T. Gilley Hickman, of Dallas, TX. A crowd of nearly 600 contractors and guests attended the event.

By Wednesday, the final day of the convention, the pace was still swift and once the Dryvit Awards Breakfast concluded, the business of the association came into the forefront. The annual meeting of the Association was held in the ballroom with Second Vice President Jimmie U. Crane, of Fulton, MS, presiding.

The “Issues and Answers” vice presidents’ forum and the asbestos abatement training course played to large audiences, and then it was the annual dinner-dance with a jampacked ballroom.

One final piece of business remained for Thursday morning—the annual AWCI Board of Directors meeting. Then it was homeward bound for most of the convention goers—until next year in Anaheim.
“...to give their opinions...”

“...including an exhibitors critique...”

“...who evaluated the performance...”

“...including a mixer drawing...”

“A Presidential party...”
“...attracted old friends...”  “...and their spouses...”

“...for a few light moments...”  “...then came the Foundation Auction...”

“...with plenty of buyers...”

“...all ready to bid...”

“...when the price was right...”  “...discussing a winning bid...”

“...even the Chairman bid...”  “...while others conferred...”
Spouse Program Sets Record, Too . . .

From politics to living for nearly a century.
That’s the range of interests that was incorporated in the spouse program at the AWCI convention in Kansas City. With substantive programming becoming increasingly more important to spouses, the convention program had a bit of something for everyone.

With Nonnie Whittle, of St. Louis, MO, serving as chairman, the spouse program got off to a strong start with an address by Edie Fraser, executive with the Washington DC public relations firm of Miner and Fraser Public Affairs, who discussed “Behind the Scenes in Washington.”

The Tuesday speaker was Kay Cronkite Waldo, who heads her own firm of Kay Waldo Associates, Inc., in Kansas City. Introduced by Mrs. Hilda Crane, of Fulton, MS, the speaker discussed the full impact of a woman’s changing role in the family and in society.

Internationally renowned nutrition expert Judy Ford Stokes, of Stokes and Associates, in Atlanta, GA, gave an outstanding talk on “How to Live to be 97 Years Old . . .” Mrs. Stokes, introduced by Mrs. Nadine Scott, of Houston, TX, gave a light-hearted approach to developing your own diet, nutrition and fitness program.

Wednesday’s program included a tour of the Hallmark Cards visitors center where convention goers had the opportunity to watch an historical film and observe the engravers and presses actually developing cards. A number of the AWCI people also used the tour opportunity to visit the famous Kansas City Crown Center shopping facility.

Later in the day, Mrs. Bennie Vernetti, of Rockford, IL, presided at a highly colorful and interesting spouses’ reception and historical fashion show. Models displayed the antique fashions from the gay 90’s to World War II.
AWCIs Convention Educational Program Had Top Specialists

The photographic montage above reflects the diversity of educational seminars and sessions that highlighted the AWCI convention in Kansas City. Sessions were run concurrently on subjects ranging from management, to general contracting, to computers, to legal issues, and even a special seminar for architects.
You needed only a glance into the seminar rooms to understand that AWCI’s educational offerings at its conventions are the high point for most convention goers.

Kansas City was no exception. The concurrent seminars and educational sessions, whether morning or afternoon sessions, were constantly filled with contractors hoping to keep up with the flood of managerial and technological developments.

About the only complaint concerning the number and quality of seminars and sessions were that one contractor couldn’t possibly attend all the interesting sessions that he or she would want, owing to a judicious mix of technical and management subjects.

As soon as the opening general session concluded on Monday, the concurrent educational seminars got under way and instructors were kept busy for the balance of the convention. Monday’s offering included a seminar on fireproofing with panelists: Peter Berry, of Canada’s Donalco, Inc.; Richard Felipe, United States Mineral Products Company, Stanhope, NJ; M.E. Herrera, American Energy Products Corporation, San Jacinto, CA; and Paul Korenberg, W.R. Grace and Company, Cambridge, MA.

Other Monday seminars included “The Pros and Cons of Light General Contracting” with Mike Chambers, of Mansfield, OH; David Anderson, Sandwich, IL, and Robert L. Whittle, St. Louis, MO; “Management to Avoid Legal Problems” with Thomas J. McCartney, Amherst, NH, and AWCI general counsel McNeill Stokes, of Atlanta, GA; “Beyond the One Minute Manager” with Philip Ramey, of Woodinville, WA, and consultant James H. Morison, Kansas City, MO; “Computer Seminar” with J. Patrick Boyd, Rowlett, TX, and AWCI computer consultant Jim Jones, of Vidalia, GA; “Controlling Your Insurance Costs” with Steven Davis, CPCU of...
Dallas, TX; “Investments” with Michael Morningstar, Houston, TX; “Journeyman Training for the Open Shop” with Donald Siptak, of Houston, TX, and Robert Ferry, Washington, DC.

Two special programs on Monday included the Association Executives Seminar featuring association consultant Joseph L. Koach, of Arlington, VA; A. Victor Abnee, Jr., The Gypsum Association, Evanston, IL, and Ed Charles, Seattle, WA; and a special seminar entitled “Asbestos Abatement: Legal Problems” by Lloyd A. Fox, of Atlanta, GA, who is legal consultant to the Asbestos Abatement Council.

The Tuesday educational agenda was equally comprehensive. Concurrent seminars were: “Exterior Wall Systems,” with Douglas C. Creed, Synergy Methods, Cranston, RI, and G. Stanton Mason, Albuquerque, NM; “How to Successfully Manage Your Job Site,” with Norb Slowikowski, Darien, IL; “Cost Control,” with Steven J. Watkins, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Bill Gargano, Jr., Endicott, NY, and Daniel McGlone, Edison, NJ; “Problem Solving/Decision Making,” with Jack C. Edwards, Chicago, IL, and Charlton Price, Kansas City, MO; “How to Keep Your Firm Alive and Growing . . . An Executive Update,” with T. Gilley Hickman, Dallas, TX, and Tom Lawrence, Kansas City, MO; “Conversion to Open Shop,” Ora Blaw, Crofton, MD, and Joseph F. Canterbury, Esq., of Dallas, TX; “Piece Work: Legal Problems,” with Bradley J. Fisher, Troy, NY, and Peter Spanos, Esq., of Atlanta, GA.

The two Tuesday special programs included a special “Asbestos Abatement: The Art of Estimating” seminar by Harry G. Carter, of the Carter School of Estimating, Hudson, NH, along with a special “Asbestos Abatement: Insurance” program given by E. Arnold Powell, of EBASCO, New York, NY. Brent Schopfel, of Pennsauken, NJ, served as moderator for the insurance program.

The Wednesday educational program involved the continuation—or Part Two — of the Exterior Wall Systems seminar and this time the panelists were Ben T. Hogancamp, of Murray, KY, along with Max O. and Jerry Jensen, of Bellevue, WA, and James Novinger, Harrisburg, PA. A number of the seminars given earlier were repeated with another special “Asbestos Abatement: Regulatory Update” session with Susan Vogt, of the EPA, Washington, DC, and Wolfgang Brandner, EPA’s Kansas City representative. David Spinazzolo, of Hampton, VA, served as moderator.

Two major sessions on Wednesday, of course, involved the Regional Vice Presidents’ Forum “Issues and Answers” and the “Asbestos Abatement Training Council”; Harry J. Vernetti, of Rockford, IL, opened the vice presidents’ forum with Rob Lederer, AWCI Executive Director, serving as moderator, for the following chairman of AWCI’s Regional Conferences: John V. Arsenia, Mid-Atlantic; Peter Berry, Mid-Central; Bill R. Gargano, Jr., Northeast; Bill Knopf, Northwest; William A. Bell, Southeast; T. Gilley Hickman, Southwest, and Thomas M. Flynn, Western.
“...including good sports, too...”

“...then the guests...”

“...took a moment out...”

“...to watch the results...”

“...and observe the drawing...”
HARRY J. VERNETTI NEW AWCI PRESIDENT

H arry J. Vernetti, president of Mid-States Construction Systems, Rockford, IL, has been unanimously elected as president of the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries-International for the coming term.

He will take office starting the new fiscal year on July 1, 1985. Vernetti and other officers for the coming fiscal year were approved in a mail ballot sent to the AWCI membership on January 2, 1985.

Longtime Member . . .

A longtime member of AWCI, Vernetti served as Bylaws Chairman for the association for more than 15 years. In 1975 he had been picked to go “into the chairs”—appointed to the executive committee which would ultimately lead to AWCI’s top volunteer executive post—but declined the offer in order to spend more time with his children.

He remained active in association affairs, though, serving as chairman of the Continuing Study Council and also as chairman of the Bylaws, Audit, and Budget committees. Throughout his 24 years as an AWCI member, he has served on such committees as the Carpenters’ Liaison, Building Supply, Membership, Resolutions, Site Selection, Plasterers’ Apprenticeship, and Public Relations.

He and his wife, the former Bunnie Ambrose, live in Rockford where they are the parents of seven children. Vernetti’s son, Phillip, has joined his father in the Mid-States business.

Other officers for the coming year include: Jimmie U. Crane, Fulton, MI, First Vice President; William C. Scott, Houston, TX, Second Vice President; P. Kenneth Hampshire, Baltimore, MD, Financial Vice President and Ronald P. Brady, La Mesa, CA, Secretary. William A. Marek, the current president of AWCI, will remain on the Executive Committee in the capacity of Immediate Past President and Treasurer.

New Board Members . . .

At the same time, eight members were elected to three-year terms of the AWCI Board of Directors, including the first new at-large AWCI Non-Resident Board member under the new bylaws. The new non-resident is Jack Frost, of Capetown, South Africa, who is a member of the City Council of Capetown and a long time member of AWCI.

Other board members, including Gene A. Warren, of Burlingame, CA, who is going into his second board term, include:

Bill Gargano, Jr., Endicott, NY (Northeast Conference); Fred V. Hornuth, Evansville, IN (Mid-Central Conference); James L. Houser, Genstar Gypsum Products Company, Irving, TX (Supplier At-Large); Kenneth P. Navratil, Mansfield, OH (Mid-Atlantic Conference); David Spinazzolo, Hampton, VA (Mid-Atlantic Conference); Steven J. Watkins, Ft. Lauderdale, FL (Contractor At-Large), and Fred Treadway, Richmond, IN.
David Spinazzolo, president of Spinazzolo Systems, Inc., of Hampton, VA, was elected chairman of AWCI’s Asbestos Abatement Council for the coming term.

The Council held its regular organization meeting at the AWCI convention at which time Spinazzolo, who played a prominent role in the establishment of the Council, was elected along with the following officers: First Vice President, Peter Berry, of Donalco, Ontario, Canada; Second Vice President, Fred Treadway, of Whisenhunt & Associates, Richmond, IN, and Brent Schopfel, of Archway Contracting Company, Pennsauken, NJ.

In a well-attended meeting, asbestos abatement contractors reviewed the extensive programming schedule at the AWCI convention and noted the commendable number of abatement manufacturers and suppliers who were participating in the exhibition hall. It was noted that the Council’s asbestos abatement training program, under the leadership of AWCI Technical Director Gene Erwin, was maintaining the high level of participation and support that it has in the past. Plans were made to sponsor an additional series of seminars in Seattle, Hawaii, Chicago or Washington, Boston, and Orlando.

E. Arnold Powell, of EBASCO Risk Management, reported at the meeting that AWCI would undoubtedly be capable soon of writing insurance for the asbestos abatement industry. Lloyds of London will be used to underwrite between $1 million and $6 million, Powell reported, and AWCI’s own Hereford Insurance will be used to provide coverage for the $1 million deductible. Powell promised that a complete report on progress to date on insurance liability coverage for the industry would be forthcoming in the April/May edition of Asbestos Abatement Magazine, the official bi-monthly magazine of the Council.

Abatement contractors were brought up to date on the list of organizations participating in the Blue Ribbon Task Force which will be meeting shortly in New Jersey, Colorado, California, and also with the EPA on the contractor certification program. It was also announced that work had begun on the training tapes which the Council will offer to contractors to use as employee training instruments.

The Council reviewed the new asbestos abatement magazine that had been prepared and produced by Gerald Wykoff, who is Editor and Business Manager for AWCI’s Construction Dimensions Magazine.

AWCI’s INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR

Each year more and more foreign representatives of the wall and ceiling industry attend AWCI’s annual convention. The 1985 convention proved just as attractive as previous years.

More than 14 nations were represented in Kansas City. Their presence was acknowledged at the opening general session, at the annual banquet and dance and, especially, at the Awards Breakfast where Dryvit President Frank Morsilli extended a multilingual welcome to anyone from France, Germany, the Hispanic or Portuguese countries, and Italy.

Emphasizing the international flavor, too, was the availability of
AWCI member Karl Otto Griep, of Bodenwerder, Germany, a member of AWCI’s International Liaison Committee who was accompanied by his wife, Lonnie.

Among the nations represented in Kansas City were Germany, New Zealand, Israel, France, Mexico, Great Britain, Germany, Canada, Australia, Italy, and Sweden. A number of other foreign nationals attended the convention but did not register as foreign guests.

“...for the big event...”

“...an evening highlight...”

“The WAC/PAC 'draw down'...”

“...included an $8000 buy offer...”

“...saw one lose, another win...”  “AWCI's President and CEO open...”
“...the annual Board of Directors meeting...”

“...when President Bill Marek conducted his final meeting...”

“...where the final actions...”

“...were taken by AWCI leaders...”
The wall and ceiling industry took a number of firm stands of national and international issues when AWCI President William Marek called to order the AWCI annual meeting which was conducted in Kansas City.

With James R. Wies, chairman of AWCI’s resolutions committee presiding, AWCI contractors took a hard look, for example, at its support of joint labor management apprenticeship and training programs. Because many contractors became signatory to a union agreement so as to assure a constant flow of competent craftsmen, the contractors unanimously approved of a resolution asking that monitoring be done on joint apprenticeship training...
committees to assure that emphasis was on training — and increasing — people in the trades, to prevail upon international unions that have been involved in mergers and the like to maintain a strong emphasis on training, that steps be taken to break bureaucratic blocks that impede training, and that the Painters union make an effort to see that drywall finishing training be separate and apart from the painting programs.

In a resolution disapproving of the concept of “comparable worth,” contractors agreed unanimously that the association go on record as encouraging the dismissal of this framework of ideas as unworkable within a free enterprise system. With many AWCI meetings taking place in international sites, the contractors approved of a resolution requiring all direct costs of any meeting or study tour to be born by those participants of such a meeting or a tour.

The contractors, though, tabled a resolution that sought to bring pressure on South Africa because of that country’s policy of apartheid. The resolution asked that AWCI hold or consider no meetings or activities of any kind in South Africa as a response to discrimination there.

In the final unanimous approval, contractors gave their total support to the resolution condemning the trend to trade off traditional fire safety systems in buildings in favor of a total reliance on sprinkler systems, as was recently proposed in Dallas, TX. The resolution condemned the efforts of the sprinkler industry to trade off fireproofing for sprinklering, and further asked that AWCI become a vehicle for distributing to local associations their arguments, material and definition of channels by which sprinkler trade-offs would replace fireproofing.

In other areas at the meeting, contractors saw an outstanding movie film by the Gypsum Association on the contribution of gypsum to progress with considerable emphasis on fire rated wall assemblies. President Marek introduced the new executive committee officers who will assume office on July 1, 1985, and then introduced P. Kenneth Hampshire, chairman of AWCI’s building committee, who conducted the annual building loan drawing.
As a national committee chairman for labor relations, he’d quickly stamped himself as an innovator.

Later, as president of AWCI he introduced a series of management and financial controls that enabled the association to reach new plateaus, including its own headquarters building.

When he stepped down as president, his role with the wall and ceiling industry continued and he took an increasingly effective role in the Wall & Ceiling Industry’s Political Action committee.

By March 1983, it clearly was time...
for the wall and ceiling industry to recognize Robert F. Watkins, president of Aetna Drywall Contractors, Inc., of Ft. Lauderdale, FL. The recognition came in Kansas City when the industry awarded him its most prestigious prize—the Pinnacle Award. Introduced in 1982 as the replacement for the coveted E.F. Venzie Award, the Pinnacle symbolizes the highest level of individual talent and service to the wall and ceiling industry.

As in past years, the recipient of the Pinnacle Award was maintained as a
well-kept industry secret and Watkins, seated with his wife, Terry, in the audience never knew that his industry regarded him as its best until he saw some of his childrens’ photographs flashed on the screen. Moments later, Bob Watkins was standing on the stage as part of the small group of men who have received the Pinnacle-Jack Dillard, of Dallas’ Storbeck, Gregory & Dillard; Vito Arsena, president of Acme Arsena, of Cleveland, OH; Jim Rose, retiring chief executive officer of the Contracting Plasterers Association of Southern California, Joseph Felder, of McNulty Brothers, Chicago, IL. Munroe McNulty, president of McNulty Brothers is also a Pinnacle Award holder but was not present at the awards ceremony.

The Awards Breakfast, sponsored by Dryvit Systems, of W. Warwick, RI, is held each year to honor outstanding industry members. Dryvit President Frank Morsilli served as master of ceremonies, and the AWCI presiding officer was William C. Scott, of Scott Enterprises, Houston, TX.

Other top award winners included: J. Patrick Boyd, Dallas, TX, Outstanding Young Member Award; John A. Macioce, Pittsburgh, PA, Honorary Lifetime Membership Award; Kenneth P. Navratil, Mansfield, OH, Outstanding Regional Chairman Award; Frank P. Morsilli, Outstanding Association Member Award; Francisco S. Ugale, of Honolulu, winner of the “Unsung Hero” Award; Daniel McGlone, of Rahway, NJ, and
“...Boyd: Outstanding Young Member...”

“...Morsili: Outstanding Associate Member...”

“...Ugale: Unsung Hero Award...”

“...Mascioce: Honorary Lifetime Membership...”
Laurance Fernald, St. Petersburg, FL, co-winners of the Outstanding Industry Employee Award; C.A. Christians winner of a second Lifetime Membership Award (posthumously), and the E.F. Brady Company, Inc., of San Diego, CA, winner of the J.D. McNulty Award. Eloise Brady, widow of the founder of the E.F. Brady Company, was on hand to receive the McNulty Award.