The 74th Convention and Exposition of the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries - International was held March 19-24, 1991 in San Francisco and was, by all accounts, a successful convention. From the business program to the exposition hall, the largest wall and ceiling exhibition ever, to the many educational seminars offered, the convention offered something for everyone.

The convention business program concentrated on helping contractors thrive in a tough economy. Educational sessions looked at marketing opportunities available, and the exhibit hall gave suppliers the opportunity to show their products and discuss concerns with contractors. Social aspects of the convention made it worthwhile too, from the outstanding “San Francisco Street Fair” get-acquainted reception to the excellent tours of San Francisco and the final night dinner-dance.

Highlights of the convention included:

--A talk by Jerry Jackson, President and Chief Operating Officer of Fails Management Institute, on “Profit Strategies in a Tough Market.” Mr. Jackson provided a series of strategic profiles to help contractors differentiate themselves; for instance, the low-cost producer would concentrate on maximizing productivity and keeping overhead to a minimum, while the high-value producer would dedicate all additional costs to providing greater value to the customer. Both strategies have a place in the market, but contractors have to communicate their
uniqueness to their customers. Mr. Jackson also brought in the importance of hiring the best people, understanding contracts completely, and using management information systems wisely.

--A presentation by Roger BelAir, a financial strategist from Seattle, Washington, on “How to Borrow Money from Your Banker.” Mr. BelAir provided the five questions normally asked by a banker of a prospective business borrower, and he explained why these questions are important as well as follow-up questions to each one. He gave hints on the types of information bankers were looking for when they asked each question. For example, the first question asked borrowers to provide information about themselves and their companies. This is important, Mr. BelAir said, because so many companies fail due to management. The banker wants to see indications that proper management techniques such as planning are in place.

--An address by Lyn Nofziger, who served as President Reagan’s top adviser for six years of his presidency, was a delight to all. Mr. Nofziger laid the blame for the current recession on politicians, including President
Award recipients during Friday’s Breakfast of Champions, where Immediate Past President Ron Brady presented the awards. Top row, Bob Geyer is named Supplier of the Year and Gilley Hickman receives the Winning Spirit Award. Second row, Mark Nabity receives the Young Member Achievement Award and Frank Nunes, Bob Drury, Clint Fladland, Wayne James and Gene Fisher are named Outstanding Association Executives. Third row, Gabe Reitter is named Outstanding Committee Chairman and the St. Louis chapter is named Distinguished Chartered Chapter. Fourth row, Dick Hopkins receives the “Unsung Hero” award and Larry Fernald, Nathan Kimmel, Deane Rockwell, Homer Battles and Mike Boyd (accepting for Jack Dillard) receive awards as Lifetime Honorary Members. Left, Joe Douglas receives the Foundation’s McNulty Award presented by Foundation President Leonard Liddle.
Bush, who were afraid to continue President Reagan’s policy of lowering taxes and government spending. He compared economists to meteorologists. “A meteorologist can tell you exactly how much rain fell last week,” he said, “but I haven’t met one yet who can predict with any accuracy how much rain will fall next week.” He said when people pay a dollar in taxes, it stops with the government. “When they spend it, it goes from pocket to pocket and grows. While the government doesn’t get as much money from every dollar spent, there are more dollars around.” He noted that Reagan did more than many people thought possible, but the work was in danger of being undone by politicians now in office.

---Educational programs ranged from an international technical question and answer session that was standing room only, sponsored by Hacker Industries, to U.S. Gypsum’s unique “Sound Booth” in which attendees learned about the variables affecting sound control. Other sessions looked at such topics as ceiling systems, scaffolding, seismic design, EIFS, and stucco. Nearly 30 educational seminars were offered at different times during the convention.

---An attraction in the exhibit hall was the AWCI/USG Hospitality Center, which included crafts demonstrations, complimentary shoe shines, a caricaturist, and many snacks and refreshments.

---Spouses were not neglected. In addition to their involvement in all business and social activities at the convention, two sessions were devoted
entirely to them: “Power Listening,” led by consultant Sharon McElroy, and “Of All the Nerve,” a fascinating presentation in which actress/author Muriel Bach transformed herself into six different risk-taking women.

--The President’s Opening Reception, “The Golden Gate Street Fair Odyssey” sponsored by W.R. Grace, was a carnival-like party enjoyed by all. Attendees played games of chance to win stuffed animals and other treasures while they ate popcorn and hot dogs and listened to the music of a Dixieland band. There was plenty of time to renew old acquaintances and meet new friends.

--The “Breakfast of Champions” Awards Breakfast sponsored by Dryvit Systems saw awards presented to a number of people. The highlight was Harry Vernetti’s induction into AWCI’s Circle of Leadership and the presentation of the Pinnacle Award to him. With his family and friends surrounding him onstage, Mr. Vernetti gave an emotional and heartfelt thanks for the surprise presentation.

--The 10th Annual Foundation Auction Reception and Dinner, held to provide funds for the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry, was once again a stunning success. Master of ceremonies T. Gilley Hickman and

Education seminars were well attended and worth while.

The USG-sponsored Hospitality Center in the Exhibit Hall was a big hit.

Scenes from the Lifetime Members reception in the Presidential Suite.

The International Q&A, left, and the Regional Caucuses attracted large crowds.
Above, President Steven J. Watkins passes the gavel to President-Elect Michael R. Boyd during the general meeting on Friday. Left, President-Elect Boyd addresses the audience during the Saturday Gala Banquet. Below, Michael Boyd and his wife DuLu receive the Presidential portrait, donated every year by U.S. Gypsum, from Frank Wall.

Auctioneer Jarvene Shackleford gave guests the opportunity to bid on such items as a classic 1963 Chevrolet Impala, a 10-day safari with first class accommodations, valuable works of art, fishing expeditions, fine jewelry, and more. The auction had a western theme, with many guests in western attire.

--The final night Gala Banquet, “Romancing San Francisco,” was the grand finale to the exciting and eventful week. Following a gourmet dinner, President Steven J. Watkins summarized the convention and his year in office, and President-Elect Michael R. Boyd received his portrait, provided by USG. The John Coppola Band provided music.
to dance the night away.

In addition to these outstanding events, the convention included committee meetings, the meeting of AWCI's Board of Directors, the live drywall contest sponsored by the National Joint Painting, Decorating & Drywall Apprenticeship and Training Committee, and the many opportunities to mingle with peers in the industry. It was a week in which AWCI members and guests accomplished a great deal for the association, and it was also an excellent opportunity for everyone to take home something of value.


Above, Joan Fisher presents the First Lady’s medallion to Ann Watkins during the Gala Banquet Saturday night. Above right, Gabe Reitter urges members to become Lifetime Members (and buy raffle tickets) during the general membership meeting. Right, Past President Burt Fisher congratulates Steve Watkins after presenting him with the President’s medallion at the Banquet.