At the Pinnacle of the Industry:

Max O. Jensen

Selection Criteria

Here’s what Pinnacle Award Selection Committee Chairman James E. Biddle had to say about the selection process:

“Each year our industry honors one of our own. We recognize the one individual who most personifies the high standards of excellence that each of us holds so dear. AWCI’s most prestigious award is presented to the individual who most merits our industry’s recognition, an individual who has given unselfishly of his time and energy to benefit AWCI and the industry.

“We considered the candidate’s business, his relationship with his family, employees, community and his image within his industry. We evaluated his dedication to our association, including how long he has served and in what capacities. We weighed his concern for those less fortunate, without regard for personal reward and recognition.

“These are but a few of the criteria the committee considered in arriving at our decision for this year’s awardee. And finally, the name has been a closely guarded secret since the committee’s final selection,” Biddle added.

All About Max O. Jensen

Born to Jenny and Otto in August 1924 in St. Anthony, ID, together with two brothers, Bob and Don and sister Mary Lou, Max studied hard in a one room school house. When he was only 12, his father, a carpenter, died, leaving Max a set of well-used carpenter tools.

In 1943 Max joined the army, the 82nd airborne division. Days before leaving for basic training he met Luella Mae Brown, “Louie,” on a blind date. On June 5, 1944, they were married. Then he was off to WWII.

When Max returned home in 1946, he found a job doing the only thing he was trained to do: jumping out of airplanes. He spent his summers working as a smoke jumper for the Montana Forest Service, living in a little college town boarding house, sharing a bathroom and kitchen. In the winters, Max and his young family lived in Salt Lake City, where Max worked in a cabinet shop.

In March 1948, Max got a job for which he seemed qualified. The ad read, “No experience necessary. Must have a hammer.” When the company, Beehive Drywall, went out of business two years later, he and his hanging partner scrounged and borrowed enough money to buy the business. They later renamed it “Mechanical Drywall” to depict the revolution from hand to mechanical taping tools.

AWCI’s most prestigious award is presented to the individual who most merits our industry’s recognition, an individual who has given to AWCI and the wall and ceiling industry. Candidates are evaluated not only on their dedication to the industry but also on civic and community work and the excellence of their companies.

On Saturday, April 3, the 1993 Pinnacle Award was presented to Max O. Jensen.
A beaming Max Jensen holds his prize.

Max and Luella Mae “Louie” Brown were married on June 5, 1944.

1944: Off to World War II.

After the war, Max continued jumping out of airplanes, only now he did it for the Montana Forest Service.

Max and Luella Mae “Louie” Brown were married on June 5, 1944.

Over the next several years, the business grew, branching out to Denver and Seattle. With things slowing down in Salt Lake City and his third partner, Arnie Larson, in Denver, Max and Louie and their seven children (Chris, Gail, Carol, Kurt, Jerry, Nate and Connie) moved to Seattle in the late 1960s. By this time, the company was called Pacific Partitions Systems, Inc.

Once settled in Seattle, Max became active in the Northwest Drywall Contractors Association, where he served several terms on the Board of Directors and as President.

According to Construction Dimensions, “When Max O. Jensen changed the name of his company December 1, [1982] from Pacific Partitions Systems, Inc. to Pacific Construction Systems, Inc., it spelled a new era for the Bellevue, WA contracting firm. It meant that Max’s diversified company is now ready to accept any work in section 9—plus exterior panels. The old name limited people’s understanding of what the company can do. The image today is: anything involving exterior or interior systems.”

That was typical of Max, who
Max O. Jensen, always one step ahead

always seemed to be one step ahead of the industry, understanding its needs and, if necessary, inventing the tools to make it better.

His strong leadership was not limited to his own successful companies.

Max spent many hours in dedicated service to the industry through his participation in numerous industry committees and trust funds. He served as Trustee and Chairman of the Drywall Industry Promotion Trust and as the Chairman of the Carpenters section of Management’s Labor Negotiating Committees.

In 1984, Max, along with three other drywall contractors, met with four plastering contractors over several months to successfully merge the two associations and industry trust funds into what is now the Northwest Wall & Ceiling Contractors Association and the Northwest Wall & Ceiling Industry Promotion Trust.

Next Month: Max shares his vision of our industry’s future.