Welcoming the New President of AWCI, T. J. McCartney

AWCI’s 1995-96 President Is Ready to Give Something Back to the Association to Which He’s Belonged for More Than 30 Years

By Michael J. Major

“I’ve gotten so much out of AWCI that now it’s payback time, time to give something back for all the benefits I’ve received from the organization.” This is the way Thomas J. McCartney, president of T. J. McCartney, Inc., Hollis, N.H., regards his recent election as president of the Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries—International, headquartered in Falls Church, Va.

McCartney, in fact, has been giving something back for the past quarter century that he’s been a very active member in AWCI. But what he likes to talk about are the benefits he’s received. “For me the greatest value in AWCI has been in the interaction or networking with other members,” McCartney explains. “The opportunity to be helped by and to acquire knowledge from these people has been a major reason for my success.”

Networking Is Key

When asked if he can think of illustrative examples that come to mind, McCartney replies, “I’ve had some 30 to 40 specific times when I’ve contacted someone in Florida, Chicago or Ohio, whether about production, product efficiency, how to handle an OSHA fine, computer system estimating, job costing, the list goes on. I can’t put a dollar value on it. But, for me, this is what AWCI is all about.”

This being the case, it is not surprising that one of McCartney’s main goals for AWCI is to dramatically improve communication among members. “I’m interested in the on-line feature of the computer and conference calls as ways to provide education and solve problems,” McCartney says. “With the business climate the way it is today, people are reluctant to take three or four days off to travel.”

Ready for the Show

For a similar reason, McCartney is aiming for a single, all-inclusive annual trade show, rather than several smaller shows. “We’ve just had a major joint convention with the Ceilings & Interiors Systems Construction Association in Nashville, Tenn., which is probably the most successful trade show that I’ve ever seen. I’d like to see that type of effort continue on an annual basis, and also include the EIFS Industry Members Association.

“The feedback we’ve gotten from our joint convention with CISCA has been very positive, and we believe that getting all of the manufacturers, vendors, suppliers and contractors under the same roof for a single show will benefit everybody,” McCartney says.

A Stronger Association

This first goal plays right into McCartney’s second goal: to increase contractor membership. For, in addition to making AWCI an even stronger organization, more contractors showing up at the AWCI annual convention will create an even stronger motivation for manufacturers, distributors and suppliers to attend.

To increase contractor membership numbers, McCartney knows it is important that he also increase member services, and this is his
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third goal. “What is unique about AWCI is the educational and technical assistance we provide in all phases of construction, through manuals, seminars and various educational programs,” McCartney says. “We plan to continue along these lines, such as expanding our already successful insurance and workers’ compensation programs. We’ll soon be coming out with our safety manual, which is as complete as any in the industry. We’re providing a toll-free technical service hotline for members and we plan to improve the business climate through tort reform and the way OSHA administers its program.”

A New Yorker in New Hampshire

McCartney was born in 1933 in Albany, N.Y., where he was raised. He served as a Marine fighter pilot from 1955 through 1959, then went to work for various drywall and plastering companies. It’s a pleasant irony that two of the gentlemen McCartney worked with in those early years, Gerold Reed and Richard Connor, also went on to become AWCI presidents.

In 1976, he started his own drywall company and was successful from the start, much of which he credits to good timing. “There was not too much struggle in the beginning,” he says. “It was not until the mid and late 1980s that I had to do some serious managing.” He adds that the business climate in his New England area is not good. “In my
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talks with contractors around the country, the economy has not recovered that much from the recession, despite what the current administration says. This is all the more reason for all of us in AWCI to work closely together,” he says.

McCartney’s mother is still alive, at age 89, and his father died last year at age 88. He has a brother who is an architect and a sister who is a retired teacher. He has been married to his wife, Maura, for 39 years, and has five children. His daughter, Mary, is in the process of taking over his business. McCartney has been active in a number of charities, and he enjoys a variety of hobbies, including golf, fishing and hunting.

As to his new role as president of AWCI, McCartney says, “The only way this would be a difficult job would be for me to make it difficult, but that I’m not going to do. AWCI has been successful because of the quality of its members. So, rather than try to reinvent the wheel, I will depend upon their goodwill and dedication. Rather than consider this a difficult task, I look upon it as an honor.”

About the Author
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