AWCI recently celebrated its most successful convention of the decade, an indication of the health and strength of the wall and ceiling industry. Held in New Orleans April 9-12, preliminary figures show that nearly 2,000 people attended the educational sessions and networking events of AWCI’s 80th annual convention, and viewed the newest industry products at the trade show.

“The New Orleans convention is our biggest show of the decade in terms of attendance,” said AWCI President Stephen R. Baker. “AWCI’s records do not go back far enough for us to be able to say it was the biggest show ever in the history of AWCI, but I would bet it comes very close. The industry is on a positive growth track, as evidenced by the amount of support received for this convention.”

In all, 90 industry-related companies purchased 279 booths for the joint exposition. More than 450 exhibitor personnel were on hand to market their wares to the 1,450 attendees who went to the expo. Products on display included everything from tools and equipment to insurance, from wallboard to exterior wall fasteners.

“The show floor was sold out well in advance,” said Margaret J. Roberts, AWCI’s director of meetings and conventions. “For the first time, we had to start a waiting list for those who wanted to buy a booth. Unfortunately, we could not accommodate all the requests, but this indicates the potential for an even larger show in Reno in 1998.”

At the time this newsletter went to press fewer than 50 booths were available for the 1998 exposition.

HIGHLIGHTS OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The AWCI convention began with meetings of various AWCI committees on Wednesday and Thursday.

Those who attended the Supplier Members Committee meeting learned about a new member benefit that provides reduced
costs on shipping and freight. (A flyer is enclosed with this issue of the newsletter for those who want more information.)

Also at the suppliers meeting several nominations were made. First, Carol Schary, Steve Peters and Gabe Bifano were elected to serve as members of the 1999-2000 Supplier Members Committee. Kevin Quinn was nominated to fill the committee position left vacant by Jim Van Dyke; Quinn will serve until the end of the 1999 term.

The Awards Committee developed plans for a safety award, which will be presented at AWCI’s 1998 convention. By establishing an award for safety, AWCI hopes to increase safety awareness in the industry and decrease the number of lost-time accidents and illnesses of AWCI members.

The new safety award will be given in addition to the Pinnacle Award and the Excellence in Construction Award. Details about how to nominate your company for the safety award will be available later in the year.

In addition to the current committee members, representatives of the Finishing Contractors Association, the International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners of America and the Operative Plasterers’ and Cement Masons’ International Association attended the meetings of the Union Contractors Council.

“Having the union officials in attendance at the crafts committee meetings helped to foster good relations among all the trades,” said Larry Cooley, chairman of the Union Contractors Council.

Members of the Computer Technology Committee evaluated the AWCI Web site and looked at new ways the committee can assist members. As a result, a new member benefit in the works is computer technical assistance. The plan is to make a computer expert available to members who need service with their computer hardware and software. More details on this new member benefit will be reported as they are available.

The committees of the Construction Technology Council met to discuss various industry standards and AWCI technical publications.

The Interior & Exterior Insulation Products Committee voted to change its name to the EIFS and Related Products Committee. Committee members also agreed to review EIMA’s Class Pb EIFS details booklet for possible association enforcement.

The Gypsum Board, Gypsum/Metal lath/Gypsum Plaster Committee
The winner of AWCI’s most prestigious award this year is William A. Bell, chief executive officer of Gayhawk Corporation, Lexington, Ky.

Bell has served AWCI and the industry in many ways during his career in the wall and ceiling industry. His support of AWCI is evidenced in the amount of time he has given to the association. In addition to serving on many industry committees over the years, Bell was AWCI’s 1993-1994 president, and is a past chairman of the AWCI Convention Committee. In 1985 he was named Outstanding Regional Chairman, and he received the J. D. McNulty Award in 1987.

The award presentation was made during the Awards Branch during AWCI’s 1997 Annual Convention. Those at the brunch were treated to a “This Is Your Life” type of video biography of the award winner. Except for a few additions, the text that follows is the script that accompanied the video, which was produced by Edge City Productions in Reston, Va.

Bill Bell was born in 1940, just a year before the second World War, in a small Kentucky town. The oldest of three, he set an example quietly but with purpose, principal and progress in mind. In keeping with the spirit of the times, he laid a foundation to build a life with his family, to build one of the most successful businesses of its kind, and fashion a work environment and community that to this day is a living monument to his vision.

After graduating from high school in 1958, he left behind a legacy as the basketball team’s “flashy little guard.” After high-school graduation, he entered Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, where he obtained a degree in economics and sociology. It was there that he met his future partner in life, Joyce Reed of Coral Gables, Fla.

Bill and Joyce married in 1962, and in 1963, backed by degrees from the university and Officer Candidate School, he started his business career as a stock salesman for an insurance company.

In 1965 he started working for United States Gypsum Company in Lexington, Ky.

Daughter Allison was born in 1966, and Leslie completed the family in 1969. It was at this time that Astronaut Neil Armstrong took one giant leap for mankind, and Bill Bell started his own business. It was those years, the move, and that special brand of enthusiasm that would allow him to seize the opportunity to revive the dormant company, Drywall Inc., on the verge of a new decade.

In 1967 Bill bought out the original owner of Drywall Inc. and ran the business from his garage. Joyce answered the phones and did the payroll. He worked day and night, sometimes earning just $100 a job. But he was not discouraged; Bill honed his instinct and strategy and kept his eye on the goal. The company started in residential drywall, but slowly worked itself into light and then full commercial work, and expanded to include acoustical, metal framing and insulation.

In only six years, the business moved out of the Bell home and into a larger warehouse and office that they built. The business was booming. He knew that playing the game the best you can, paying attention to the fundamentals and selling hard and often would lead to success—but not without innovation.

It wasn’t long before his company was known in Kentucky as the one that pioneered prefabricated exterior wall panels. These panels are recognized nationally today as a superior advancement. Bill distinguished his company, identified the demand, and began functioning as a contractor, manufacturer and supplier. In 1978 he and a partner started Grayhawk & Building Supply Co., Inc., which soon became the largest acoustical supply company in the state.

Bill joined The Association of the Wall and Ceiling Industries-International in 1980 and, over the next 17 years, devoted his time, leadership and service to nearly every AWCI committee.

He started Panel Tech, Inc. in 1981 as a separate company that would fabricate EIFS panels. His companies were doing more than $6 million per year in business volume.

As chief executive officer, he shifted to new technology and new modes of fabrication. Both companies continued to grow, and the industry took notice. In 1988 he received AWCI’s J. D. McNulty Award for his work with prefabricated panels.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Bill continued to look to the future. He once heard that it is good luck to see a hawk, so, for both economy and efficiency, he merged Drywall, Inc. and Panel Tech to form Grayhawk in 1990.

Grayhawk took flight. The company today has more than 200 employees, some of whom have been with him from the beginning—including his wife and daughters. Grayhawk’s annual revenues in the range of $7 million to $10 million. Grayhawk has done prefabricated panel projects more than 20 states. The company is currently working on a $74 million church project.

In 1993 he became president of AWCI, and continues today to serve on many AWCI committees. His zeal for service continues to extend beyond AWCI to the United Way, the Rehab Hospital, the Lexington Children’s Museum and the University of Kentucky.
AWCI's Excellence in Construction Award was presented for the first time this year, to a team that consists of the contractors, manufacturers and suppliers/distributors who worked together on an outstanding wall and ceiling project. One winning project and two honorable mentions were honored at AWCI's 1997 Annual Convention.

**The Winner**

The winning project is the Columbia (S.C.) Airport Concourse. The 100,000+ square-foot project was started Oct. 1, 1995, and was finished by Oct. 30, 1996. The winning team is comprised of Bonitz Contracting Company, Inc., Columbia, S.C., the contractor responsible for the concourse's interior work; Consolidated Systems, Inc., Columbia, S.C., who manufactured the metal studs used on the project; Specialties, Inc., Columbia, S.C., who supplied the acoustical ceilings, firestop compound, metal studs and wallboard; and United States Gypsum Company, which is headquartered in Chicago, who manufactured the sheathing, firestop compound and wallboard that was used on the job. Precision Walls, Inc. of Raleigh, N.C., fabricated the aluminum panels for the project.

The challenges facing all parties involved on the Columbia Airport Addition were numerous. First and foremost, the existing airport was to remain in operation at all times. The work done was in very close proximity to aircraft while airport support personnel continued their daily operations. Constant cleanup was required so there was no possibility for any type debris blowing into and damaging a jet engine.

For security reasons, all personnel and material deliveries were escorted in and out of the project area. All personnel were on the jobsite by a scheduled time. Once there, no one could leave and no one could enter after the original scheduled time without security escort. Even routine sales calls were difficult. Parking was approximately one mile away. The general contractor provided a shuttle service across airport property and through security gates. The
daily material deliveries required close coordination and scheduling with escort vehicles. These deliveries of material were made across active runways and tarmacs. Obviously, this was an extremely high-profile job. All people entering and leaving the airport viewed the construction as it progressed. Quality was of utmost importance, and the crews on this project earned a quality award numerous times. Also, safety was the most important part of the entire job. The amount of scaffolding and high work areas required accentuated safety requirements.

One of the unique features of the airport is the pre-manufactured exterior aluminum panels. These panels defined all openings and, therefore, all vertical break dimensions. Since Bonitz was doing the interior work, their interior dimensions became critical for all aspects of the job.

The project was completed on schedule, within the budget, without any sacrifice for quality and, most importantly, there were no lost-time accidents. Columbia certainly has a new airport of which it can be proud.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Two honorable mentions also were named for excellence in construction.

The first project honored is the Central Florida Heart Center in Ocala, Fla. The contractor on this job was Suncoast Acoustical Contractors, Inc., also located in Ocala. The manufacturers who contributed to this job are Armstrong World Industries, Deitrich Industries and United States Gypsum Co. The AWCI-member suppliers on this project were Armstrong World Industries and Panther Supply.

Just under 50,000 square feet, this project was built with light-gauge metal walls and light-gauge pre-engineered metal roof trusses. It was a difficult roof system and framing package. The schedule was on a fast track and had a $15,000 per day liquidated damages clause in the contract. Our contract included all the framing, blocking, trusses, drywall, insulation, exterior sheathing, vapor barrier and acoustical ceilings. Work started July 8, 1996, and the job was finished Oct. 14, 1996; the job was completed under schedule.

The second project receiving an honorable mention is the Loch Raven VA Nursing Home, located in Baltimore. Manganaro Corporation of Maryland, Beltsville, Md., was the contractor on this job, which used material made by United States Gypsum Co. and supplied by MidAtlantic Materials. More than 100,000 square feet, this project exemplifies United States Gypsum Company’s ability to provide products and systems that meet the needs of the market. Manganaro Corp. worked closely with USG personnel to submit and get approval for USG’s exterior systems as an upgrade over the standard EIFS specification, thereby providing the owner with a single-source system. The use of Sheetrock gypsum panels and accessories throughout the interior shows Manganaro’s preference and commitment for providing materials and workmanship of the highest quality. The job was completed in eight months.

Florida Heart Center, Ocala, Fla.

Loch Raven VA Nursing Home, Baltimore
AWCI/CISCA Joint Exposition
Convention, continued from page 31

passed motions relating to an association position on jobsite lighting conditions and jobsite humidity conditions.

The Spray Fire Resistive Materials Committee continued its work on the draft of a testing standard for intumescent fireproofing products. The committee also will review the existing AWCI Fireproofing Industry Standards document to bring it up-to-date.

The Portland Cement Plaster Committee reviewed the draft of a document on evaluating portland cement plaster. The final draft will be reviewed by the committee at the fall Industry Executives Conference.

EDUCATION SESSIONS

Those who attended the education sessions now have the power of knowledge. The topics discussed are as follows:

- Fleet management and driver safety.
- Aggressive claims management.
- Technology as an information resource.
- The basics of fireproofing.
- How AIA’s document revisions will affect subcontractors.
- Getting comfortable with construction scaffolding.
- Excellence in field management.
- The field manager’s impact on company profits.
- Understanding the financial performance of construction firms.
- Hiring and firing by the book.

AWARD AND RAFFLE WINNERS

The Pinnacle Award, AWCI’s most prestigious honor, was presented to William A. Bell, chief executive officer of Grayhawk Corporation, Lexington, Ky.

Bell has served AWCI and the industry in many ways during his career in the wall and ceiling industry. Bell’s support of AWCI is evidenced in the amount of time he has given to the association. In addition to serving on many industry committees over the years, Bell was AWCI’s 1993-1994 president, and has been chairman of the AWCI Convention Committee. In 1985 he was named Outstanding Regional Chairman, and he received the J. D. McNulty Award in 1987. (For more about this award winner, see page 32.)

AWCI’s Excellence in Construction Award, presented for the first time this year, is given to a team that consists of the contractors, manufacturers and suppliers/distributors who worked together on an outstanding wall and ceiling project.

The winning project is the Columbia (S.C.) Airport Concourse. The winning team is comprised of Bonitz Contracting Company, Inc., Greenville, S.C., the contractor responsible for the concourse’s interior work; Consolidated Systems, Inc., Columbia, S.C., who manufactured the metal studs used on the project; Specialties, Inc., Columbia, S.C., who supplied the acoustical ceilings, firestop compound, metal studs and wallboard; and United States Gypsum Company, which is headquartered in Chicago, who manufactured the sheathing, firestop compound and wallboard that was used on the job. Also, Precision Walls, Inc. of Raleigh, N.C., fabricated the aluminum panels for the project.

Two honorable mentions also were named for excellence in construction.

The first project honored is the Central Florida Heart Center in Ocala, Fla. The contractor was Suncoast Acoustical Contractors, Inc., also located in Ocala. The manufacturers who contributed to this job are Armstrong World Industries, Deitrich Industries and United States Gypsum Co. The AWCI-member suppliers on this pro-
The annual auction of the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry was held in conjunction with the Final Night Dinner. Following the silent auction, attendees were greeted with a Mardi Gras-style parade that included a motorcycles, floats, costumes and beads. Many members caught the spirit and joined the line, waving their napkins, as the parade snaked through the tables in the ballroom.

The success of the 1997 auction to benefit the FWCI mirrors the overall success of the convention.

More than 60 items were offered to attendees of the FWCI’s Silent Auction, and 24 items were up for grabs at the Live Auction.

The hot item at the live auction—the 1978 Chevrolet Corvette Indy Pace Car—was won by Jim Wade of BKW Enterprises, Columbus, Ohio. The bidding, which started at $16,000, ended moments later at $36,000.

The auction’s supporters helped the FWCI bring in more than $80,000, the highest grossing fund-raising event in the FWCI’s history.

Honored Sponsors

AWCI thanks the following firms who so generously gave to our convention.

Grabber® Construction Products
Convention Attendee Directory 1978 Chevrolet Corvette
Gypsum Association
President’s Reception
Marino/Ware, a division of Ware Industries
Exhibit Hall Shoe Shines
National Gypsum Company
Final Night Dinner/FWCI Auction
Convention Program Book
Senergy, Inc.
Lifetime Member Reception
United States Gypsum Company
Opening General Session and Awards Brunch