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Publisher's Letter



Dear Readers,

I have to say I am sick of watching television and looking at a morning paper with headlines that simply depress me.

From slanderous campaign ads that tried to sway my way of thinking to a big red arrow that pointed down at a big drop in the stock market, it all created this feeling of irritation and frustration as I headed off to work one recent morning.

It wasn't until I turned on the radio to find something with entertainment value that I found my spirit lifting because of a good old song called "Sweet Home Alabama." Suddenly my worries were a thing of the past and life was back to the way I liked it. Refreshing like the morning sunrise.

What am I trying to say? Good question.

What I realized that morning was that this life of mine is about what I make of it — not what some politician or screwed-up economy dictates. It's what I do that makes it something.

"Joe the Plumber" has been on the news listening to presidential candidates attempt to tell him what they would do for Joe in the White House. I'm going to tell you this right now: It's not about what some government employee is going to do for us, it's what we are going to do for us. As America's backbone, namely the most innovative and creative society in the world, we are about what we set out to accomplish with our mind and hands.

I can't help but remember this historic quote: "When the people fear their government, there is tyranny; when the government fears the people, there is liberty."

My friends, it does not matter which one of our citizens is sitting in that White House, because if we are still the nation I know, our government is going to spend the next four years listening to our hammers and saws at work outside their window every morning. And if they don't like it, it simply means they need to get to work earlier each morning as well.

My friends, these are the times of greatest opportunity for us. We are hard-working, industrious and innovative people, and this is our opportunity to let that talent shine.

Sincerely,

Bent Mikkelsen, Publisher

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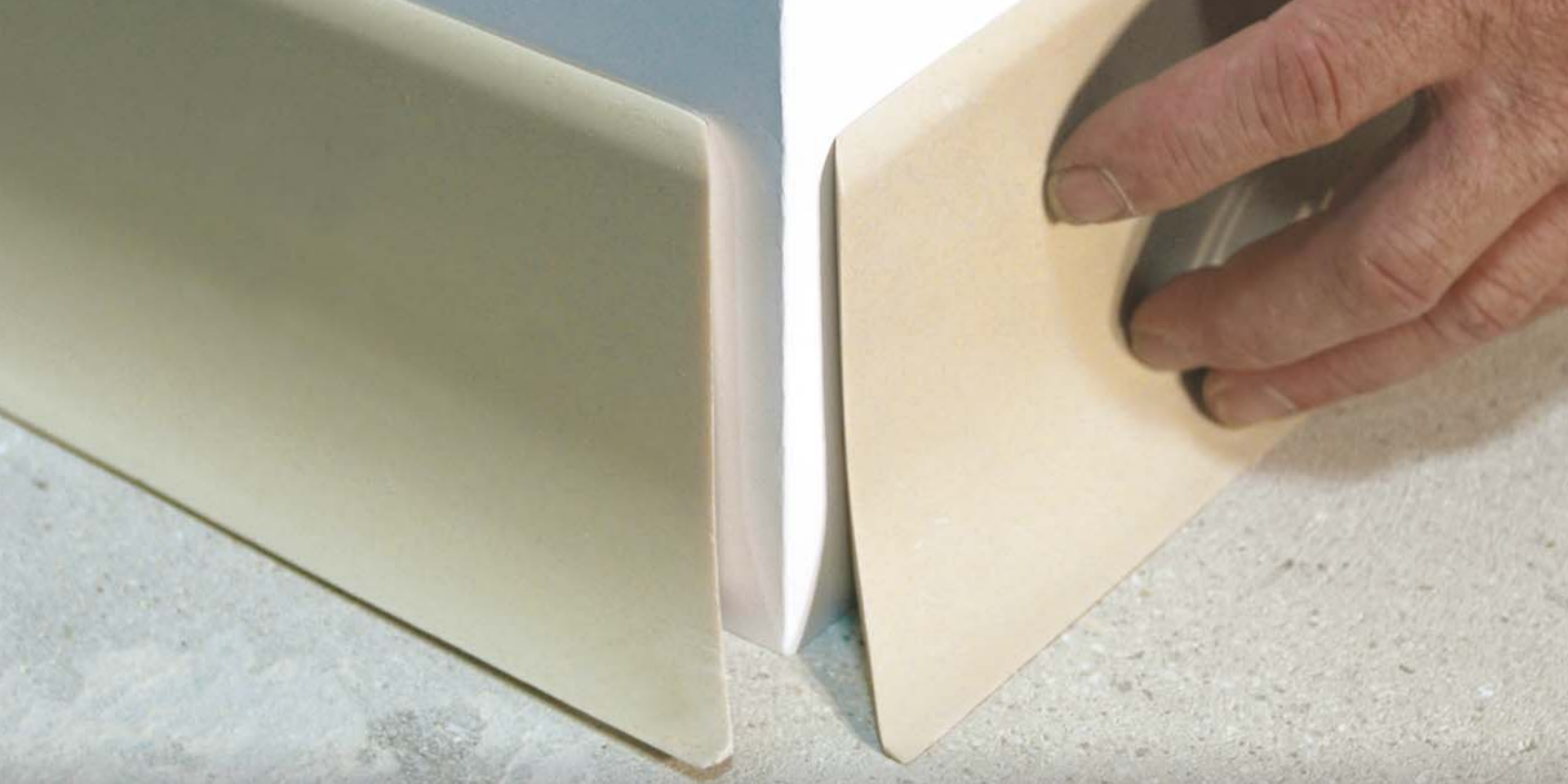
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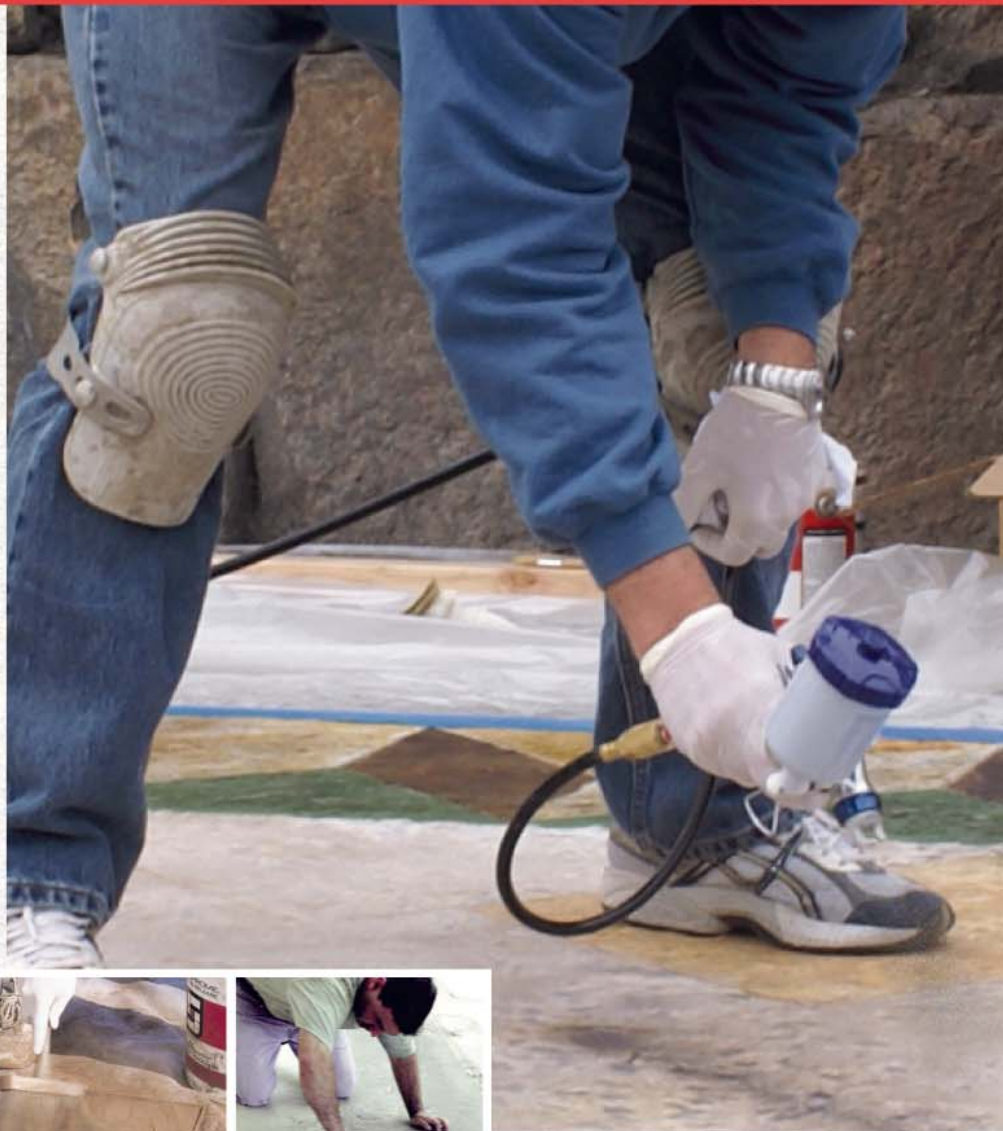
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On the Cover: Distinctive Concrete owner Bill Guthro created this floor for Planet Fitness health club in Somerville, Mass., using a 1/8-inch integrally colored microtopping. Read more about Guthro and his company on page 30. Photo courtesy of Distinctive Concrete.

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Cheng, Buddy Rhodes join forces to host December training event

Cheng Concrete and Buddy Rhodes Artisan Concrete have announced a first-ever collaboration. They are offering Ultimate Concrete Countertop Training, featuring innovative methods from the two founding fathers of concrete countertops in one week at one destination.

The training program will be held Dec. 2-10 in the San Francisco Bay Area. It includes a three-day Professional Concrete Countertop Training course by Cheng Concrete, two-day Comprehensive Training from Buddy Rhodes, and Cheng GFRC Countertop and Sink Training featuring Jim Ralston.

The Rhodes and Cheng training facilities are both located in the Bay Area — Buddy Rhodes' studio is in San Francisco and Fu-Tung Cheng's is 10 miles away, across the Bay Bridge in Berkeley, Calif. Both renowned for their artisan-based and innovative approaches to concrete, Fu-Tung Cheng and Buddy Rhodes have each developed world-class training facilities and programs that provide hands-on experiences. They can offer training options that range from approachable for a beginner to technically challenging for the professional contractor.

 www.chengconcrete.com

 www.buddyrhodes.com

Concrete Industry Management program added at Texas State University

The Concrete Industry Management program — a business-intensive program that awards students a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Concrete Industry Management — has announced the addition of CIM to the curriculum of Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, beginning in spring 2009.

“Given the fact that Texas is ranked second nationally in terms of volume of ready-mix concrete production and the number of plants, the CIM program is a very timely addition at Texas State University-San Marcos,” said Vedaraman Sriraman,

Texas State department chair of technology, in a press release.

The goal of the CIM program is to turn out broadly educated graduates who are grounded in basic business management and knowledgeable of concrete technology and techniques. They should be able to manage people and systems as well as promote products or services related to the concrete industry. The program includes a broad range of courses, from English and history to science and mathematics.

CIM currently has programs at Middle Tennessee State University, Arizona State University, the New Jersey Institute of Technology and California State University, Chico.


 www.concretedegree.com

Concrete Countertop Institute announces fall 2008 class lineup

The Concrete Countertop Institute released its hands-on fall 2008 class lineup.

The classes — Intensive Precast Countertops 101, GFRC for Concrete Countertops 201, Advanced 3-D Mold Making 301 and Advanced 3-D Design 302 — are taught by Jeff Girard, owner of The Concrete Countertop Institute. The classes offer comprehensive, engineering-based training ideal for concrete countertop professionals or anyone looking to become one.

The classes are held approximately every four weeks at The Concrete Countertop Institute's training facility in Raleigh, N.C.

 (888) 386-7711

 www.concretecountertopinstitute.com

CIM student projects announced

Students from the Concrete Industry Management program at Middle Tennessee State University have announced five research projects that are designed to benefit the industry as well as provide valuable experience for students.

The projects include comparing new fiber with

existing market fibers, investigation of a new liquid admixture, and a collaborative project with five other labs across the United States to determine the best way to consolidate and cast cylindrical specimens for pervious cement.

www.concretedegree.com

Another benchmark in sustainability

For the fourth year in a row, Holcim has been named "Leader of the Industry" in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, and once again it has been acknowledged as the company with the best sustainability performance in the building materials industry.

The Holcim Group has been included in both the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index and the Dow Jones STOXX Sustainability Index for six years. The recognition rewards continued and strengthened commitment to sustainable development as an important part of Holcim's strategy.

Launched in 1999, the Dow Jones Sustainability Index was the first global index to assess leading sustainability-driven companies worldwide.

www.holcim.com

Holcim to donate land for park and agriculture center

Holcim (Texas) LP will donate 123 acres of land to the City of Midlothian, Texas, for the development of a park and an agriculture education facility, following the City Council's unanimous vote to approve the donation as well as a rezoning request by the company for part of its property.

The parcel is part of a 317-acre site owned by Holcim. The new park and education center will be separated from the plant site by a buffer zone and a 20-foot landscaped berm.

In addition to the 60-acre park and the agricultural center, plans for the parcel include a nature center and a 2.5-mile trail that will wrap around the property's perimeter. The park will provide new open space to the community for organized sports, family

outings and other activities.

Holcim (US) is one of the nation's leading manufacturers and suppliers of cement and mineral components.

www.holcim.com

Ghines and Alpha enter distribution agreement

Ghines and Alpha Professional Tools have announced an agreement for distribution and service of the Ghines product line within the United States.

Ghines manufactures a wide range of products, including high-quality diamond and profiling tools, routers, dust collection systems for stone fabrication shops, and cost-effective, stationary contouring machinery.

Thanks to the Alpha deal, Ghines products will now be stocked in U.S. distribution centers.

[\(800\) 648-7229](tel:8006487229)

www.alpha-tools.com

Urethane Polymers make hires, acquires companies

Urethane Polymers International has hired Lee Tizard as business development manager and Brandon Carpenter as architectural sales manager.

The president of UPI, Jim Bolotin, feels both men bring a large amount of field and technical experience to the company.

This summer, United Polymers acquired Excellent Coatings Inc. and Tufflex Polymers late last year, allowing UPI to expand its product offerings.

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Photos courtesy of Pat Reardon, American Society of Concrete Contractors

Conference attendees build an Alamo to remember

by Shellie Rigsby

When Frank Lewis asked me to participate in the American Society of Concrete Contractors' Annual Conference 2008, I had no idea what I was about to experience. It seemed simple enough at the time.

We were at World of Concrete, I had just finished teaching a class, and Frank and I were admiring the work of various artists showcased in the Artistry in Decorative Concrete section. There is a great energy and passion for decorative concrete at World of Concrete. Frank asked if I would be willing to teach a class for the ASCC event that was to be held in San Antonio, Texas, in September. Honored by the invitation, I agreed without hesitation. He then began to describe his vision for the event's decorative demo — a scale reproduction of the Alamo. From that simple conversation, the airplane left the hangar and did not land until well after the event.

I came to discover that the ASCC and its subdivision, DCC (the Decorative Concrete Council), are very serious groups. As it turns out, this Annual Conference is not only a big deal, but is also packed with information, features

fantastic demonstrations where you can really learn, and offers the most amazing group of industry giants in a setting small enough for them to really get to know each other. It took many meetings and discussions to convince the ASCC that this ambitious demo would be a success. No one wanted to see a poor reproduction of a well-known historical building.

Frank flew into Dallas, my hometown. We discussed the vision of reproducing the Alamo and brainstormed the details: technical aspects, products to use, who and how many artists we would need, and logistical considerations (Frank is a natural whiz with logistics). Wes Vollmer, a talented contractor based in San Antonio, would oversee the entire conference. I would oversee the Alamo demonstration with Wes' help.

We went on to test, mock up, play with and push various products and systems. The easiest and quickest option was to replicate the carved detail with cut foam. Mike Eastergard of PreiTech offered to provide the labor and materials to create these. On a real job, I would definitely go this route. However, we decided that simply coating precise details would not offer much of a teaching demo. We opted to carve all the

detail into the carvable vertical mix on-site with reference photographs. I was fortunate enough to be able to convince Ralph Hiene and Randy Klassen, two contractors whose work I greatly admire, to commit to be there for the project. Other amazing talents, such as Bob Harris, Stan Pace, Clyde Cobb, and a few I did not know, would be there as well. With that we were confident of promising results. We spent months preparing to ensure a fabulous event without surprises.

A hurricane — who knew? None of us could predict that a little hurricane could cause so much chaos. Flights were cancelled, the wind roared, and the media was frenzied anticipating Rita's potential landfall. The night before we were to begin I learned that Hurricane Rita had dwindled our stellar crew to Randy, Ralph and myself. My kicked-back comfort level for our well-prepared fun event took a turn. This was going to be a lot of work if it would be just the three of us, and I was worried. Reggie Burnett, a Floric Polytech rep, assured me that he would be there too. I entered the hotel lobby and was introduced to the "few I did not know" and up to that point was not sure would be there, including Kevin Percy and Marshall Hoskins. These guys are the real-deal,

mud-in-their-blood concrete heroes. Our outdoor event quickly shuffled from an enormous tent to a parking structure. We were back on track and better than ever. As it turns out, the only stir San Antonio faced from the hurricane was ominous media predictions, travel confusion, and beautiful, breezy, sunny weather. It was awesome and everyone was in a great mood.

We used EIFS, foam blocks that connect like giant Legos, to make the base structure. Specialty Concrete Products supplied FossilCrete for our vertical mix, and SureCrete supplied Eco Stain for the final color. We studied hundreds of photographs and laid out the project with exacting detail. We carved the EIFS and used additional sheet foam to make build-outs, columns and other proud detail. FossilCrete, like most vertical mixes, can be built out, stamped, carved, pigmented integrally and stained. It responds very well to a myriad of techniques.

The actual Alamo does not have much color. Its perceived color is from age, wear and dirt. This made the Alamo especially challenging but quite appropriate for our demo. We worked from unpigmented material that matched the base color of the Alamo



very well. We stamped the fresh mud with texture skins. We took the most bizarre collection of gadgets and began shaping and carving the mud wall into a work of art. Ripped PVC tubing shaped the detail on the columns. We used an orange peeler or metal banding to trench out grout lines. Suddenly we had an impressive reproduction. We added a bit more of the mud to the grout lines and then packed it with sand. (The actual Alamo has a very sandy grout mix.) The final detail was color. We opted to use the Eco Stains as they are penetrating and nonreactive. We diluted these and pushed color into crevices and along the roofline with the intent of honoring the color of the Alamo. We lightly accented stones with subtle shading.

We were thrilled to see the response of the ASCC, which had questioned the ambitious venture. They were genuinely



and pleasantly surprised to see how well these decorative concrete products perform. I think they might have also been a bit surprised at how much talent their group has. I was surprised too, not by the products or talent, but what a great experience I had. You can be sure I am looking forward to the next event.

www.ascconline.org

www.concretestaindesigns.com

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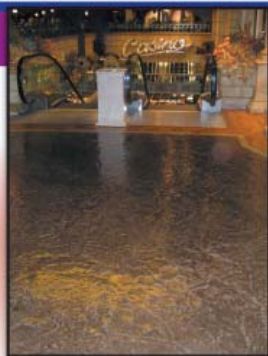
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The New Age of Coloring

Hang up the phone if you are one of the many decorative concretists that are about to embark on any form of colored concrete. If you are somewhat new to the whole coloring thing, please give this article a close look. The progression of improvement in the coloring biz has turned yet another corner in the simplification of the process. Take it from a concrete guy that has spent years throwing color or praying that ready-mix drivers can count bags and talk on cell phones at the same time. The complexity of coloring the concrete surface has made a natural progression towards being more user-friendly, accurate, affordable and durable.



by Doug Carlton

For years now I couldn't help but think that there had to be a better way to achieve vibrant colors without killing myself and my crew with broadcast-style color hardeners. I vividly remember thinking that someday cement masons would simply spray on color and eliminate this thankless task of coloring the concrete surface. I didn't know it at the time, but I was right — well, kind of. I'm getting ahead of myself, so let me explain.

Up to this point, coloring concrete was pretty much done with one of two

methods: dry-shake color hardeners and integrally colored concrete. I'm betting most of you know the difference between the two, so I won't take up much space explaining the differences. Color hardeners are broadcast across the wet concrete surface and create endless color options. Integral coloring is usually done at the ready-mix plant and colors the entire load of concrete. Integral colors are limited but have a huge place in the decorative concrete industry. It is rare, but sometimes my crew will use integrally colored concrete for one reason or another.

Most decorative crews will use the (dry-shake) color hardener method because it's accurate, more affordable, and produces crisper lines in the pattern. This process adds another step to the finish and stamping procedure, but the benefits have far outweighed the drawbacks, at least up to now. The problem is that this step has a huge learning curve and can be extremely timing-sensitive. Lately I have found myself questioning why we color the way we do. I guess I'm just kind of an outside-the-box type, but see if this makes sense to you. If you could stamp and color quality jobs while making it easier for your crew and saving your client money, than why not?

The epicenter of all this is the new and user-friendly stains that are now available.

The stamp and stain process

This stamp-and-stain process is not entirely new, because fellows have been stamping and then acid-staining to highlight for years. This is not the process I'm promoting. The process I'm talking of consists of not coloring the concrete at all during the stamp or color process. Natural gray concrete is simply finished as usual or stamped with the use of a clear liquid release agent.

The concrete is left to cure to the point when you would usually apply your sealer — but this is where the staining comes in. The next step would be to thoroughly clean the surface and apply a solid base-color stain. If the surface is imprinted, then another highlight color or colors could soon follow. The final effect and look is the same as a colored surface or as a stamped surface if imprinted. Think of the risk this eliminates if your project requires multiple pours across several days. The new stain products and procedure I'm talking of have a sealer in them, so this will eliminate the normal sealing process. The end result is less time, less money, and less headache.


You may be asking, and I would be, how much time and money this saves. My figures are showing somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 percent to 20 percent of your material and labor costs. These figures are broad, and your cost will vary depending on availability, number of steps and efficiency. Regardless, it will simplify the coloring or stamping process, and few will argue this point, I'm sure.


This coloring type offers flexibility with coloring options. It will also leave you the option to completely recolor in the future with little cost and no troubles if your client decides on a color change. Remember, this is all about the customer. If the customer wins, then all of us in the decorative concrete industry win.

A field example

Our office recently had a client call for more stamped concrete that would connect to a stamped patio my company installed almost eight years ago. The problem was that originally, the

Here are a couple of Web sites for manufacturers that make the type of stains I have discussed. Be sure to order sample packs for test samples.

 www.qcconprod.com

 www.getnewlook.com

landscape contractor picked the color — integral — from a pallet of leftover color bags stored at the local ready-mix plant. We were simply given the pattern of choice and a release color in the terra cotta family. I knew this concrete would never be matchable, regardless of who installed it.

Our company put on their thinking caps, because I can assure you no contractor wants to turn down work, at least not in this market. The idea was simple. Our crew would stamp the

new concrete by not adding any color of any kind. The new concrete would be allowed to cure and then both the new and old stamped concrete would be stained to insure 100 percent color consistency between the two. This became a true “win” situation that would not have been possible before.

This same idea could be used on all types of decorative finishes, stamped or not. The possibilities are endless, and I'm sure some of you will take this to a level far beyond what I'm describing. This magazine is 100 percent committed to improving our great industry as well as your business, so let us know how this works for you. 📞

Doug Carlton operates Doug Carlton Concrete in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at carltondoug@comcast.net.



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Looking Back ... and Looking Forward

This being my last column for 2008, I find myself both looking back ... and looking forward. This year brought many positive changes to our industry, along with moments of sadness, one of which hit too close to home, not only for myself but also for the many people who knew and worked with Byron



by Peter Wagner, CSI

Hanson at L&M Construction Chemicals. On Sept. 10, Byron passed on after a six-month battle with cancer. Officially he was our lead technical backup, but in reality he was the heart, soul and answer man to anyone in the industry who had the honor to know him.

Byron Hanson was that rare person who always cared about the other person before looking out for himself. Once you met Byron you became his friend, and that was regardless of whether you were a customer, a colleague or a competitor. Byron served the industry for more than 30 years, but I only had the honor to work with Byron, and call him my friend, for three months. If you ever talked with Byron, or had the opportunity to look into his elfish eyes, you'd have thought that he'd be with us forever. In fact, I still haven't removed Byron's phone number and photo from my phone, and probably never will. As you choose to move ahead

in the concrete industry I wish to share one thought with you — honor others with respect, give back to your industry, be committed, and look forward to the day when you meet your own version of Byron Hanson.

This year has seen many changes. As I write this, the whole world is being affected by a financial crisis that none of our generation has experienced before, a crisis that will affect your livelihood in some manner. Now is the time to look deep within yourself and determine what your strengths and commitments are. Do you have a plan to ensure that you come out of this intact? Evaluate your situation and don't be afraid to acknowledge that maybe your heart isn't in it. If not, now is not the time to panic, but to make changes in an orderly fashion. With that said, if you're committed to succeeding, then let's look at the opportunities that exist for you.

Our industry is growing. Whether you consider new geographic markets or new and growing niches, polished concrete has a great and prosperous future ahead. What started as the means to rehabilitate dusting and spalling concrete in industrial applications morphed into the flooring option with the lowest life-cycle cost available. Now as new building investments may wane, we have the opportunity to go back to our roots — restoration of existing floors. I firmly believe that

with both new and old floors, polished concrete opportunities will grow at a greater rate than other flooring options. Consider two recent areas of growth: international markets and the green/sustainability market.

Recently two co-workers and I returned from Ireland, where our company conducted its first certification training for installers. In Ireland the polished concrete industry is just starting to lay the same foundation that we started in North America 10 years ago. For several years now, our director, Nick Costello, has been laying the groundwork for the successful introduction of polished concrete in Ireland. The advantage those in Ireland and other emerging markets have is that they do not have to reinvent the wheel. Many of the problems confronted in North America in the early years have been identified and solved. The circle is closing, with expertise from North America now returning the favor overseas, providing chemicals, diamonds and equipment, whereas initially the exchange came east to west.

As for my second growth area, no growth market crosses more borders than the potential for polished concrete in sustainable environments. Owners, architects and builders pursue sustainable building for many reasons. Some believe it is their duty, some are pursuing tax credits, some believe it is healthier. It really doesn't matter why they are doing it. It only matters that it is creating greater opportunities for all of us in our industry. Remember that polished concrete began to solve the problem of dusting and spalling concrete. Very simply, what we are doing connects with this movement like no other flooring choice. Where are these markets? Do they just drop in your lap? Probably not. How are they created? Let's look at a couple of examples.

Scott LaFontaine runs Concrete Solutions of New England in Manchester, N.H. Scott started polishing concrete about eight years ago, and he has provided polished concrete in


a variety of settings throughout New England, from Hummer dealerships to his most recent Gold LEED project at NRG Systems, located south of Burlington, Vt. NRG serves the wind energy industry, and although they would seem to be a natural fit for sustainable, green building, it took Scott to steer their focus to polished floors. NRG was expanding, and their original building featured acid-stained and topically sealed floors in the offices and epoxy in the manufacturing areas. When Scott secured the opportunity to meet with NRG and their architects, he was comfortable in asking the question, "Why?" If you're really going green, he suggested, go green all the way. Scott was able to help NRG understand how polished concrete could be a performance- and design-oriented flooring choice at the same time. Scott's work played a major role in NRG's ability to earn a Gold rating. NRG incorporated polished concrete, and in doing so, they enhanced their day lighting, radiant heat and utilization of the concrete slab's thermal mass, along with lowering maintenance costs.

Invest your time so that you can identify the opportunities in front of you and then feel comfortable selling the concept, as Scott did with NRG. Scott's work delivered design with the use of seven different concrete dyes applied in intricate patterns, and it offered performance through dry grind-based polishing and chemical densification.

Schools are another open market for the pursuit of LEED designations and polished concrete. In a situation that Sustainable Flooring Systems of Vancouver, Wash., found themselves in, not only are they providing dyes, densification and dry grinding, but they are performing restorative work alongside new. The Sherwood, Ore., School District is pursuing Silver LEED designations, and in working with Dull Olson Weekes Architects of Portland, they specified dyed and polished concrete for the expansion of the high school, both old and new floors. In

addition, as the high school project is reaching completion, Brad Sleeper, general manager for Sustainable, has just completed his first project meetings down the road at the new Sherwood Middle School. Whereas the high school was pretty straightforward, featuring colors in large blocks, the middle school will have the Tualatin River and its tributaries running through the hallways. Besides taking advantage of high performance, design orientation, and low maintenance, schools are also excited about providing improved indoor air quality for students, staff and teachers. Schools talk amongst themselves, both within districts and between districts. Do a good job and they'll sell for you, but do a lousy job, and they'll ...

Going into 2009, look to the bright side. Continue to invest in your employees and their and your education. If you want to learn more about LEED and CHPS, contact me and I'll be happy to assist. If you are going to WOC 2009 in February, I will be presenting a 90-minute seminar Tuesday, Feb. 3, on Polished Concrete on LEED and CHPS project.

May you finish 2008 with a positive frame of mind. And by the way, for those of you from my generation, CHPS stands for Collaborative for High-Performing Schools, not the California Highway Patrol. 

Peter Wagner is director of marketing and sales support for L&M Construction Chemicals. He has more than 20 years of experience in the flooring industry and is in his eighth year in the polished concrete industry. He can be reached at pbwagner@lmcc.com.



Photo courtesy of Artistic Surfaces Inc.

Indoor air quality was improved in this home by tearing out old carpeting, then polishing and dyeing the concrete floor.

Everything is Green

You are probably getting very tired of hearing that everything is green. The sustainability movement today seems ubiquitous. There's even a term for this: greenwashing, which Greenpeace defines on its anti-greenwashing Web site (www.stopgreenwash.org) as "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service."



by William D.
Palmer Jr.

I tried to think of the least green thing I could to see if it too was being touted as green — how about gasoline? You'd think there wouldn't be a way to portray gasoline as green. From oil production to transport to emissions from burning the stuff, there doesn't seem to be much room for being green. So I did a Web search and, lo and behold, found an online article devoted to, you guessed it, green gasoline. It's almost like the recent barrage of political talk: If you say something enough times people begin to believe it whether it's true or not.

All that should make it pretty easy for us to declare concrete green. If everyone else is greenwashing their products, why not us? The real bottom line is that many

products and construction materials can be considered green if used in the right way, to contribute to durable and efficient use of the world's resources. The danger, though, is that as manufacturers greenwash their products, architects and owners have become cynical about any claims of environmental benefits. So when they ask for proof, be ready.

The good news is that we don't have to greenwash concrete, because there are many ways that concrete as a construction material honestly contributes to green — sustainable — construction. Although we can't and shouldn't try to gloss over the fact that the production of portland cement and the mining of aggregate are not gentle, environmentally friendly processes, we can show those looking for ways to make their buildings greener that the benefits of building with concrete outweigh the impacts. To do that, though, it's not enough to try to make concrete less bad. We have to look at the life cycle of the material in a way that is more organic and less industrial.

Architect William McDonough calls this evolution, this new paradigm, "cradle to cradle," since we are talking about recycling rather than disposing. In his book, "Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things," he points out that "when designers employ the intelligence of natural systems — the effectiveness of nutrient cycling, the abundance of the sun's energy — they can create products, industrial systems, buildings, even regional plans that allow nature and commerce to fruitfully coexist."

Concrete is a perfect material for this philosophy of green construction, since it is basically man-made sedimentary rock. Concrete is eminently recyclable as road base or fill or even as aggregate for new concrete. In building interiors, once hardened, it is basically inert — no need to worry about toxic off-gassing. Concrete's ability to store heat and thereby dampen temperature swings in a building can reduce the size of heating systems when creating comfortable homes. But concrete's greatest contribution to sustainability is its durability. With smart design, a concrete building will provide safe shelter for its residents from any natural or man-made disasters for at least 100 years — the Pantheon's concrete dome still stands in Rome nearly 2,000 years later.

So that's my standard concrete greenwashing pitch.

Tell all this to an architect or building owner and their eyes will begin darting around as they look for a way to escape another green sales spiel. What they should do is ask a simple question: How can you prove it?

The way to prove it is with numbers. We live in a world where everything has to be quantified — how big, how fast, how strong, how green. And that leads us to LEED.

You have undoubtedly heard of LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a program of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). This is one — not the only, but the most referenced — rating system for quantifying just how green a building is. Under LEED, you do this and you get a point. Do that and you get another point. Get enough points and you can call your building green.

If you haven't yet been involved in green building, you

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Green Matters

will be. Cities, states and countries around the world are mandating green attributes for new and retrofit construction. According to the USGBC, as of Oct. 1, 2008, LEED initiatives have been adopted by 163 localities (107 cities, 29 counties and 27 towns), 31 state governments, 12 federal agencies or departments, 15 public school jurisdictions and 39 institutions of higher education across the United States. And that's just the beginning.

Let's look briefly at how concrete helps a building gain points under the LEED program. In subsequent "Green Matters" columns we will explore some of these factors in detail and also look at the other rating systems.

An introduction to LEED

Today there are nine approved LEED programs, for projects such as new construction, homes, schools, healthcare facilities, and even neighborhood development. Each of these has slightly different requirements, all with the goal of reducing a building's (or an entire development's) environmental footprint.

Each LEED program includes categories for such things as site selection, water efficiency, energy usage and indoor air quality. Points, up to a total of 136 possible, are awarded for attributes of the construction within each category — sometimes very specific attributes.

Take, for example, water efficiency in LEED for Homes. You can earn a maximum of 15 points for water efficiency. Within the water efficiency category, Section 1 is Water Reuse, which can earn a building up to 5 points. To get all 5 points, the building would need to have a rainwater harvesting system and a gray-water reuse system. For rainwater harvesting, you would need to design and install a system to collect and store all the water from a 1-inch rainfall — equivalent to 0.62 gallons per square foot of roof.


As a decorative concrete contractor, your most likely contribution would come from improving indoor air quality. Unlike carpeting, concrete floors emit no volatile organic chemicals. Concrete can't get moldy and it also seals out radon (when there is a good vapor barrier). But finding where you get credit for this in LEED isn't simple. First you look in the Indoor Environmental Quality category. That refers you to the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star Indoor Air Package. There you find, in Section 6.7, Building Materials, this requirement: "Install water-resistant hard-surface flooring in kitchens, entryways, laundry areas, and utility rooms."

Is that convoluted enough for you? Does it make you want to just give up? LEED isn't perfect, and it doesn't completely incorporate the cradle-to-cradle philosophy. But it is what most designers are using today to prove that their buildings are green. So you need to be ready to show them how concrete can help them with LEED points. In the next issue we'll get more specific on how to do that. 🚚

William D. Palmer Jr., P.E., is with Complete Construction Consultants, where he develops technical and educational resources for the construction industry. He can be reached at wpalmer@cee3.com.

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Marketing and Salesmanship

It's not your imagination — the construction market is currently much more competitive. When opportunities exist, beating the odds to win the job and the increase of price pressures require more marketing tools and salesmanship than at any time in the last decade.

Contractors are asking themselves: How can I stand out in a tough market? How can I give my customers added reasons to choose my company for their next projects?



by Sherry Boyd

Direct and indirect competition

At a time like this, it is important for decorative contractors to size up both direct and indirect competitors.

Looking at the direct competition: How does your customer service stack up? Do you make it easy to do business with your company? Do you offer the right product mix? Distributors who are supplying decorative materials have noted that the contractors who offer the most diverse range of products and services have more projects on the go right now. That is because offering many different types of decorative concrete allows contractors to move the customer to the right-priced service without reducing pricing.

Indirect competition to decorative concrete comes from alternative paving and flooring materials. Exterior decorative concrete competes for jobs with asphalt, precast unit pavers and natural stone. Interior staining and polished concrete compete with tile, terrazzo, carpet, epoxy and vinyl/linoleum products. The best way to

show customers the advantages of using decorative concrete is to compare the installed cost of each service to alternative flooring and paving products. As a starting point, check out the chart at www.concretenetwork.com/stamped-concrete/comparison.html. Labor costs vary widely in different parts of the country, so make your own chart using local installed costs.

Decorative concrete offers an excellent choice for long-term durability and low maintenance at an affordable price. For those with keen interests in green building and LEED criteria, decorative concrete has the benefit of being environmentally sound and having excellent "life-cycle costing," a fancy way to say it is very long-lasting. The good news is that many kinds of clients that seek durable green building materials for high-traffic areas are still active: commercial buildings, schools, public projects and transportation facilities.

Projects with government or municipal funding in place are continuing under increased scrutiny to get the most out of budget dollars. The term "value engineering," a euphemism for cost-cutting, might send chills down the spine, but it creates an opening to sell decorative concrete against more expensive indirect competition.

With a comparison chart in hand, a savvy contractor can sell decorative concrete as an economical way to extend a construction budget by replacing natural stone in large expanses, or by limiting the use of expensive granite or slate to accent areas. Less-expensive concrete can be installed in colors and textures that harmonize with materials such as marble, bluestone and granite without sacrificing aesthetics.

Proactive marketing

Faced with a competitive marketplace, contractors are busily looking for bid opportunities, updating mailing lists, networking with professional groups and producing advertising. Before jumping into these marketing activities, it is important to ask what you can offer that's different from your competitors. Do you offer

something new in your area? Do you provide unique artistic graphics? Do you offer services such as maintenance, refurbishment and restoration? Is your staff knowledgeable about the latest green building criteria? Do you offer educational programs? Do you use recycled materials? Are you superior at customer service? Can you list awards and projects you've done that address

green building needs? Find ways to differentiate your company from your competition and be newsworthy.

Some decorative concrete companies consider their showroom their most unique and effective selling tool. Whether it's an outdoor courtyard, a conference room or an expansive warehouse-sized showroom, a sales center with samples of a variety

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Image Shown: SADDLE BROWN using Stencil Model No. FIG116



of concrete finishes, patterns and colors provides a great opportunity for customers to see and touch the materials that make decorative concrete so appealing. It also provides a place to invite professional groups to gather for educational meetings that show designers new possibilities.

Remember the old saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words"? Make it 2,000 words, because this is doubly true for decorative concrete. However, sending out photo-filled brochures can be too costly for mass mailings. Some large contractors e-mail quarterly or biannual e-newsletters. However, an old-fashioned postcard with a few good, colorful photos can be just as effective and cost far less. While the e-mail may be seen once, designers may keep an eye-catching postcard on their bulletin board as an inspiration. A beautiful postcard is also a keeper you can leave with customers and distributors to use for referrals.

Fantastic short-run color printing is

available inexpensively. Several printers offer predesigned formats and make printing professional-looking marketing tools affordable for small businesses.

For the best results, be sure your postcard or newsletter includes your phone number and "call to action" statements, such as these:

🌱 "Schedule a visit to our showroom to see beautiful samples."

🌱 "Call for free professional consultation and estimates."

🌱 "Visit our Web site to see more examples." (Don't forget to include your Web address with this one.)

Selling from strength

In a buyer's market, working on your satisfaction ratings is important to your reputation. Sending or delivering a "Customer Satisfaction Survey" with a cover letter demonstrates your interest in knowing the customer's viewpoint. It can provide a second chance to solve any problems. Customer surveys identify what customers think — which may be different than what you think they think. As part of a follow-up program when the job is finished, customer surveys increase the chance that you will receive valuable referrals from satisfied customers.

In your customer satisfaction survey, leave space for people to answer these open-ended questions:

1. How did you find out about us?

2. Please explain why you decided to use decorative concrete.

3. Please tell us if the appearance and quality of the finished project met your expectations.

4. Please comment on our service and staff.

5. Please tell us about any areas we could change to improve customer satisfaction.

6. Please tell us why you would or would not recommend us.

Repetition, repetition, repetition

In advertising, repetition is the way to get your company name remembered. Repeating the benefits of decorative concrete in your sales materials and mailings is crucial to getting them remembered, too. Restate the key benefits often, in as many ways as possible.

The key benefits of decorative concrete are:

- 🌱 Beautiful, natural appearance
- 🌱 Long-term durability
- 🌱 Excellent life-cycle costing
- 🌱 Environmental soundness — it meets LEED criteria
- 🌱 A wide range of colors and color effects
- 🌱 Many choices for textures and patterns
- 🌱 No delays in availability
- 🌱 Minimal maintenance if correctly sealed
- 🌱 Versatile and unique
- 🌱 Cost-competitive

Perhaps these benefits sound obvious to anyone in the concrete business, but prospective customers may not have stopped to think about how all these benefits add up to a great choice.

Three Tips for Better Marketing Surveys

1. Enclose a self-addressed, postage-paid return envelope.

2. To make satisfied customers an extension of the sales force, enclose a company brochure or postcard along with a "thank you" letter to customers who respond to the survey. That makes it easy for them to make a referral when people ask about their project.

3. If it is difficult to get surveys returned, making it an entry form as part of a drawing for "customer appreciation gift certificates" improves the return rate.

Dependability

Success in a cost-competitive market also means avoiding chances that might lead to mistakes or costly rip-outs that are reputation-damaging.

Ken Heitzman of Decorative Concrete Systems in Milton-Freewater, Ore., offers this advice for winning during challenging economic times: "Customers will continue to choose concrete because it is dependable. They return to decorative contractors that are dependable. Now, it is more important than ever to stick with products that offer performance that is dependable, too." 📱

Sherry Boyd of Boydworks Marketing provides public relations and advertising services for clients in the building industries. She spent eight years as head of marketing for a leading manufacturer of concrete coloring materials. For more about her, visit www.boydworks.com.

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North of the Border: A Canadian Perspective

by Judy Mead

If you're a concrete contractor in Canada and are considering expanding your business to include countertops, you may appreciate my insights.

We established Concrete Countertops Canada in 2006 to specialize in fine concrete finishes suitable for the busiest residential and commercial applications. We set out to become a resource and Canadian industry leader in this niche craft.

Inspired by the design portfolios and apparent business success of specialists centered mainly in Southern California, we embarked on a market analysis in an attempt to forecast demand north of the border. Really, there's not much out there that is specific to this industry in Canada. However, in the United States, the decorative concrete market is growing faster than any other segment of the concrete industry, with hundreds of manufacturers and thousands of contractors. And according to The Concrete Network Web site, concrete countertops top the list of the most requested decorative-concrete services.

No wonder, when according to a recent study by Freedonia, U.S. countertop demand is expected to reach 540 million square feet by 2011, driven by the remodeling segment, with demand for engineered stone and natural stone countertops growing the fastest. The market in Canada could be expected to grow proportionally, to some 50 million square feet.

Canada is a big piece of geography with a few major urban centers, many, many smaller centers, and lots of fields, forests, mountains, lakes and streams in between. This country boasts a population virtually overflowing

with tenacity and ingenuity — just like concrete, come to think.

Our shop is located just east of Canada's largest metropolis, which is a city virtually cast in concrete. Toronto is a concrete showcase of homes, infrastructure and internationally recognized landmarks, including the groundbreaking New City Hall and the record-smashing CN Tower. This abundance of concrete infrastructure may explain why the uninformed public is skeptical about our promise of concrete as a decorative element. We still receive the uniquely Canadian polite smiles when we speak to new audiences about a concrete showpiece in the centre of their home or office. Oh Canada — always the diplomat. Luckily our growing photo portfolio and a chance to visit our showroom for a touch and feel, along with the relationship we build in the process, generally cement the deal. Since the precaster ultimately influences the end result, it is important that clients trust and respect the artisan's judgment.

I am business manager for Concrete Countertops Canada, and at the upcoming Design Trends Toronto and Concrete Canada shows, my company's owner, countertop artisan Rob Bryant, will speak to architects, designers, builders and contractors about the growing trend to concrete for use in kitchens, baths and decor.

The national shows, held Dec. 3-5 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, run concurrently with Construct Canada, Home Builder & Renovator Expo and Property Management Expo. Last year, more than 23,000 visitors from across Canada and 25 international countries, including the United States, attended.

If showcasing the hottest new design trends with one of the world's oldest building materials seems an odd pairing, consider this. The history of concrete is one of creativity and innovation. Although there's no crystal ball when it comes to predicting design trends, there is a legacy of kings' and artisans' fascination with concrete, dating back to the pyramids of Egypt and the Great Wall of China. In the

classical periods of stone building there were no distinctions between structure, ornament, and architecture — form followed function.

Thanks to renewed interest and confidence due to design and technological innovations, our commercial business is growing. However, there is a tendency for architects to spec to larger companies

over smaller specialized artisans. We believe that our growth and success in this market segment will be directly tied to repeat business and referrals from a few key designers and architects.

Our residential clients are primarily "innovators" — creative types who value originality. By the time they've called us, they are already sold on the warm, natural feel of concrete. They often have



smart

Beautiful

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- MR Credit 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 - Building Reuse
- MR Credit 3.1, 3.2 - Material Reuse
- EQ Credit 4.1 - Low Emitting Materials
- EQ Credit 7.2 - Thermal Comfort

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a specific color or element they want us to match or complement.

We're rarely quoting against other stone choices but are often asked about the material's perceived shortfalls in withstanding the daily assault of a busy kitchen. We find that client testimonials are key. There's a great testament in a Buddy Rhodes reference where his countertops have been used

in a teaching kitchen at a middle school in Berkeley, Calif. The client writes that after 13 years and 3,000 students, the countertops still look beautiful. Unfortunately there are few others in the industry that have a decade-long track record.

In the last 18 months, we've trained more than 100 professionals from a variety of backgrounds and trades.

The two-day course offers hands-on experience and advice. We also cover client expectations and offer our thoughts on the level of integrity and professionalism that high-end design demands.

Our training alumnae value our Canadian connections to resources for tools and materials, and they are generous in sharing their best connections too. We are working to establish a network of associate artisans in regional centers across Canada to whom we can confidently refer suitable projects and with whom we can share industry news and resources.

We are working to build the industry in Canada together, because single artisans are hard-pressed to direct significant marketing dollars toward educating buyers. It's interesting to note the number of times concrete countertops appear unreferenced in design magazine advertisements for fixtures or cabinets. We are exploring partnership opportunities with national suppliers for credited product placement.

It's a long-term plan for long-term success, because while concrete in Canada is nothing new, the challenge for decorative concrete artisans may be in changing existing perceptions and attitudes toward a medium whose historical relevance, flexibility and utilitarian competence should speak for itself. If a trend toward concrete countertops is growing, it may well be one that will outlive its innovators.

So come on Canadian contractors, toe in — the concrete's fine. 

 www.concretecountertopscanada.com

Judy Mead, a communications strategist, is business manager for Concrete Countertops Canada, based in Newcastle, Ontario. The company's owner, countertop artisan Rob Bryant, will lead two workshops Dec. 3 at the Design Trends Toronto and Concrete Canada expositions, to be held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Visit www.concretecanadaexpo.com for details.



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Distinctive Concrete Rowley, Mass.



Photos courtesy of Distinctive Concrete

by Christina Camara

Bill Guthro may be one of the top decorative concrete specialists in New England today, but his beginnings in the industry had more to do with muscle power and output than artistic talent.

Raised in all-boy Catholic schools outside Boston, Guthro planned to become a lawyer until he got hired on a summer construction job, where he dug trenches, shoveled concrete and moved heavy wheelbarrows around all day. He loved it, and at \$5 an hour, he says, he was making huge money at age 16.

He dumped the law school idea and joined a construction crew, becoming a journeyman in

the Carpenter's Local Union No. 26 in 1989. In two years, he had worked his way up to foreman on huge industrial projects around Boston, including the Ted Williams Tunnel and the Deer Island Treatment Plant.

But after a while, the backbreaking work and emphasis on quantity over quality got old. His concrete work on the Ted Williams Tunnel was buried underground, and people drove by his bridge work at 65 miles an hour. By 1999, he was thoroughly bored and dreaded going to work in the morning. "I don't know if I had a midlife crisis early or something, but I just grabbed my tools and told the guy I quit."



Then he went home and waited for his wife to arrive, so he could break the news to her. (They're still married, by the way.) What followed was six months of traveling to various classes on decorative concrete techniques and a new business, Distinctive Concrete, based in Rowley, Mass.

At the time, only a few contractors were doing anything with decorative concrete around Boston. "I thought I would be the stamped-concrete guru," Guthro says.

The next phase in building his business was educating architects and builders about the range of possibilities available to them, which wasn't always an easy sell. It's even more difficult to persuade customers in this historic area to try new looks.

Guthro stuck with it, concentrating

mainly on stamped work with a crew of three or four during the eight months of good weather. He expanded into stain work and interior overlays, and at one point had 13 guys working for him. But with every new business there's a learning curve, and Guthro had to make changes when he found he was keeping the crew busy and not making enough money. Now, Guthro works on his own, not only to keep his payroll in check, but also to maintain the artistic integrity of his work, hiring day laborers or other friends in the trades if he needs help. He'll also help out a friend in the industry who may be great at one part of the job, but not another. "It works for me, and it works for them," he says.

Clients include hotel chains, retailers,

local municipalities, sports fitness clubs, local restaurants and hundreds of residential customers over the years. He now focuses on interior commercial floors, with clients who are going for high-end looks with acid-stained floors and microtoppings.

One of Guthro's favorite jobs was a small, outer-space themed park he helped create within a housing development for the Boston Housing Authority. Imagine concrete domes of different sizes representing the planets, and glass embedded in black pavement to conjure up the Milky Way. Guthro used his form-making skills to create realistic-looking planets, and he enjoyed the artistic challenge and complexity of the job. "Everyone was blown away" at the results, he says.



Guthro is also a consultant and distributor, and he often advises other contractors to be selective, even in a down economy. "If you see a job with red flags all over it, just walk away." Some contractors are so driven to work that they forget that they could lose money on certain jobs, he says.

He calls himself an "optimistic realist" about the projects he takes on. He gets some of his work from architects who add his firm to the job specifications, but he has to make sure the job makes sense. He's seen acid-stained floors planned for a restaurant, but no sealer added to the specs.

And working with interior designers can be frustrating because they're working with a vision in their head, but no specifics. "I can't get inside your head and see what's in there," Guthro says. He will help the team form a new game plan. "I want to make sure at the end of the job that you're happy, and



you're happy a year from now. Sometimes I have to take them by the hand and walk them down a different path."

As a distributor, Guthro rides herd on manufacturers to ensure their claims are more than just claims. The technology for decorative concrete products is constantly changing, and to keep up, Guthro does his homework — interviewing the distributors and installers about various products, then going to the manufacturer's site to be set up with tools and a "playpen" so he can experiment. "My guys are relying on me. I tell manufacturers that I'm a pretty straight

shooter. Don't talk to me like a salesperson."

Over the years, he's developed strong relationships with the lead technicians to learn new tricks and techniques that he can share.

Guthro admits there are times when he misses his old 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. workday, with his union-mandated 9 a.m. coffee break and half-hour lunch. But now he likes the thrill of "nailing the job just right," when the owners are ecstatic and the phone is ringing from referrals. "I'm competitive. Being OK isn't good enough. I want it right every time. If I have to tear it out, I tear it out."

In the winter, he indulges his curiosity, as part scientist and part artist, to try new things. "I do love the business, because there's so much you can do with the material." And the opportunities to learn more never end, he says. "In this business you have to adapt, and always try to peek around the corner to see what's coming next." 📞

🌐 www.distinctiveconcrete.com

Project Profile



Photos courtesy of Tom Ralston

Magid House Backyard Aptos, Calif.

by David Searls

The husband-and-wife team of Dr. Morgan Magid and Mary Alves were looking to add a modest basketball shooting court to their shallow backyard for their youngest son, Jared.

"All they wanted," says family friend and concrete designer Tom Ralston, "was a small extension to the patio for a basketball hoop. Just one hoop and a net."

For Ralston, of Santa Cruz, Calif.-based Tom Ralston Concrete, it sounded like it would be one of his simplest jobs ever.

"Then Mary started asking me for ideas," he says, adding with a chuckle, "Bad idea."

What the Magids ended up with, after a year and a half, was a three-level, four-season stamped-concrete outdoor luxury living space featuring three entertainment areas, four sets of staircases, a cascading waterfall, radiant heat, outdoor kitchen with barbecue pit, stereo system, mini-bar, refrigerator, flat-screen television, warming drawer, two-burner stove and trash compactor. Everything, in short, but the kitchen sink.

Wait. That's in there, too.

"I always wanted a second kitchen," Mary explains.

And Jared got his basketball court, though it's easy to miss as you take in the full sense of the project.

Reclaiming the unusable

While the Magids have a generously portioned backyard — about a third of an acre — most of it falls away almost as soon as you step out the back door.

"The yard was unusable," says Alves. "Just a narrow strip of grass and trees on a hill."

Ralston adds: "It had about 14 feet of flat space, and the rest fell away in a 30-degree slope."

To make better use of all of the wasted vertical space, Ralston first took down a wall. Then he cut patios, multiple flights of stamped concrete staircases and other features right into the hillside. Helping people make it up

and down that slope in style required the loving addition of some 220 linear feet of steps, about 33 stair steps in all, with seating and entertaining space here and there to break up the monotony.

Or, to put it in more practical terms, "The patios are places to catch your breath as you walk up the hill," according to Dr. Magid.





Four-season appeal

Alves asked her designer friend at some point as she pondered the stamped concrete building material, “Don’t patios get cold in the winter?”

Yes, even in sunny California. “Not if you install radiant heat,” Ralston remembers replying.

“Have you ever done that before?”

“No,” he admitted. “But I’d like to try.”

So seat walls with radiant-heated wall caps became a cozy part of the project.

“Tom made a lot of drawings,” says Mary. As the married couple’s enthusiasm grew and imaginations began to run free, she says, “the whole project took on a mind of its own.”

You’ll find something to draw the eye wherever you look. At the top of the hill is a fire pit with colored glass broadcast into the concrete. “A really cool multicolored look” is how Dr. Magid describes it.

The greenish-hued concrete patios



and steps (“They fit right into the landscaping,” says Alves) were strikingly finished with a sandstone color hardener

with weathered sage release agent.

Lucky number 13

Ralston has established a reputation as an innovator in concrete countertops. For his clients’ kitchen and barbecue pit at the bottom of the hill, he set about designing a two-inch-thick countertop that would serve as a focal point. It was a project component that he and the wife half of the client duo took very seriously.

Alves recalls being presented with sample after sample of countertop, each prototype constructed by Ralston.

“We experimented with numerous compositions and hit it on the 13th try,” he says.

The selected slab features embedded stones from Bali and was finished with a blend of three acid stains: fern green, weathered bronze and faded terra cotta with an oyster-white color hardener. It was sealed with a two-part UV-resistant polyurethane.

The greens, yellows and browns make the countertop a one-of-a-kind composition, according to Mary.

Picking up on the natural beauty of the surroundings, Ralston had his landscaper add “softscaping” in the form of a gently cascading waterfall

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behind the kitchen space. The whole multilevel area has been set off with furniture designed by a local artist and constructed of teak from Thailand.

"One of a kind" is a valid description of the entire project. The property was a big hit on a local garden tour, and the Magids have hosted their first outdoor Thanksgiving feast in their new backyard.

"Tom is a real artiste," says Alves, voicing the ultimate compliment to any decorative concrete designer.

www.tomralstonconcrete.com



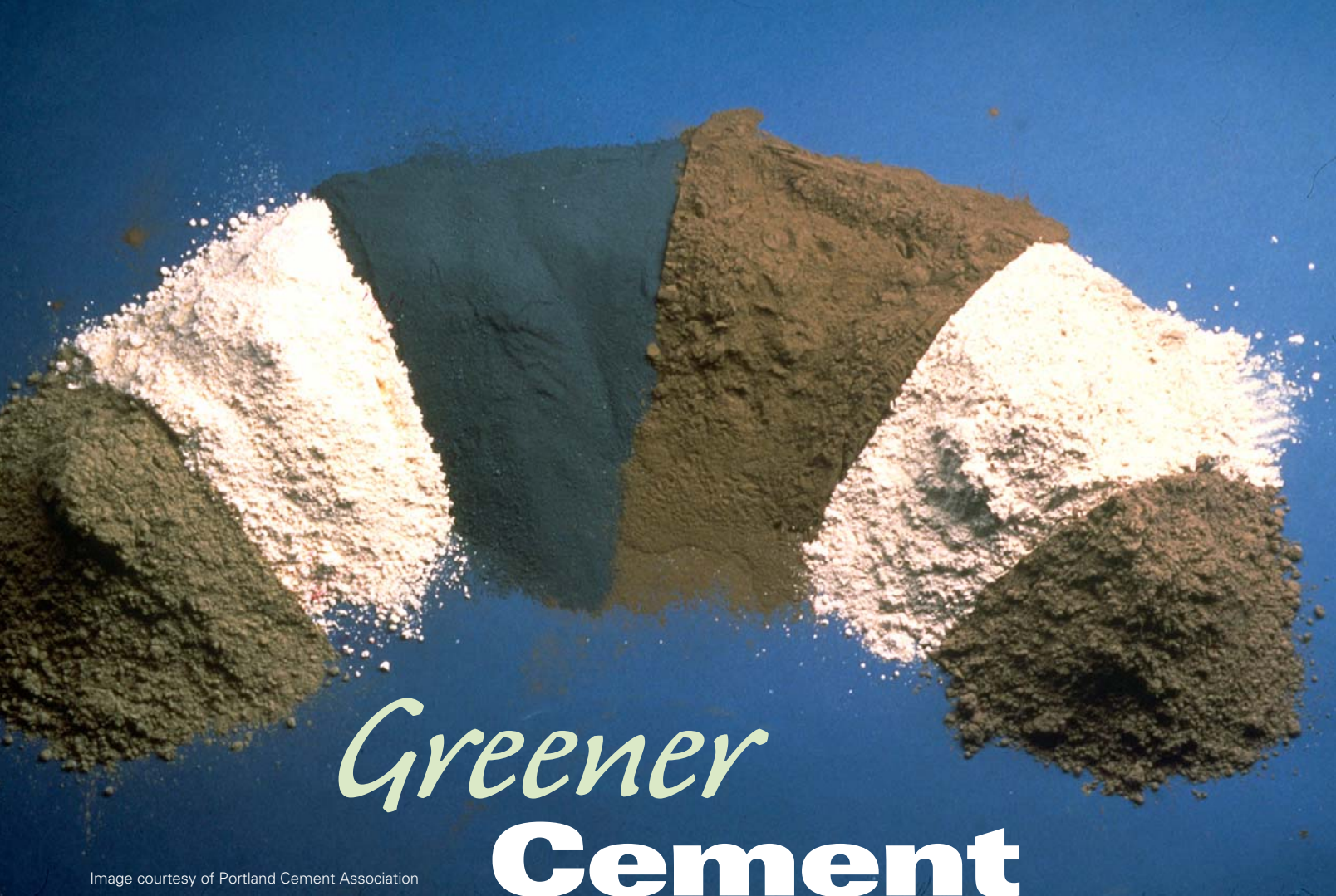


Image courtesy of Portland Cement Association

Greener Cement

Pozzolans vary widely in color. Shown here, left to right, are fly ash, metakaolin, silica fume, fly ash, slag and calcined shale.

Since manufacturing portland cement damages the environment, more and more concrete makers are giving alternatives a chance.

by Loretta Hall

According to the LEED certification system, concrete has several green qualities, including a long lifetime and recyclability. Portland cement, one of concrete's primary ingredients, is another story.

Making portland cement starts with environmentally destructive ore mining. That's followed by heating the crushed ore to 2,650 degrees Fahrenheit, a process that consumes an average of 4.6 million BTUs of energy per ton of cement. Manufacturers are reducing that energy demand by improving their processes. "Between 1972 and 2006, they've reduced their total energy consumption by 37.3 percent per ton," says Terry Collins, a concrete construction engineer with the Portland

Cement Association. "And they're recycling waste for use as fuel — tires, paints and solvents, polymers, anything that will burn with a very high BTU rating."

That's progress, but many contractors want to make concrete even greener. Usually, this means replacing part of the portland cement in a mix with some type of pozzolan. During hydration, portland cement and water produce calcium hydroxide, which pozzolans convert into additional cement. As a bonus, less lime is available to cause efflorescence.

Half a dozen pozzolans are being used in decorative concrete. Each offers different performance and environmental qualities.

Metakaolin

Also known as calcined clay, metakaolin is a white pozzolan that increases the strength and stain resistance of concrete. It can replace 5 percent to 20 percent of the portland cement in a mix. Production of metakaolin involves mining clay and heating it. The processing temperature is only about half as high as that of portland cement, so less energy is needed and the material is somewhat greener.

Silica fume

Silica fume, a waste product of steel manufacturing, strengthens concrete, but its very dark color can be a drawback in decorative applications.

"Silica fume decreases workability a lot, and you have to use more superplasticizer to overcome that," says Jeff Girard, president of the Concrete Countertop Institute. "People who aren't that aware of what they're doing just tend to add more water, which is really bad for concrete." He says silica fume usually replaces 5 percent to 10 percent of the portland cement in a mix. It is available in bag quantities, although many distributors do not keep it in stock.

Slag cement

Slag cement is a waste product of blast furnaces. Slag Cement Association literature claims that it offers "improved



Alla Linetsky, owner of Concrete Elegance Inc., uses slag cement for environmental reasons.

workability, including easier placement and improved finishing characteristics."

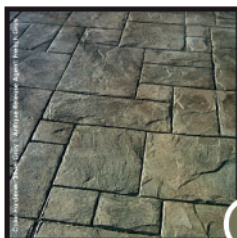
"About the only reason I use slag cement is it's readily available in my area," says Alla Linetsky, owner of Concrete Elegance Inc. in Toronto. "All the concrete I've made with high replacement ratios of slag cement just hasn't held up. Right now, I use only 9 percent. Even at that level, it makes the concrete noticeably weaker and more porous." She adds that slag cement is often not available in small enough quantities to be convenient for the

decorative industry.

Fly ash

Fly ash consists of microscopic, glassy particles recovered from the smokestacks of coal-fired power plants. There are two types. As a pure pozzolan, Class F depends on the presence of cement to harden. Class C contains enough calcium hydroxide to initiate the reaction on its own. "I've seen mix designs that go anywhere from 20 or 30 percent replacement to a few prototypical 100 percent replacements

Image courtesy of Concrete Elegance Inc.



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Image courtesy of Portland Cement Association

Clockwise beginning at right: clinker (ground to become the main ingredient of portland cement), gypsum (included in portland cement in small amounts), portland cement, fly ash, slag, silica fume, and calcined clay (metakaolin). In the center is blended cement, which contains at least one pozzolan.

with Class C fly ash,” Girard says.

“Fly ash greatly enhances workability, flowability, placeability and finishability,” says Tom Fox, Western regional technical support manager for Headwaters Resources, a fly ash supplier. Fly ash reduces concrete’s porosity and permeability, so it protects rebar from corrosion, he adds.

Eric Corey Freed, principal of organicArchitect in San Francisco, reports seeing contractors use as much as 85 percent fly ash, although high concentrations have significant effects on a mix. “The troweling is a lot different,” he says. “It increases the instance of pitting. We’ve found we can parge over it with a finish layer of plaster or stucco. The curing time is much longer.”

Girard notes that pozzolans can be used in combinations. “The workability of fly ash tends to offset the workability reduction of silica fume,” he observes.

However, he cautions contractors

against modifying mix designs themselves unless they understand concrete very well. “There’s a scientific process to making a mix design,” he says. “I teach my own mix designs in my classes.” Another way to get help with creating and testing a new mix design is to contact a concrete test facility. Making test pieces is also an essential part of the process. Experimenting on an actual project can cost money and damage the reputations of both the contractor and of decorative concrete in general.

Portland-free

“As far as I know, we’re the only ones with a complete, no-portland product,” says Leo Kahl, vice president for marketing with CeraTech Inc. in Alexandria, Va. “Our materials are comprised of a high percentage of fly ash as well as other materials.” CeraTech’s proprietary powder is simply dry-mixed with fly ash and aggregate. “Our process is not even manufacturing,” Kahl says.

“It just comes together at the point of use, so there’s absolutely zero carbon footprint with this product.”

Two versions are available. Surfex, a pigmentable and stainable gray overlayment, can rehabilitate concrete surfaces as a final application or as a substrate. Artkote, a white overlay product that can be colored and stamped, is particularly suitable for decorative finishes. Both products are intended for underroof or indoor purposes only, and neither requires a bond coat.

VCAS

VCAS (Vitreous Calcium Alumino-Silicate) is a white pozzolan made from glass-fiber manufacturing waste. Literature from the manufacturer, Vitro Minerals, says producing its product requires 99 percent less energy than an equivalent amount of portland cement. Replacing 20 percent of cement with VCAS increases paste volume 4.2

percent given a fixed water-to-cement ratio.

"Our material has all the same attributes as fly ash for replacing cement — low water demand, good physical properties," says Jerry Turner, Vitro Minerals' marketing manager. "Our advantage is that our material is white. In a stampable mix, we can replace roughly 20 to 25 percent of the cement. Our material makes the mix very smooth and creamy. It helps fill the fine areas in the mold or stamp, so installers get very good detail."

"VCAS greatly reduces efflorescence and greatly reduces or eliminates alkali-silica reaction problems," Turner says. "With time, our material reacts with the sodium hydroxide, but not so fast that surface stains don't take hold. As the material continues to react over time, it makes the concrete less porous, so the colors stay bright and more permanent."

VCAS plus GFRC

Steve Silberman and Tommy Cook, co-owners of Absolute ConcreteWorks in Poulsbo, Wash., use a combination of methods to reduce their use of portland cement. "Our mix design for most all of our products is glass-fiber reinforced concrete, or GFRC," Silberman says. "Because it's so dramatically stronger, we are able to pour it much thinner. Our basic structures are typically poured 3/4 inch or 1 inch thick — there, initially, we've reduced our use of portland cement by up to 50 percent, because industry standard is a 1 1/2-to-2-inch-thick pour."

Using Vitro Minerals' VCAS enables the company to reduce its overall portland use by up to an additional 22 percent, Cook adds.

Silberman adds that their GFRC mix uses no gravel, which has to be quarried. "If you're looking at it from an overall green and sustainability perspective, the elimination of the gravel from the structural integrity is another eco-friendly element."

Deco-Poz

The Deco-Poz concrete resurfacing system uses a mixture of 75 percent white portland cement and 25 percent white, recycled glass pozzolan. "Deco-Poz can be stained or coated with just about any material," says John Bennett, president of Eco Safety Products Inc. "It has more porosity than a hard-troweled concrete or one that's very dense with curing compound, so it actually becomes a little easier to stain."

The product, consisting of a powder and a liquid polymer, offers another green benefit. "Our system can be applied over existing asphalt, adhesive or mastic," Bennett says. No primer is needed, no substrate has to be removed and dumped in a landfill, and there's no need for stripping, which creates hazardous waste.

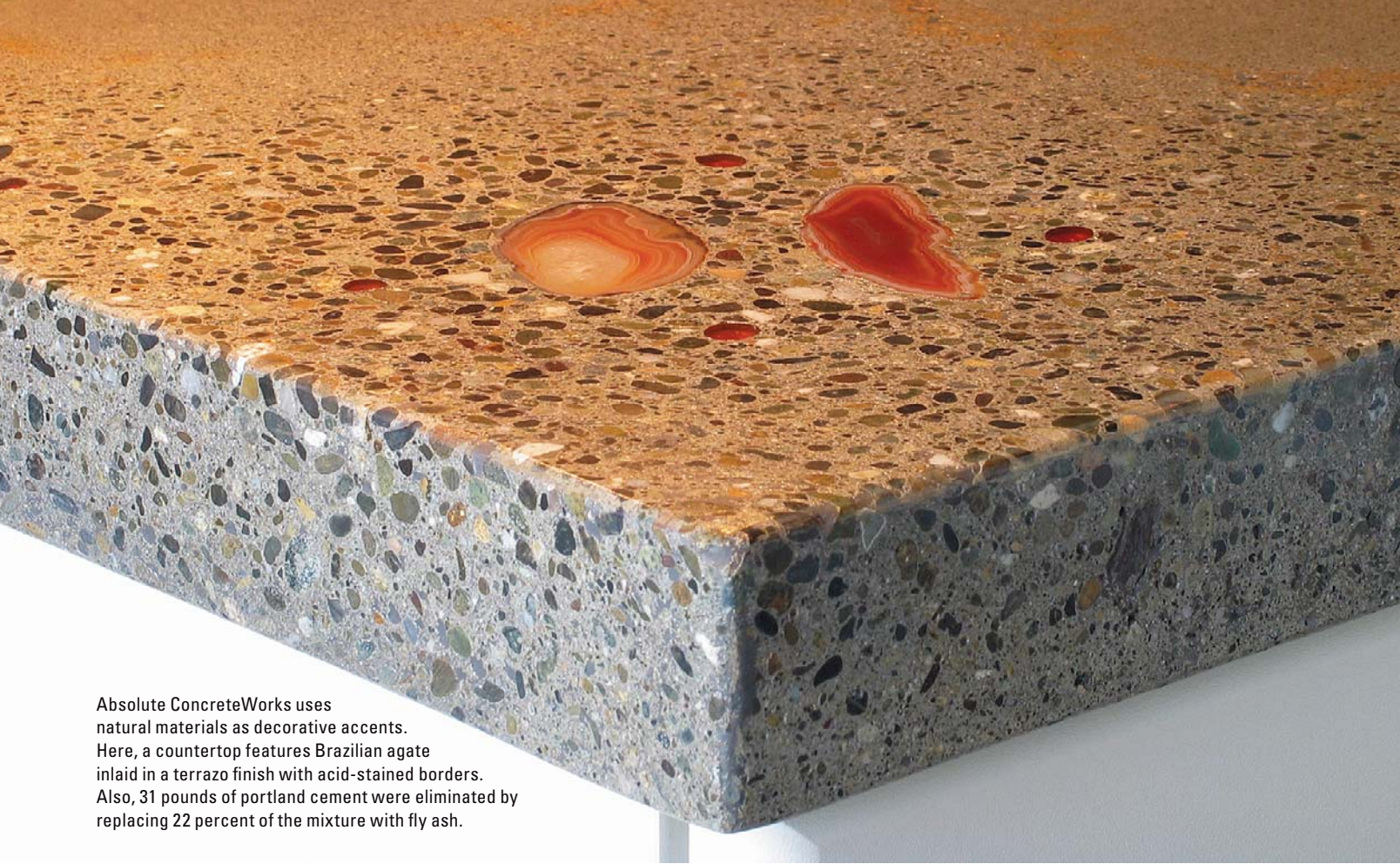
"You can put Deco-Poz over glass, old Mexican tile or Formica tops," says Sam Dalrymple, co-owner of Xiascapes in Carefree, Ariz. "We've done the insides of swimming pools with it, on top of plaster that's rotting away." Dalrymple says

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Absolute ConcreteWorks uses natural materials as decorative accents. Here, a countertop features Brazilian agate inlaid in a terrazzo finish with acid-stained borders. Also, 31 pounds of portland cement were eliminated by replacing 22 percent of the mixture with fly ash.



Photos by Roger Turk, Northlight Photography

A custom color countertop with a built-in wiggly drain board created by Absolute ConcreteWorks. The piece was cast with a GFRC-plus-VCAS mixture.

the 6,200-psi strength is double that of other products.

Making a choice

Comparing the greenness of these alternatives gets complicated because many factors are involved. The most obvious are recycling versus mining virgin materials and calculating energy consumption during production. Others, like eliminating the need to remove and discard old substrates, are less apparent. And the choice often involves trade-offs. "If you happen to be near a cement plant and they happen to be using old tires as the fuel for making that cement, isn't that a little bit greener, versus buying (a pozzolan) that has to be shipped across the country?" Girard asks.

As Kermit the Frog said, it's not easy being green. 🐸

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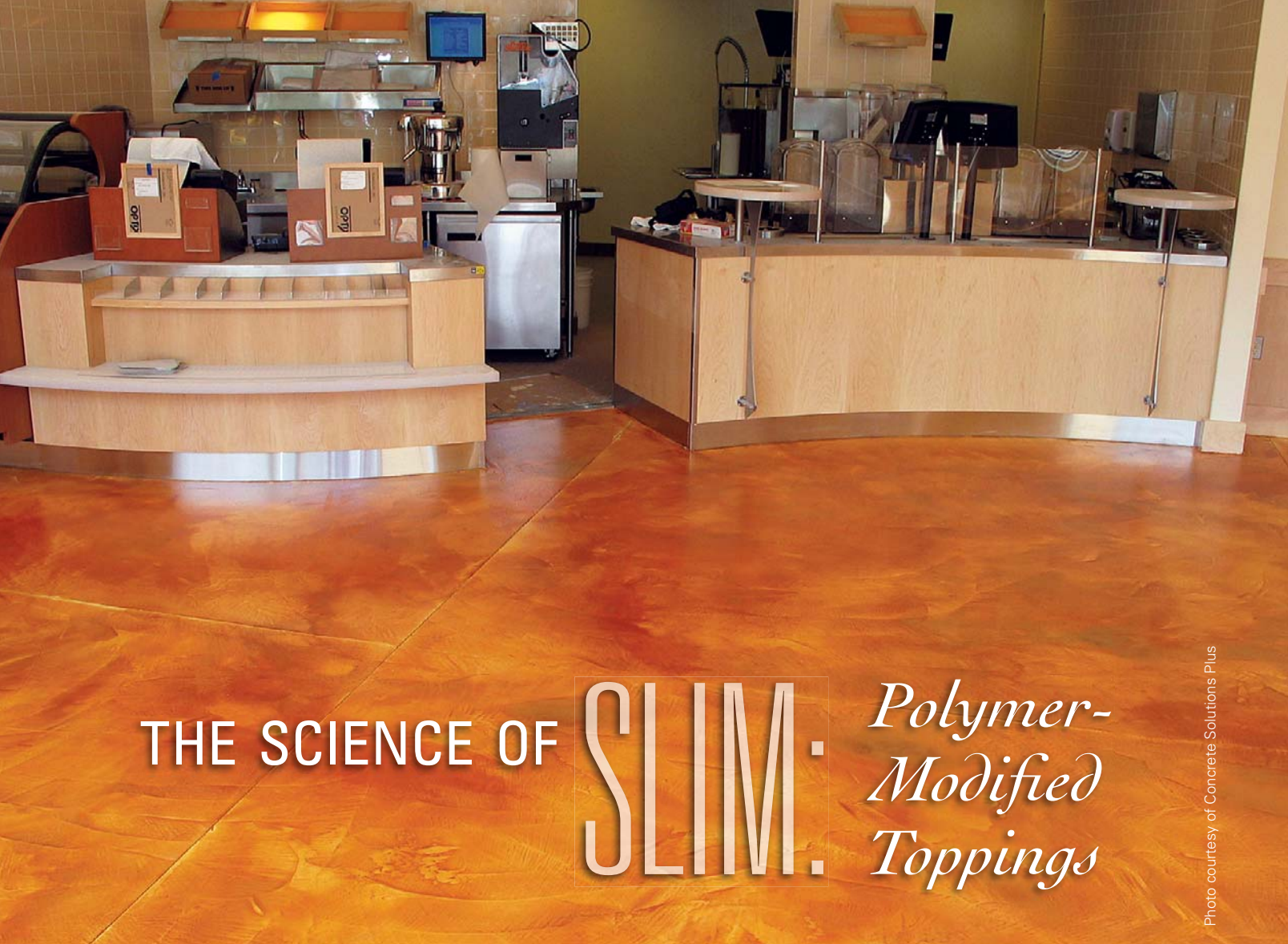


Photo courtesy of Concrete Solutions Plus

THE SCIENCE OF SLIM: *Polymer-Modified Toppings*

Construction materials placed on this concrete floor when it was fresh affected hydration and left circles and lines that only showed up when acid stain was applied. To solve the problem, artisans covered the ruined floor with a microtopping, then applied amber-colored acid stain to get the look originally intended.

by Amy Johnson

Decorative concrete is both an art and a science, and nowhere is that more true than in the case of thin overlays and toppings. The art lies in the palette of finishes and designs that make old, worn concrete look bright and new and different. The science lies in the chemistry that makes these toppings possible.

“Thin toppings” in this case means cementitious overlays applied at a depth of 1 inch or less — sometimes as thin as 1/16 inch — over an existing slab. While they have the look of regular concrete, they are not formulated in the same way. “Standard concrete has no strength at that depth,” explains George Henderson, president of PermaCrete/Quality Systems Inc. “It depends on its mass for strength, so it must be 2 inches thick, at least.”

Steve Crast, technical director for Crossfield Products, adds: “Traditional cementitious materials depend on alkali silica reactions and hydration of cement. Minimal thickness is difficult to achieve without shrinkage or cracking. Bonding is also a problem.”

Enter polymers — chemical molecules linked in chains that change the strength, elasticity and adhesion of any formulation to which they are added. “ ‘Polymer-modified’ is a term used to describe cementitious products that have both an inorganic binder and a polymer modifier that work together to impart special properties that cannot be achieved by cementitious systems without polymer modifiers,” says Stan Stratton, director of technology development for L.M. Scofield Co. “The inorganic binder is most often portland cement, and the polymer modifier is either a dry, redispersible polymer or a polymer latex.”

When a traditional concrete mix is formulated with a polymer, the resulting material can be stronger or more flexible, depending on the polymers used and their ratio to cement in the mix. “Polymer modification of cementitious materials affords more control of final set-time properties, strengthening of the mix, enhancement of physical properties and longevity,” Crast says.

The advantages for concrete are clear. Now a formulator can manipulate the mix to deliver the most desirable attributes for a given application, delivered in a thin overlay that improves the look and performance of the underlying concrete without tear-out or significant buildup.

Polymers also improve the adhesion of a topping. “Polymer additives form a chemical bond with the underlying surface so the topping won’t delaminate,” Henderson explains. “Regular concrete offers only a mechanical bond.”

Latex polymers

Pioneering efforts to modify concrete were made with natural rubber latex as early as the 19th century. Today, the most familiar toppings for decorative applications are modified with synthetic latex polymers: styrene butadiene rubber, polyvinyl acetate or acrylic. SBR has long been used as a general-purpose cement modifier. Noted for water resistance, it is often used in countertop formulations. However, a tendency to discolor under UV exposure makes SBR-modified concrete toppings

less attractive for exterior applications.

Acrylic has good weathering characteristics and provides increased work time compared with other polymers. Acrylic also imparts the highest physical strength of the three polymers. “Acrylic is a very hard resin,” says Brian Farnsworth, assistant director of technical services for Bomanite Corp. “Acrylic-modified toppings improve wear resistance in high traffic areas. They are less likely to show dents or damage from wear from, for example, a rolling chair.”

The downside of this hardness is rigidity. Toppings modified with acrylic polymers perform best in interiors or mild climates where they are not

subjected to temperature extremes.

Mike Ferraro, owner of Decorative Coatings and Concrete Co., based in Aurora, Colo., says another advantage of acrylic-modified toppings is water-vapor permeability. “Acrylic cement is breathable. Moisture comes through the concrete below and breathes out so the topping won’t delaminate.”

Vinyl acetate is the most flexible of the polymers used to modify concrete for cementitious toppings. This, along with inherent water resistance, makes it a good choice for exteriors in climates that see extreme freeze-thaw cycles. Toppings modified with vinyl acetate can flex without cracking during thermal expansion and contraction.



Workers created a stone-tile appearance on this living room floor by pressing the tile pattern into a cementitious overlay that was installed at 3/8-inch thick.

Photo courtesy of Bomanite Corp.



Photo courtesy of Bomanite Corp.

Polymer-modified toppings are less porous than traditional concrete, so they are easier to clean, so patterns like this cafe floor keep looking bright and new.

Daniel Owen, vice president of Arizona Polymer Flooring, believes the choice of materials often comes down to personal preference. “Acrylics set faster and get harder, which makes them more difficult to stamp,” he says. “Vinyl acetate has a longer pot life, and we can make a 1/4-inch stampable overlay with it.”

A technical bulletin published in 2001 by Arizona Polymer Flooring states: “Our research and development efforts showed that a blend of acrylic and vinyl acetate ethylene produced a modifier that maximized the properties we sought — strength, flexibility, adhesion and weatherability.”

Epoxy- and urethane-modified concrete

Decorative concrete toppings are modified with latex polymers, but there are large industrial and commercial markets for polymer-modified cementitious toppings based on epoxy and urethane resins. While they can accept integral colors, the chemistry of these materials is too complex to formulate them for staining or other decorative techniques. Aesthetics can be improved by techniques such as broadcasting quartz chips, but generally these epoxy- and urethane-modified cementitious toppings are designed and

used for their physical attributes, not their appearance.

“Urethane cements are among the most popular in the market and have excellent performance properties for high impact, thermal shock and chemical resistance,” says Robert Cain, president of Key Resin Co. “They are used prominently in food plants, dairies, kitchens and so forth.”

“Epoxy-modified concrete is a little easier to install and handle because it is more trowelable than urethane-modified concrete,” observes Ron Borum, executive vice president of Crossfield Products. “This is a newer technology just starting to get traction in

Polyaspartic Sealers: Something New on Top

Advances in chemistry go beyond polymer-modified concrete to auxiliary products such as improved sealing and coating systems. One of the exciting new types of materials is polyaspartics.

Raw material supplier Bayer MaterialScience defines "polyaspartic esters" as amine-based high-performance resins used to make two-component, light-stable coatings. "Polyaspartics are in the same chemical family as polyurea — in fact they are non-yellowing polyureas," says Robert Cain, president of Key Resin Co.

Chemically modifying polyureas results in a material that in several ways is significantly improved. According to Cain, benefits include nonyellowing properties, near zero amounts of volatile organic compounds, more useable pot life, fast tack-free and recoat times, heavy film build (15 mils) in one application, lower temperature curability and excellent wear and chemical resistance.

Daniel Owen, vice president of Arizona Polymer Flooring, explains why polyaspartics make good wear coatings for cementitious toppings. "The big benefit I see to them is quick cure and rapid return to service. You get higher film build in one coat compared to two coats for a two-part urethane coating, so you have a shorter install time. And a polyaspartic is more UV-stable than an epoxy coating and has a bit better abrasion resistance."

Polyaspartic coatings have some other differences too. Owen cautions that contractors may have to alter some work habits. For example, due to the quick cure time, they may have to change rollers every hour. Cain adds that sanding may be required between coats or when coating over other coating materials in order to get proper adhesion.

The high solids content (92 percent) means that the price per gallon can lead to "sticker shock" notes Daniel Owen. "Mil for mil, putting a polyaspartic coating on the floor is comparable in price to a two-part urethane."

George Henderson says PermaCrete/Quality Systems Inc. is evaluating polyaspartics for coating products to be introduced soon. He likes the fact that the polyaspartic-coated surface can be opened to foot traffic in two hours, and that the film surface is bubble-free and extremely UV-resistant. He especially likes the low VOCs. "These are good times for chemical companies," he says. "Sealers based on bad-actor solvents are being replaced with water-based sealers that are just as tough and strong."

the market."

The choice between epoxy and urethane-modified cements is dictated by experience and personal preference, supplier recommendation, and cost and criteria for the project. Cain says that polymer-modified toppings are generally less expensive than such competing materials as epoxy mortars or 100-percent-solids resinous materials.

When only a topping will do

Modifying cementitious mixes with polymers makes it possible to apply the material in a thin topping and still get long-term performance. This makes them attractive for several applications. Toppings and overlays fill the bill when renovation or repair is required but concrete cannot be removed. This happens, for example, when concrete is cut out for a new plumbing run. Even though the concrete is repaired and integrity restored, the only way to restore the appearance is with a topping.

Sometimes a topping is applied just to get a new look. And thin toppings are attractive for interior renovation because they don't interfere with existing features like doorjambs. In new construction, toppings are used where a 2-inch concrete slab would not be workable. They can also be used as part of a moisture suppression system.

Polymer-modified cementitious toppings have another advantage over traditional concrete. George Henderson explains that because polymer chains tend to fill in material



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Photo courtesy of Decorative Concrete and Coatings

Mike Ferraro used a roller to apply a thin cementitious topping to this pool deck. He wanted to change the color without changing the deck profile.



Photo courtesy of Quality Systems Inc.

Overlooking the Allegheny Center Mall in Pittsburgh, Pa. A polymer-modified topping was used in the 111,000-square-foot plaza.

voids, toppings are less much porous than concrete. This means that dirt and other contaminants sit on top instead of penetrating, making polymer-modified topping surfaces easier to clean effectively with mild detergents and pressure-washing. Henderson even recommends cleaning driveways with a simple household cleaner and a hose. He cites as an example an 111,000-square-foot outdoor pedestrian plaza in Pittsburgh with a polymer-modified topping installed in 1990. "It looks like new," he says. "We just pressure-wash the chewing gum off and put on a light coat of colored sealer every few years. A topping like this with high cement and high polymer content can go on indefinitely."

Polymer-modified cementitious toppings are supplied in self-leveling or trowelable formulations. "Self-leveling toppings are slurries the consistency of pancake batter," says Cain. "They are spread with a gauge rake or notched trowel and allowed to self-level."

Self-leveling polymer-modified products help with fast-track construction, Farnsworth says. "These products are generally used to level a surface and finish all in

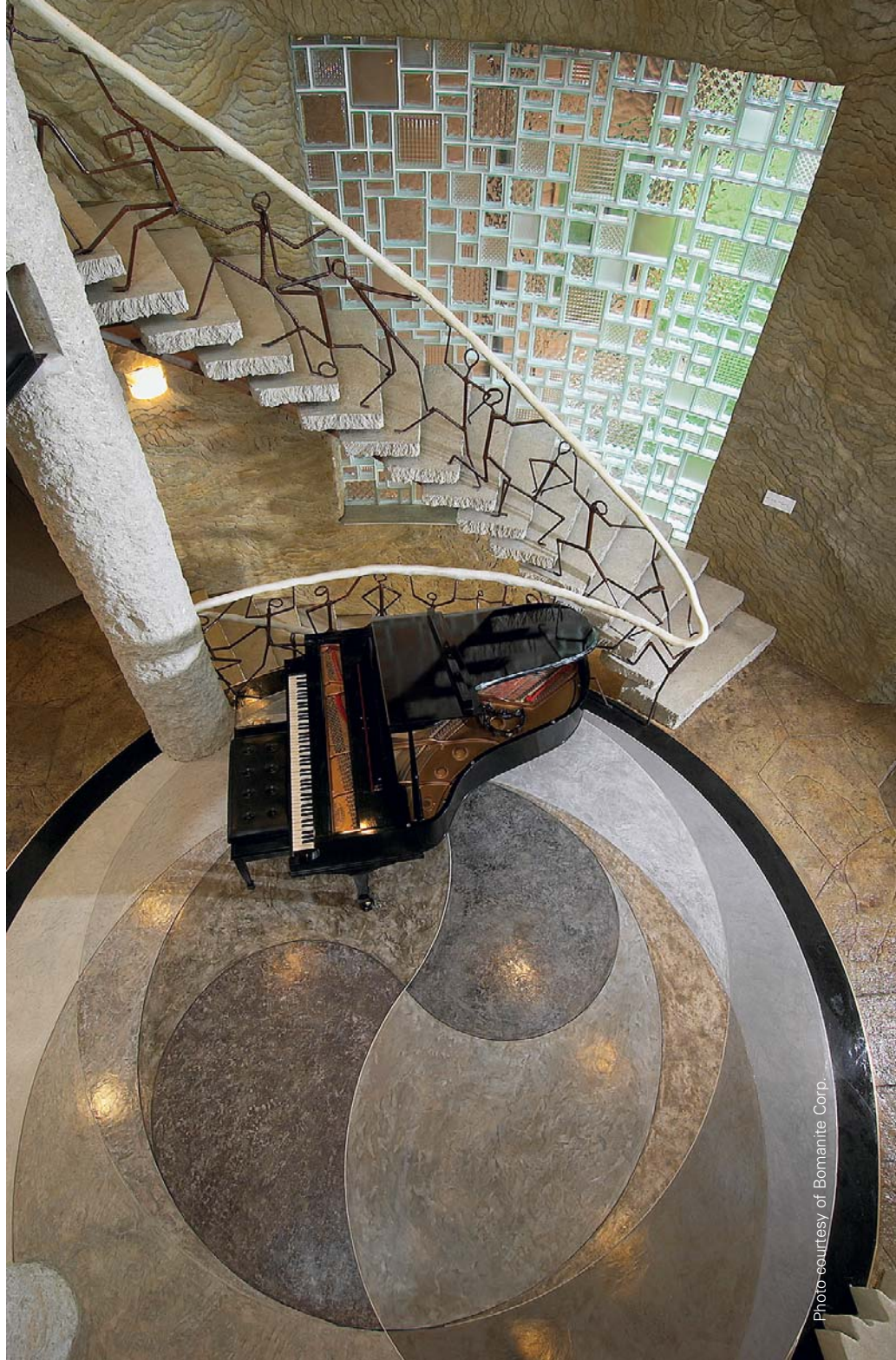
one application.”

“The advantage of self-leveling over troweled toppings is speed and efficiency of application,” Ron Borum says. “However, most are limited to interior use and cannot be used over wood or other deflecting substrates, nor can they be used vertically. They are not suitable for texturing. Most need to be sanded, which makes them less efficient for stained decorative finishes.” Borum also recommends use of a primer with self-leveling toppings.

Stratton points out that self-leveling toppings are helpful on interior floors that need to be level so that cabinets and shelves stand straight. “Normally, exterior concrete is sloped slightly to facilitate water drainage in the right directions,” he says. “The slope requirement precludes the use of toppings that are self-leveling for exterior applications. Most of the self-leveling products in the marketplace also do not have enough durability to perform satisfactorily in weather-exposed areas.”

Troweled toppings are generally thicker and may be used on horizontal or vertical surfaces. While they require more labor, they open up more decorative possibilities. Besides stains or dry-shake powders, various texturing finishes may be used. Many trowelable toppings can be stamped or stenciled. Trevor Foster, Miracote sales manager and head trainer for Crossfield Products, offers a list of finishing materials that can be appropriate: pool and finish trowels, texture mats, rollers, brooms, squeegees, notched trowels, sponges, foam rollers, plastic, carving tools and chisels, antique rakes, cheesecloth, spiked rollers and even the human hand. Mike Ferraro once used a paint roller to roll a cementitious topping onto a pool deck to change the color. “It looks and feels more like concrete than paint, because of the cement.”

It was this opportunity for artistic expression that lured Mac Gordon, owner and general manager of Concrete Solutions Plus, in Louisville, Colo., out of the floor maintenance business and into decorative concrete. After 22 years of cleaning and detailing old floors, he converted his janitorial service into a decorative concrete business focused



Micro-Top by Bomanite is an example of a two-part cementitious material that combines a liquid polymer and colored powder mixture to give designers a wide range of color and graphic options.

on decorative overlays, staining and industrial coatings, including epoxies, polyurethanes and polyaspartics. He says whether concrete has been discolored, vandalized or repaired, polymer-modified cementitious toppings do the job. “You can take the oldest, nastiest concrete and put a microtopping on it to get a nice fresh surface to work on. You get a fresh

start and everybody’s happy. You can integrally color it, stain it, dye it, or leave it natural. There are a hundred things you can do with it.”

Want to learn more? Search online at www.concretedecor.net

FIND IT FAST! polymer-modified **Search**

Product Profile



Photo courtesy of Benchmark Hospitality at The Heldrich

NyconG from New Nycon Inc.

by Emily Panter

With all the talk about “green” products lately, it’s only natural that somebody has created an eco-friendly reinforcement fiber for concrete.

The synthetic fibers of NyconG, from New Nycon Inc., are made from 100 percent reclaimed post-consumer and post-industrial waste carpet.

“The performance is quite similar to virgin products,” says Paul Bracegirdle, director for New Nycon. “It’s equivalent to fibers made from their pure original form. We had it tested by an independent lab, and the results show compliance with the AC308 requirement for crack control.”

Back when Bracegirdle was trying to determine how to create a greener product, the federal government and carpet manufacturers were trying to come up with a way to increase recycling of waste carpet because of the quantity that was going to landfills.

“It was an obvious choice for us to research,” says Bracegirdle.

And just in case you needed an extra reason to go green, NyconG also contributes to obtaining project certification for the LEED program, as well as opportunities for tax credits to architects and owners.

Designed for both decorative or construction purposes, NyconG is a well-graded blend of nylon fibers (3/4 inch to micro-length). Although it is made in two types, with either nylon or polypropylene-grade fibers, the majority of the stock is nylon, which means it will not float.

“It has no limitations,” Bracegirdle says. “It can absolutely be used on countertops or in decorative concrete.”

Although not decorative in and of itself, NyconG was recently used in a large-scale project at The Heldrich Hotel and Conference Center in

New Brunswick, N.J. Bracegirdle says the project was constructed with approximately 500 architectural precast concrete panels. "Those panels were produced with a very special precast concrete that included our NyconG green fiber," he says.

Also in Nycon's lineup of green fibers are NyconG Nano and NyconC. NyconG Nano is made from recycled carpet fibers just like the original NyconG, but it is made up of a microscopic blend of nylon fibers. NyconC is made up of cellulose fibers.

Bracegirdle also says that despite NyconG's earth-friendly properties, it works just like all Nycon's other nylon or polypropylene fiber-reinforcement products.

"It's exactly the same as the virgin fibers that it comes from," he says.

 www.nycon.com



Photo courtesy of Nycon

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Call 800.456.9266 or visit www.nycon.com for more information.

* USP 6,971,784, other US and foreign patents pending.

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Joint cutting and cleaning tools



CS Unitec Inc. — F 1509 FR

CS Unitec Inc.'s model F 1509 FR tuck-pointing machine is ideal for removing old mortar from brick joints for restoration and waterproofing. It is designed to provide a clear view of joints.

The machine's 11-amp motor provides 10,000 rpm for removal of brittle mortar from long and horizontal brick joints. Concrete repair and restoration can be accomplished with an adjustable cutting depth of up to 1 inch.

The F 1509 FR comes with a built-in 1 1/8-inch vacuum port for dust-free operation when connected to an industrial vacuum such as CS Unitec's CS 1225.

☎ (800) 700-5919

🌐 www.csunitec.com

EDCO Inc. — SB-14

The SB-14 concrete and asphalt walk-behind up-cut saw from EDCO Inc. is designed for cleaning out joints.

The up-cut blade rotation of the saw provides a level surface at the base of the cut and throws dust and debris forward out of the cut. The unit captures dust and debris in a dry-dust collection system when it is used with one of EDCO's Vacuum Port Blade Guards. The SB-14 frame and undercarriage is constructed with solid, 7-gauge steel, which eliminates bending and vibration. This unit is available in 9-, 11- and 13-horsepower gasoline options as well as a 5-horsepower electric option and a 5-horsepower air motor option.

☎ (800) 638-3326

🌐 www.edcoinc.com





Husqvarna Construction Products — K 3000 Wet

Husqvarna Construction Products recently unveiled K 3000 Wet, a new addition to its line of power cutters. The K 3000 Wet is an electric power cutter that allows the user to cut indoors easily and cost-effectively, without dust.

The K 3000 Wet is equipped with a wet cutting kit that regulates the flow of water. It concentrates the spray into a stream and then onto the blade. Specially designed nozzles are housed in specific positions along the blade guard to help keep water flow use to a minimum. Additional features include a ground-fault circuit interrupter to help protect the user in case of damage to the electric circuit and an electronic overload protection system that varies the rotation speed to warn users if they are approaching overload.

☎ (913) 928-1000

🌐 www.husqvarnacp.com



Stone Construction Equipment Inc. — Stone Saw Devil

Stone Construction Equipment offers the Stone Saw Devil, a full line of concrete saws.

The line consists of popular sizes and configurations for concrete and asphalt flat sawing, with depths available of up to 7 5/8 inches. Stone Saw Devils come in two manual models and one self-propelled model, with a wide variety of engine and blade size options. The three models have features that include vibration-reducing all-steel box frame construction, right- or left-cut versatility, and an easy-to-remove blade guard contoured to reduce slurry buildup.

☎ (800) 888-9926

🌐 www.stone-equip.com



U.S. Saws — Dust Buggy

U.S. Saws has added the Dust Buggy to its dust-free product line. The Dust Buggy allows for easy stand-up cutting on joint clean-out applications or decorative score-cutting projects. It offers contractors the ability to control dust on the job site when it is connected to a Shop-Vac or other dust collection system.

The Dust Buggy includes a dust shroud with an on-off switch and includes a plug-in for a vacuum. Placement of the Dust Buggy's handle on the dust hood allows for downward pressure at the front of the shroud to prevent lifting. The model has a right-angle grinder, and it can be used with a 7-inch or 8-inch blade to reach a maximum cutting depth of approximately 2 inches. 🛠️

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🌐 www.ussaws.com

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Product News



Cohills releases water-based stains

Manufactured by Cohills Building Specialties Inc., Pro Series Enviro Stain is a line of water-based, nonacid polymer-bonded stains that penetrate into a concrete surface to produce long-lasting UV-resistant stains that enhance any concrete surface.

Pro Series Enviro Stains contain no arsenic, lead or mercury and only a small number of organic solvents to conform to all VOC regulations. One gallon of stain covers up to 200 square feet.

www.cohills.com

Concrete tub mold from Expressions Ltd.

Expressions Ltd. is now selling the Urbane, a concrete tub mold.

The Urbane is constructed out of fiberglass and can be reused. Measuring 52 inches long and 25 1/2 inches wide, the mold can be used for both precast and in-place concrete tubs.

The Urbane is currently the only mold available from Expressions, but other tub designs will be available soon.

www.Expressions-LTD.com



Sonoma unveils MetalCrete

Sonoma Cast Stone has unveiled a new option for concrete countertops and sinks: MetalCrete.

MetalCrete concrete countertops and sinks do not ring hollow like molded metal. They have the feel of solid stone, and each has been permanently plated with a genuine metal finish. Fixtures can be completely or partially plated for a variety of effects. Copper, nickel, brass, bronze or steel finishes are available.


 www.sonomacaststone.com



An underlayment that self-seals

USG has introduced a new cementitious underlayment. Levelrock brand 4500 NXG floor underlayment is a high-performance underlayment designed for interior use in a wide variety of projects. It turns out a smooth, hard surface that provides long life over concrete slabs, prestressed concrete and concrete planks at thicknesses from featheredge (with proper sand) to 2 inches.

Suitable for use with a variety of floor coverings, the underlayment offers compressive strengths of up to 5,500 psi. Quick application and setting times, combined with high production rates, permit the resumption of trade traffic within hours of the underlayment pour.

 (800) 874-4968

 www.levelrock.com

Blastrac develops the Eco-Shroud

Blastrac, a leader in surface preparation technologies, has announced the development of the Eco-Shroud.

The Eco-Shroud is a vacuum shroud designed and engineered for use on a wide variety of grinders to provide maximum results from hand-held grinding and polishing tools.

The shroud aids in reducing dust during grinding and



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polishing procedures, which increases visibility and helps maintain air quality in the work area.

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🌐 www.blastrac.com

Stoneage offers kneel board, mesh dispenser

Stoneage Concrete Tools has released two new tools for the trade — Quickdisc and E-Z Mesh.

The Quickdisc allows a person to slide effortlessly when floating or troweling concrete. The kneeling board has a wide, 22-inch-diameter base to avoid sinking, and a bowed aluminum bottom helps keep edges out of the cement.

The E-Z Mesh is a wire-mesh dispenser and straightener, reportedly the first one on the market. Made out of aluminum and PVC, it is lightweight and can be applied to a trailer hitch by one person. As an alternative, it can be placed on the ground using its incorporated legs. In addition, it can be

made into a sturdy work platform by removing the mesh roller and adding a custom piece of plywood.

🌐 www.stoneageconcretetools.com

A coating blend from Anvil

Anvil Paints & Coatings Inc. has introduced Anvil 1700 High Performance Epoxy Show Coat concrete and garage floor paint for use on interior and exterior, painted or unpainted concrete surfaces.

Its durable acrylic and epoxy formula delivers a solid-color satin finish that is highly resistant to hot automobile tires as well as fading, scuffing, cracking, peeling and blistering. For a super-gloss showroom finish, Anvil's 2350 Wet Look Sealer can be used as a topcoat.

☎ (800) 822-6776

🌐 www.anvilpaints.com

QC releases water-based stains

Renew by QC is a new line of nonhazardous, water-based penetrating concrete staining products that are free

of acids or acrylics.

The line consists of: Renew by QC Solid Color Concrete Stain, Renew by QC Translucent Stain, Renew by QC Primer, and Renew by QC Color Additive. Offered by QC Construction Products, these products rejuvenate colored surfaces or plain gray concrete by minimizing discolorations without altering surface texture. Made for use with existing concrete, unsealed concrete, interior or exterior concrete and other cementitious surfaces, Renew by QC products are easy to use and low-maintenance with excellent recoatability. Renew can be used to create specialty stencil designs with stencils and can be specially ordered in any standard QC product color.

☎ (800) 243-8213

🌐 www.qcconstructionproducts.com

Self-leveling concrete topping from Ardex

Ardex Engineered Cements has launched a new self-leveling concrete for outdoor applications — Ardex K 301 Exterior Self-Leveling Concrete Topping and Underlayment.

Ardex K 301 is a portland cement-based product for fast-track resurfacing and smoothing of concrete. The product is an ideal concrete wear surface or underlayment for commercial, light industrial and residential applications such as sidewalks, loading docks, parking garages, driveways, plazas, balconies and many other applications. It is freeze-thaw resistant, sets quickly, and can be walked on in just two to three hours.

☎ (888) 512-7339

🌐 www.ardex.com

Alpha adds nine

Alpha Professional Tools has expanded its line of products by developing nine new tools for the concrete industry.

The list includes the Ecogrinder, a high-performance grinder with a built-in vacuum system. Its unique slide cover allows the Ecogrinder grinding wheel to grind all the way up to a wall. The other products are: Grinding Cup Wheels, Dust Bag Carriage, Concrete Profiling

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Masonry and concrete workers now have access to a single tool that performs the functions needed in leveling, plumbing, squaring and measuring projects.

Level Best2 utilizes two opposing level bubbles, a perfect 90-degree angle, and a ruler. Masonry and concrete contractors can plumb, level and square building foundations, sidewalk and driveway forms, stairs, countertops, retaining walls and even infrastructural footings easier and faster with this tool. It is made from injection-molded high-impact polystyrene. To ensure lateral rigidity, a perfect 90-degree angle and extreme durability, Level Best2 uses a 90-second in-mold curing process. Other Level Best2 features include "dual sides," so it can be turned over and applied to all four corners of a foundation, and a pencil slot for convenient and accurate markings.

The Level Best2 is available in three different sizes.

[\(866\) 930-5203](tel:8669305203)

www.levelbest2.com

Sto Corp. meets low VOC regulations

Sto Corp., a leader in cladding, coating and restoration systems, has announced that the majority of its coatings line of building products has been adjusted to meet new low-VOC regulations that went into effect in southern California this past summer.

There are a number of Sto products affected by the change. They include Sto Metallic Coating, StoCoat Color, Stochastic Sand, and Sto Concrete Coating Smooth.

The adjustments to these coatings products fit with Sto Corp.'s upcoming implementation of its ISO 14001 Environmental Management System.

[\(888\) 786-2955](tel:8887862955)

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■ ■ ■ Association News



All 23 examinees for the ACI Concrete Field Testing Technician – Grade I passed and are now certified. They are pictured in Chennai, India, with ACI officials and ACI India Chapter officials.



An ACI certification program participant demonstrates the ASTM C231 Air Content by the Pressure Method performance evaluation exam in Chennai, India.

American Concrete Institute

Philippines, India get certification programs

The American Concrete Institute recently approved the initiation of ACI certification programs in the Philippines and India, increasing the total number of countries outside of the United States where ACI certification programs are regularly offered to 19.

ACI certification examinations (and training, if offered) are administered by local sponsoring groups, which are typically ACI Chapters, trade associations, public agencies, and educational institutions working with the support and participation of businesses within the construction industry.

Certification programs are now available for aggregate testing technicians, flatwork finishers, field-testing technicians, inspectors, laboratory testing technicians, shotcrete nozzlemen and tilt-up supervisors.

☎ (248) 848-3800

🌐 www.concrete.org

New publications released

The American Concrete Institute has announced the availability of five new publications covering new concrete-related information and technology.

Titles are: Building Code Requirements for Structural Concrete and Commentary (Metric Version) (318M-08), Report on Behavior of Fresh Concrete During Vibration (309.1R-08), Guide to Portland Cement-Based Plaster (524R-08), Specification for Type ES (Epoxy Slurry) Polymer Overlays for Bridge and Parking Garage Decks (548.9-08), and Fifth ACI/CANMET/IBRACON International Conference on High Performance Concrete Structures and Materials (CD-ROM) (SP-253CD).

☎ (248) 848-3800

🌐 www.concrete.org

Achievement Award presented

Oliver "Skip" Dulle Jr. of St. Louis was presented with ACI's Distinguished Achievement Award at the ACI Fall 2008 Convention in St. Louis.



The award is given to ACI nonmembers who have made notable contributions to the advancement of the concrete industry.

Dulle serves as executive director for the Concrete Council of St. Louis and is president of Dulle&Co International. Since he became the executive director of the Concrete Council of St. Louis in 1987, revenues of the organization have increased by more than 3,000 percent. Along with developing a data-driven program to track local projects and convert them to concrete construction, Dulle implemented an in-house and seminar-based promotion program, along with a number of product demonstration and certification activities, that provides more than 2,000 hours of CEU credits each year to local architects, engineers, and public officials.

🌐 www.concrete.org

American Society of Concrete Contractors

Inman receives ASCC award

Brad D. Inman received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society of Concrete Contractors at the association's annual conference in San Antonio, Texas. The award is given to outstanding individuals for the body of their accomplishments furthering the concrete construction industry and the ASCC.

The bulk of Inman's career was spent at Charles Pankow Builders Ltd. where he began as a project manager. In



1974 he became manager of the firm's San Francisco office and was promoted to vice president in 1981.

Inman has served on the ASCC board of directors since 1982 and was president of the organization from 1995 to 1996. He received the Roger Corbetta Award from the American Concrete Institute and is also a fellow of ACI.

☎ (314) 962-0210

🌐 www.asconline.org

Safety Management Plan published

The American Society of Concrete Contractors has published a Safety Management Plan that can be customized to serve as a company's complete safety program.

The manual was prepared by ASCC's Safety & Risk Management Council to help contractors develop and implement basic safety management

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plans. The plan covers basic policy statements, safety responsibilities, inspections, first aid, emergency planning, hazard communication and more. ASCC also offers a comprehensive Safety Manual that contains all of the elements of an effective safety program for the concrete contractor. Regular updates reflect changes in OSHA regulations and the concrete construction industry.

The Plan is available in a three-ring tabbed binder or on a CD.

☎ (866) 788-2722

🌐 www.ascconline.org



Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association

Contractor and manufacturer survey results available

CSDA recently developed a short survey for its contractor and manufacturer members as a means of collecting operating and budgeting data. Thirty percent of contractor members responded, while 20 percent of manufacturer members responded.

As far as contractors are concerned, 71 percent said that they are experiencing increased productivity in their operations, and 50 percent of these believe it is due to an increase in training while 36 percent said it was because of better equipment.

In developing their companies' sales plans for 2009, 38 percent of the manufacturer respondents believe the sawing and drilling market will grow modestly.

🌐 www.csda.org

National Precast Concrete Association

Precast Show to debut in 2009

The Precast Show, set to debut in Houston Feb. 20-22, 2009, is all about precast concrete — what it takes to produce the world's most versatile building material, train employees and run a successful business.

NPCA held extensive brainstorming meetings with exhibitors and precast manufacturers and developed the event along with longtime trade show partner the American Concrete Pipe Association. The Precast Show has been in the planning stage for more than two years, starting with a meeting of 66 major exhibitors held in Chicago in 2006.

"The Precast Show is an equipment and services trade show designed by precasters and suppliers, and it puts the focus squarely on manufacturing, safety, technical training and the producers who are doing award-winning work in this industry," said Ty E. Gable, president of the National Precast Concrete Association, in a press release.

🌐 www.precast.org

Portland Cement Association

Regional association appoints technical specialist

The California Nevada Cement Association has appointed Paulette Salisbury technical specialist for northern California and northern Nevada. In this position, she will make presentations on current topics in concrete for architects, engineers, developers, owners and municipalities throughout her region.

Salisbury comes to CNCA from Paulette Salisbury & Associates, where her company represented manufacturers of concrete and concrete repair materials.

The California Nevada Cement Association is one of 10 Portland Cement Association Regional Promotion Groups serving the United States.

🌐 www.cncpc.org



Tilt-Up Concrete Association

TCA sponsors events at WOC 2009

The Tilt-Up Concrete Association — a nonprofit international organization that serves to expand and improve the use of tilt-up as the preferred construction method — is sponsoring several educational events at the 2009 World of Concrete, to be held Feb. 2-6, 2009, in Las Vegas.

As a co-sponsor of World of Concrete, TCA will offer important educational events, including "Tilt-Up: It's a System," TCA/ACI Tilt-Up Technician/Supervisor Training and the ACI Tilt-Up Certification Exam.

The TCA Annual Meeting and Awards Breakfast will take place Feb. 5 at 8 a.m. This year's TCA Annual Meeting will feature a presentation by Dave Kelly, who recently retired as vice president and chief engineer from Meadow Burke. 📄

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🌐 www.tilt-up.org



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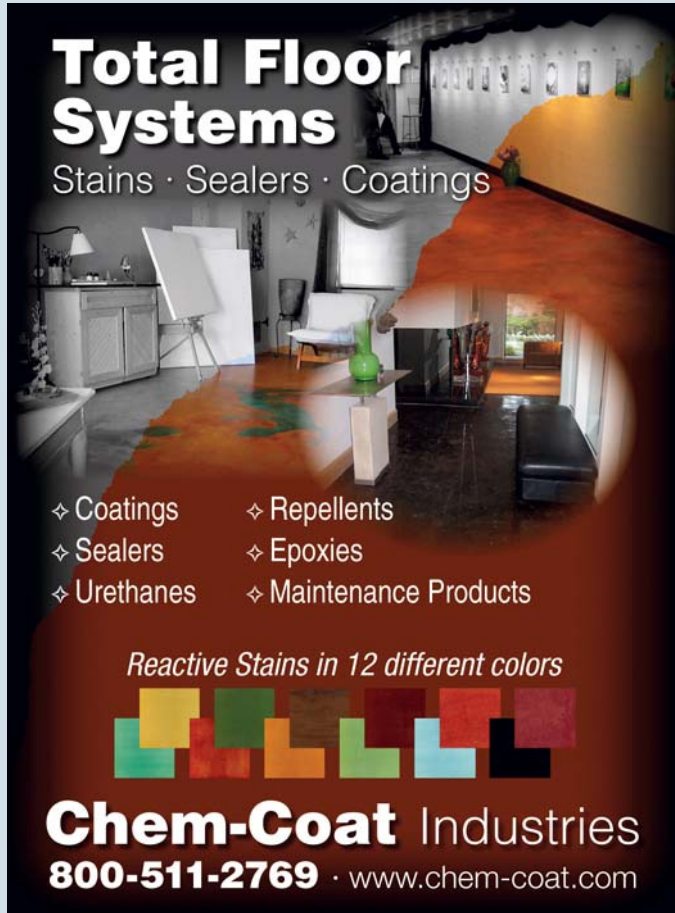
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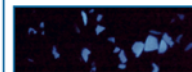
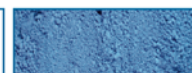
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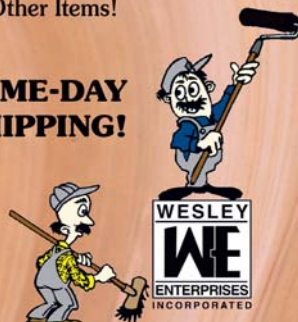
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Photos by Lynda Apple



A Mountaintop Countertop

We asked Lynda Apple of InConcrete Custom Countertops and Design Elements if the precast tabletop her Flagstaff, Ariz., outfit produced for a ski patrol shack was the highest decorative concrete installation in America. Boy, did we get a response.

"First off," she writes us, "I know for SURE we have the highest concrete countertop and custom concrete chair in Arizona. At 11,500 feet — I'm pretty darn sure we probably have the highest concrete countertop and custom concrete chair in the country — because most likely it'd be at a ski area and I don't know of any other ski areas with lodges or shacks that high that, if they are fancy enough, don't have granite, or if they are your typical ski patrol shack — well, they are lucky to have a picnic table in them."

Here are the whos, whys and hows.

Apple and Michael Whalen, her husband and business partner, have been outdoor enthusiasts for most of their adult lives, working as river guides, hiking guides, ski guides and, most recently for Apple, as a professional ski patroller at Arizona Snowbowl, in the San Francisco Peaks.

The couple's enthusiasm for skiing and what Apple calls "our little resort" motivated them to help improve the Snowbowl's "upper patrol shack," where ski patrollers wait for emergency calls. "Whalen and I decided to make a new countertop piece for a new 'bar' that the other patrollers had put in — as they were just going to leave it as plywood or possibly tile it. Well of course, as a concrete geek — I could NOT have that!"

Templating the piece was a unique challenge, she says. On templating day, she dressed in full ski-patrol uniform

and climbed onto the resort's chairlift with a backpack full of tools, including some pieces of fluted polypropylene. "I got more than a few strange looks from guests who I'm sure were wondering what the heck those pieces of corrugated plastic could have to do with keeping them safe on the mountain," she recalls. "Getting the completed template DOWN was even more fun — and most likely a perplexing sight for folks. There I was, cranking out my telemark (skiing) turns while trying to keep a 5-foot by 5-foot oddly shaped template from blowing around and breaking — I felt like I was skiing with a sail ... all the while, looking, you know — as cool as possible."

Apple and Whalen based their countertop design on a universal ski patrol emblem: the white cross on a red and black background. "My husband



and I, both with art backgrounds, design all our pieces together,” Apple writes. “We poured the piece in three steps — first the white cross, let that set up well enough to pull the forms, than the red background, let that set up well enough to pull the forms, and then the black border. We used our basic sand mix and only did a very light grind on the piece.

“Delivering the piece was again — pretty funny. Noting again of course that the ski area is open and this is all happening in the middle of the winter. We’d also put the pressure on ourselves to complete it before ski patrol’s annual Full Moon Party.”

The trusty chairlift helped hoist the finished concrete countertop up the mountain. “Four of us ski patrol loaded a chair with ourselves. We had the chair stopped while the lift mechanics, Whalen, and a few other ski patrollers loaded the top onto the next chair — tying it down securely. And then we had the chair started again while the other half of our ‘install team’ loaded up.

Once at the top, those of us at the front kicked off our skis and waited for the countertop’s chair to arrive. We stopped the chair and unloaded the top as best we could, started the chair and waited for the rest of the crew (so they could) help carry it across the top of a run to inside the patrol shack. Happily, it fit in place perfectly!”

To go with the top, Apple and Whalen cast a concrete chair emblazoned with the ski area’s logo. “Winds regularly top 70 miles an hour with much higher gusts not unusual — so finally there is a chair up there that has not blown away and does not need to be brought inside nightly,” Apple writes.


“Both have been huge hits. And because our ski area is open all summer as well for scenic sky rides — the pieces have been great, unique, year-round marketing pieces for us. Our logo is affixed to the wall behind the top, and to the back of the chair.

“We do all our work at 7,500 feet elevation. And although we are in

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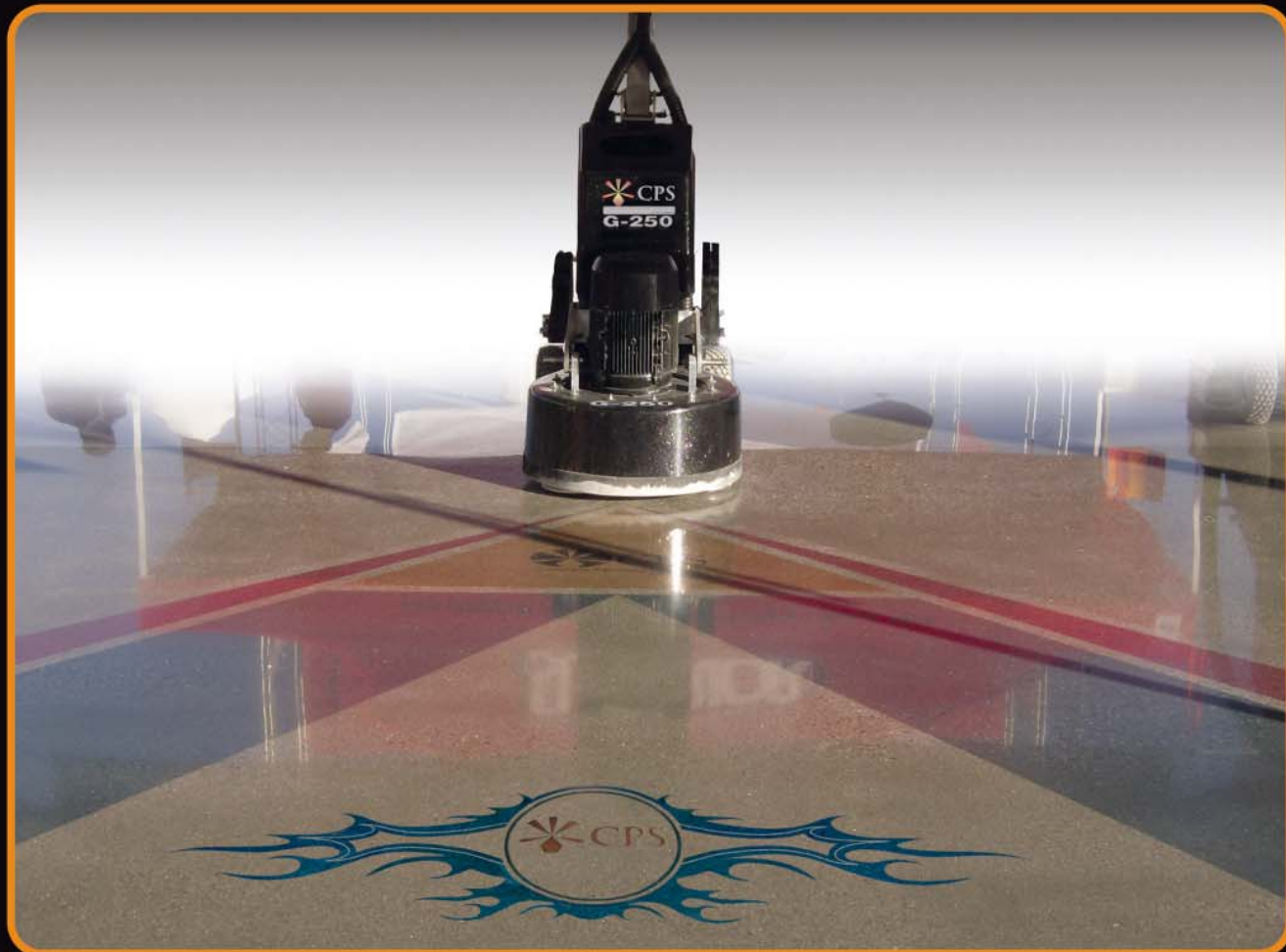
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