

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Do What You Love, Love What You Do: The Legacy of a Life Well-Lived by SBC Staff

Have fun, work hard, always maintain your integrity and ethics, and you will be successful no matter what you choose in life. —Dick Bowman

Johnny Carson once said, "Never continue in a job you don't enjoy. If you're happy in what you're doing, you'll like yourself, you'll have inner peace. And if you have that, along with physical health, you will have had more success than you could possibly have imagined."

Many of us strive to achieve this kind of success in our work and in our lives. The industry recently lost a man who did achieve it. Richard "Dick" Bowman spent most of his life in sales. He must have loved it because—not only was he still doing it at the age of 73—everyone who knew him would agree that he was happy, he liked himself, and he exuded inner peace.

Dick established his career in sales in 1963 as District Sales Manager for S.J. Casper Company in Milwaukee, WI, where he was responsible for selling food service equipment and supplies to institutional markets in Wisconsin. He entered the construction industry in 1971 when he joined Rural Builder Magazine as Advertising Manager. During his tenure at Rural Builder, he rose through the ranks and spent his last decade with the magazine as Vice President of Sales and Marketing. In addition to these duties, Dick also served as Director of the National Rural Builder Show for 19 years.

In 1991, Dick became Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Knight Enterprises in Lawrence, KS, which at that time published WOODWORDS Magazine and managed the Building Component Manufacturers Conference (BCMC). It was at Knight that Dick kindled a passion for the structural building components industry and the people in this business.

Steve Milano, a life-long friend and Dick's former co-worker at Knight Enterprises, had these memories about working with him: "Dick knew just about everybody in the components business, and he once told me that many of the long-time advertisers in the magazine weren't just buying WOODWORDS, they were buying Dick Bowman. He was very proactive in making sure each advertiser's ad ran correctly, looked good and gave them the biggest bang for their buck....Dick gave the same respect to a sixth-page advertiser as he did to those who bought a full page."

Because of the value that Dick added to a publication staff, Kirk and Suzi Grundahl were pleased by his decision to join Truss Publications, Inc. when it took over publication of WOODWORDS (now SBC Magazine) in 1999.

"Dick was very helpful to us as we undertook the design and production of the magazine. He had established excellent relationships with the advertisers and he really helped us make the transition smooth. Our staff learned a lot from Dick about advertising sales and service. He threw his heart into making each and every issue successful. We valued his efforts on behalf of the magazine as well as his friendship. We will miss him very much," said Suzi Grundahl.



IN MEMORY OF
RICHARD "DICK" BOWMAN
(1930-2004)

During his time with Truss Publications, Dick again served in the Sales and Marketing department and worked primarily with new and current advertisers as he closed each issue of the publication. With many years in the industry under his belt, Dick was able to cater to our dedicated group of advertisers in a personal way and he developed many friendships throughout the industry.

Tom Manenti of MiTek Industries commented, “We truly enjoyed working with Dick over the years. I always loved seeing him at BCMC. No matter what the circumstances, Dick would always brighten up my day. I’m sure, like everyone else he ‘served,’ he always made me feel as if I was his only customer!”

Linda Rauch of The Koskovich Company also remembered Dick’s enthusiasm and excellent customer service: “I was very saddened to learn that Dick Bowman had passed away. Although I did not have the pleasure of meeting Dick personally, I spent a good deal of time with him on the phone, discussing our advertising plans for the next issue of SBC, which he was always on top of. He would undoubtedly get on the subject of Florida and how much he and his wife enjoyed living there. Dick was always upbeat. He could make you laugh with some of his stories, or at the very least, always put a smile on your face. My heart goes out to his wife, Marilyn, as well as his ‘family’ at SBC.”

SBC Staff also enjoyed Dick’s sunny disposition and his diehard attitude. He loved being part of a team and was always striving to make each issue of the magazine better than the last.

“For the last two years Dick has been mentoring me in the area of sales. It was very apparent to me that he loved what he did and wanted to share his wisdom as well as his enthusiasm with me,” recalls Peggy Pichette, SBC Director of Sales. “We had many conversations along the way, but the one I remember most is the first time I told him I made a sale and he told me he was proud of me.”

“I never thought of Dick as a superstitious person, but one thing I remember is that, when he was closing an issue of the magazine, he never tallied up a sales report until each one of our advertisers had been called personally,” recalls Melinda Caldwell, SBC Art Director. “He would always say that he didn’t want to jinx it, but I really think it had more to do with his drive for excellence in each issue. Dick wasn’t the type to rest on his laurels.”

Milano remembers a similar attitude: “As the growth and success of SBC Magazine has shown over the years, [Dick’s] commitment to making advertisers and exhibitors part of the WTCA family made it a win/win situation for everyone, and made Dick more of a marketing consultant to his customers, than just a salesman.”

No story about Dick Bowman would be complete without mentioning his family—in so many ways, they were his story. He is survived by his wife Marilyn, who this writer knows he was honored to be married to for 50 wonderful years; his children and their spouses, Tom and Shannon, Judi and Bob, and Bonnie & John; and four grandchildren, Sarah, Andy, Jack and Shelby.



Dick is survived by his wife Marilyn; his children and their spouses, Tom and Shannon, Judi and Bob, and Bonnie and John; and four grandchildren, Sarah, Andy, Jack and Shelby. This photo was taken last year on the occasion of Dick and Marilyn's 50th wedding anniversary.

Everybody was sad because they think he died
But he's still alive, look inside
I know this spring he'll be at my track meets
My starting blocks behind the athlete
I see him in the light, on the back street
Laughing at his jokes even when they're tacky
Making people happy was his greatest feature
Always remember him as the greatest teacher
Loving to all and any creature
It's an honor to have him as my leader
—Excerpt from "Grandpa's Rap" by Andy Schaefer, grandson of Dick Bowman

When asked how his dad has influenced his own outlook on work, Tom remembered the following: "Being the positive person he was, he enjoyed going to work, and I can never ever recall him not having fun and making the most of his experiences. This was my father's attitude, outlook and behavior on practically everything in life: Have fun, work hard, always maintain your integrity and ethics, and you will be successful no matter what you choose in life.

"Of course, he enjoyed the many friendships he established over the years. The opportunity to use his God-given talents to not only provide for his family, but also truly enjoy each day is a lesson he passed on to me that I adhere to every day of my life."

Judi provided her insight into her father's work with these memories: "The main thing that comes to mind is his dedication to getting a job done. He always said 'you can do anything if you put your mind to it' and 'never give up!'

"I remember when the economy was at its lowest and he was still able to close out an issue or get people to attend a conference successfully. He had an amazing way of talking with people. He was genuinely interested in his clients. His happiness was contagious, and he always strived for a 'win/win' situation. My dad always loved his job; he loved working with people.

"As his daughter, I always valued that he included his family in some of his business travels. One year he invited me to go to New Orleans to attend one of the big National Conferences. He wanted me to see and experience his industry and the wonderful people in it. It was a great opportunity for me.

My dad was so proud of his family and the people he worked with in his industry and wanted to share both with each other.”

Dick was diligently working to close the March issue of SBC when he learned he had bone cancer in early January of this year. Despite the pain he was experiencing and the severity of his condition, his charm and good humor were with him to the end. The last email he sent to staff included this upbeat take on things: “At present I am at Hope Hospice Health. The facilities are awesome! They are taking very good care of me and getting my pain under control. I feel like I am at Golden Pond.” He passed away peacefully in his home on Sunday, February 8.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, “Measure not the work until the day’s out and the labor done.” May we all be able to tally up such success as Dick did when the time comes to “close the issue” of our lives.

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