



ITEMS

NEWSLETTER

April 2002

The Engineered, Cost-Effective Alternative for Applications Requiring Heavy Duty Couplings

All SuperGrip 2002 Heavy Duty Couplings are designed to be installed with a pre-set torque wrench calibrated to 80 inch-pounds to accommodate the Type 305 5/16" stainless steel hex head/shoulder screws.

1-1/2" through 4" diameter couplings include 3" wide corrugated type 304 stainless steel shield and four 304 stainless clamps. 5" through 10" diameter couplings feature a 4" wide 304 stainless shield and six 304 stainless clamps.

Available in 1-1/2" to 10" Sizes

Additional clamps provide a more uniformly rigid joint, inhibiting pipe and fitting movement, even at internal pressures higher than are commonly found in DWV applications.



Neoprene gasket (ASTM C-564) features multiple sealing beads located off-center relative to the overlying clamp bands. When clamped, these gaskets form a slightly conical shape, effectively impeding movement of the gasket, pipe and fitting, providing a safe, secure seal.

Designed to Deliver Better Pressure Performance Than Any Heavy Duty Coupling on the Market Today!

Price Hike Slated for June 1

A 5% list price increase on all no-hub and SV cast iron material will be effective June 1, 2002. This increase will apply to customers in California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada and Arizona immediately.

There will be no price protection on orders delivered after June 1, so customers

are encouraged to plan ahead. There will also be a small multiplier change in June.

This announcement is made in keeping with AB&I's policy to give as much advance notice as possible concerning pending price changes. For more information, contact the customer service department at 800-GOT-IRON or your AB&I field sales representative.

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Given The Current State of Manufacturing in This Country, Could We Do It Again?

I just finished a very interesting book, *Blue Yonder*, which chronicled the story of the B-24 airplane and the people who built, maintained, and flew them during World War II (including a young pilot named George McGovern, who distinguished himself on more than 35 missions over German-occupied Europe).

The pilots and others who fought that war are now fading into history at the rate of over 1000 per day, and their stories, once told first-person by fathers and grandfathers, are now relegated largely to books and to the History Channel. Many of those stories tell of valor on the battlefield or in the flak-filled skies, but *Blue Yonder* told of another kind of courage, too; that of the average American Joe and Jane who stayed behind to build the war machine that would liberate the world from the prospect of international tyranny.

It's not an exaggeration to say that, by the time Pearl Harbor was attacked, the American Army Air Corps (there was no separate Air Force yet) was in very bad shape. Fatigue from World War I, and an American political climate inclined toward isolationism, resulted in a steady decline of the entire military during the 1930s. Against this backdrop of an American military that lacked readiness, our country entered the biggest war we had ever undertaken, with enemies on multiple fronts, and a need to move men and materiel thousands of miles, across oceans and continents most knew only as distant and strange-sounding names on the map.

Men not drafted into service and women all across America mobilized to convert our military from the minor power it had become into the best-equipped and trained fighting force the world had ever seen. While engineers worked day and night to design the airplanes that would be needed for the conflict ahead, the Army developed the most amazing, effective pilot training program ever seen, taking men (and a few women) barely out of high school and turning them into an elite corps of the best airborne warriors this, or any other, country had ever produced.

Factories from the Pacific to the Atlantic ramped up at breakneck speed to

produce the parts that would soon become fighting aircraft. In just over a year, the American warmaking capacity increased dramatically, producing more aircraft than would have been thought possible before the attack on December 7. In just a few short months, America was producing more military airplanes than Japan, Germany, the Soviet Union and Britain combined. Pilots were flying them off to fight in air battles that would become the stuff of legends that long outlived their players.

At the same time I was reading this book, I was reading the papers and watching the news. The story of the controversial American steel subsidy was a hot topic, and I couldn't help but put that news story into the context of World War II, and what it took to win that conflict. It's a widely known fact that the American steel industry has declined in recent years, due to a confluence of factors, including the unrealistic labor agreements entered into during the 1960s and 70s, and the rise of imported steel as a factor in the domestic marketplace. Dozens of American steel plants have been silenced over the years, with offshore producers gaining a dominant role in the business. Is this good for America? Steel is a vital commodity, both in terms of domestic consumption and national security. Is it wise to let production be controlled by others, some of whom have been our mortal enemy during our own lifetimes?

Recent news stories tell of our trade deficit back on the increase, jumping 15% in the latest report. Conservative estimates say that over a half-million American jobs have been lost as manufacturing moves from Main Street to Tienenmen Square. Look at your feet. If you're wearing shoes, any kind of shoes, chances are almost 100% that they were made in either China or Korea. Ditto for most of the clothes and home electronics that we buy by the ton in this country. Is this good for America?

My mentor in this business always said that the strength of the American economy was in manufacturing and homebuilding. It seems that we're giving too much of this away. If we continue to

"disarm" our production capacities, will this lead us to a point where we could not repeat the efforts of 1941-45? Might we have to buy strategic products and materials from countries who may not be our best friends, or worse, our enemies?

I've heard all the talk. Things are different now. The New Economy and global interdependence have brought a new world order that makes the ways of old obsolete. But have they? Do we really think we're that much different from people in the past, that human nature has changed because of things like the computer and the Internet? Do we really want to make the world's best software, but farm out steel production and other basic manufacturing? I don't think so, and if we don't do something to strengthen our manufacturing base, we could be in for a surprise in the (not too distant) future.

So what do we do? For starters, we need to take a look at the way our manufacturing competitors are doing business. While American and European companies fight to produce their goods while maintaining a clean environment, many of our competitors seem to have no concern for the air and water. Their costs are lower and, combined with government subsidies and "dumping" practices, they may appear to provide products at lower cost. But at what price? Let's level the playing field, and insist that everybody be good stewards of their environment and their workers.

We also have to take a longer view, insist on quality and value, and get back to the basics. I was talking with a contractor the other day about the leaks he was experiencing with the imported pipe he was installing. He looked me in the eye and said that he just needed to pass the test and he was home free. Really? What about latent defects, I wondered. What if the pipe contains harmful components, like lead, asbestos and arsenic (much imported product does)? What are the costs of making good on a bad product? Nobody's "home free," ever, and the sooner we realize that, the better.

Good economic policies are good for all of us. Bad policies are bad for all of us. It's really that simple. Let's keep important manufacturing at home, where it belongs. If we don't, let's pray hard that we never have to turn to American industry and ask them to do what they did in 1941. There may be nobody to talk to.



Customer Spotlight
Trautman & Shreve, Inc.
Denver, Colorado

The same year Trautman & Shreve started providing mechanical contracting services to the growing Denver market, Adolph Hitler was expanding his war against Britain and the Soviet Union. That year was 1939.

Founded by Fred Trautman and Ted Shreve, the fledgling contractor soon grew into a major player in the Denver mechanical market. Today, Trautman & Shreve is the oldest mechanical contractor and engineering firm in the Rocky Mountains, employing 400-750 people, depending on the workload.

Trautman & Shreve, Inc.
 Mechanical Contractors and Engineers

"Service to all our market segments is our most important function," says Jim Durant, President and CEO, who cites that Trautman & Shreve customers run the gamut from small service accounts to giant high-tech manufacturing companies. Denver has grown into a high-tech center, and Trautman & Shreve has been involved in much of that growth over the last six decades.

"Our strength lies in our history, our diverse capabilities and our people" says Durant. Finding and retaining a quality-oriented workforce is a top priority for the company, so Trautman & Shreve has

developed an in-house training curriculum, complete with union programs, to ensure the constant availability of talent.

One of the biggest changes Durant has noted over the years is the rise of 3-D design and its application to fabrication. Doing things better and faster, and maintaining a customer-oriented focus, are what have set Trautman & Shreve apart from the crowd for over sixty years.

What's Next With Imported Pipe?

Problems keep cropping up with this stuff. Is it really worth all this?

First it was asbestos coating.

This week, it's a report of arsenic levels approximately 10 times higher than that found in domestic product (see sidebar).

Contracting is a competitive business, and the temptation is always there to cut a cost here or there to save a buck. Do that enough and the savings can be substantial, right? Well, maybe.

Consider the cost of tearing out a job and replacing it with different material. An unlikely occurrence? Tell that to the guy in Pennsylvania who reportedly had to do just that because he used imported pipe that did not meet standards. Where do you think his bottom line was on that job? For that month? Year?

Consider also the cost of not getting a job because word gets out that you're prone to cutting corners. Successful contractors depend on repeat business. You simply cannot be as profitable as possible, if you're constantly replacing old customers with new ones. Sooner or later, the well runs dry, or at least word leaks out that you're willing to take risks with other people's money. Not the best scenario for getting repeat business and referrals, and that should be every contractor's primary objective.

Consider also the longer term liability. What if arsenic or asbestos is found in

ground water and the enviro detectives start looking for a culprit? What do you think would happen if they traced that contamination back to pipe you installed five years ago? Do you think your phone would ring, maybe get a visit from a man in a gray suit? How much will it cost in legal fees alone to defend against a lawsuit brought five or ten years from now for pipe you're installing today? Did the few extra bucks you made on this job warrant the risk of that phone call? If you're the type of person who takes his paycheck and races off to Vegas to double it, then by all means, use material that may or may not meet standards. If, on the other hand, you're building a business that has real value and you plan to keep building, then consider carefully the risks of using products that may contain substandard material. Saving a dollar today could really cost you tomorrow. Or the next day.

Let's face it. When all is said and done, business is about money. The people we meet during the course of our workdays are great, but the bottom line is money; always has been, always will be. Are you protecting yours by insisting on quality products that won't bite you in the backside later? All contractors are urged to take a closer look at their buying strategies and make sure all products meet standards.

High Levels of Arsenic, Weakness Reported in Imported Pipe and Fittings

A report issued by an East Coast foundry employee who recently witnessed imported pipe and fittings being installed at a local school project indicated that the material used contained high levels of arsenic, and may not comply with ASTM standards.

The pipe and fittings tested reportedly contained an arsenic level of .094, ten times the background level found in recently-tested AB&I material.

According to the same report, the pipe was checked using the Brinell Hardness test and the casting was so weak it cracked under a 1000kg load. This means the pipe may not comply with ASTM 888 standard of 21,000 psi tensile strength.

The report indicated that, as a result of these test results, a complaint was filed with the school administration and that the school rejected the installation of the material, requiring the contractor to remove the imported product and replace it with material that met standards.

Contractors are urged to use only products that meet all applicable laws and standards.



Wall Charts Now Available

The popular AB&I Wall Charts have been printed and are now available for distribution.

These charts feature the major products in the AB&I line of cast iron no-hub and service weight hub & spigot pipe and fittings, providing useful product code, sizing and dimensional data at a glance.

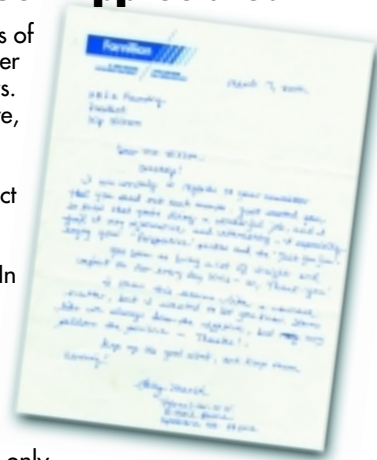
"We're glad to be able to provide these wall charts again," says AB&I sales manager, Greg Seiler, who notes that the impetus for the production of these came from customers in the field.

For your copy, contact your field sales representative.



Notes of Thanks Much Appreciated

One of the real gratifying aspects of putting together a monthly newsletter is the feedback we get from readers. Usually the feedback is very positive, like the nice letter we just got from Polly Marsh at Familian NW. Sometimes a reader writes to correct us on a mistake we made. Very rarely, somebody writes with something downright nasty to say. In any case, we appreciate reader comments and we read every one of them. Constructive criticism is always welcome, but what we really like are the letters that tell us how great we're doing and to keep up the good work (hey, we're only human). Thanks for your comments.



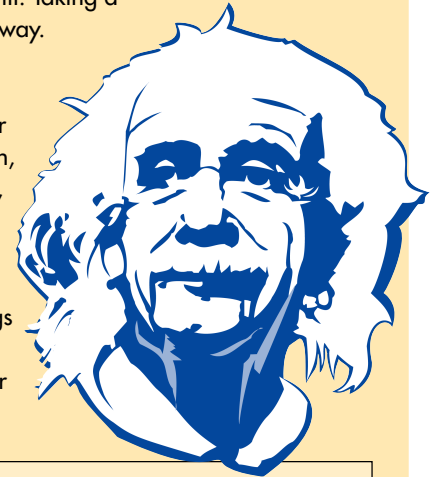
Just for Fun...

A Test For People Who [Think They] Know Everything

So, you think you're pretty smart and good at taking these tests we keep throwing at you in the Items. Try your hand at this one; it may be a humbling experience.

1. There's one "sport" in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends. What is it?
2. What famous North American landmark is constantly moving backward?
3. Of all vegetables, only two can live to produce on their own for several growing seasons. All other vegetables must be replanted every year. What are the only two perennial vegetables?
4. Name the only sport in which the ball is always in possession of the defense and the offensive team can score without touching the ball?
5. What fruit has its seeds on the outside?
6. In many liquor stores, you can buy pear brandy, with a real pear inside the bottle. The pear is whole and ripe, and the bottle is genuine; it hasn't been cut in any way. How did the pear get inside the bottle?
7. Only three words in the standard English language begin with the letters "dw." Name them.

8. There are fourteen punctuation marks in the English language. Can you name half of them?
9. Where are the lakes that are referred to in the "Los Angeles Lakers?"
10. There are seven ways a baseball player can legally reach first base without getting a hit. Taking a base-on-balls (walk) is one way. Name the other six.
11. It's the only vegetable or fruit that is never sold frozen, canned, processed, cooked, or in any other form but fresh. What is it?
12. Name six or more things that you can wear on your feet that begin with the letter "S."



Bonus Riddle

Q. What is greater than God, more evil than the devil, the poor have it, the rich need it, and if you eat it, you die?
A. Call Customer Service for the answer at 800-GOT-IRON.

Answers: 1. Boxing. 2. Niagara Falls. The rim is worn down about 2 feet per year because of the millions of gallons of water that rush over it every minute. 3. Asparagus and rhubarb. 4. Baseball. 5. Strawberry. 6. The pear grew inside the bottle. 7. Dwarf, dwell, dwindle. 8. Period, comma, colon, semicolon, dash, hyphen, apostrophe, question mark, exclamation point, quotation marks, brackets, parentheses, braces, and ellipses. 9. In Minnesota. The team was originally from Minneapolis. 10. Batter hit by pitch, passed ball, catcher drops third strike, catcher's interference, fielder's choice, pinch runner. 11. Lettuce. 12. Shoes, socks, sandals, sneakers, slippers, skis, snowshoes, stockings.