



ITEMS



NEWSLETTER

December 2005

Major Addition to Foundry to Cut Energy Use, Improve Air Quality



AB&I's new recuperator awaits installation at the Oakland headquarters.

With energy costs increasing for natural gas and other fossil fuels, AB&I engineers are constantly on the lookout for new technologies that can help stretch the BTUs.

One such technology is currently in the process of being installed at the Oakland foundry. A large "recuperator" has been designed and built that will help reclaim the hot air created during the production cycle, and route it back to the cupola to preheat combustion air, thus decreasing the foundry's dependence on natural gas.

"We're currently using natural gas to preheat the air we use in the burning of coke, the most efficient fuel to melt iron," said AB&I environmental engineer, Dave Robinson. By recycling

the hot air created during production and turning it back to the cupola, less natural gas is needed to preheat the combustion air. The result is less gas used, lower costs, and fewer products of combustion released into AB&I's air quality control system.

"This is a major step for AB&I," said Robinson, pointing out that this recuperator is just one facet of a multi-year, multi-million dollar investment in the foundry's environmental systems. This major investment has been in the planning stages for quite some time, and is now being implemented in order to continue to meet tougher environmental regulations.

Since AB&I's beginnings in 1906, the foundry has been constantly looking to technology to increase efficiency and to improve the quality of the products cast in the Oakland facility. "Our commitment to the future started a hundred years ago," said AB&I's vice president, Kip Wixson. Through the generations of foundry ownership, from founder Joseph Boscacci, to Arnold Boscacci, and now to Allan Boscacci, AB&I's commitment to the future has never wavered.

As the market for cast iron DWV products becomes global, AB&I is making sure that it stays competitive in that market while maintaining the very highest environmental and workforce standards.

For more information about AB&I's environmental and production programs, or for a complimentary tour of the Oakland foundry, contact your field sales representative or the AB&I customer service department at 800-GOT-IRON.

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Kip Wixson

Perspective

Christmas, Like the Future, Ain't What it Used to Be, and the Importance of Just Saying Thanks

I guess I'm a little bugged by what Christmas has become in America. No, it's not just the hyper commercialization of the holiday – we all know that it has become too concerned with buying – but rather, the lack of thought that goes into the whole experience.

I was reminded of a *Seinfeld* episode, where Jerry and Elaine were exchanging gifts. Their relationship had taken on a, eh, physical dimension, so Jerry thought he was obliged to ramp up the value of this year's giving. Trouble was, he just ran out of time, and ended up wrapping \$175 in cash in a gift box. Kramer, on the other hand, crafted a nifty little do-dad that he made himself that better reflected Elaine's taste. Needless to say, she was touched more deeply by Kramer's \$25 handmade trinket than Jerry's \$175. It truly was the thought that counted.

How often do we just buy something for somebody to "get it out of the way?" How much time and thought do we really put into the gift selection process? We all feel the insanity of Christmas and know we really should do the whole thing differently. Some of us even vow to make things different next year. We'll plan better, start sooner, give more thoughtful gifts, and maybe even spend a little less. But when next year comes, we're sucked right back into the shopping maelstrom, and have no more time to devote to the true meaning of the holiday than we did last year. And so it goes.

Some things get better with time, but Christmas as a holiday in America is not one of them. I'm not sure it's any worse than it has been for several decades, but it's not

getting measurably better, either, in spite of all of our best intentions. How do we change it? I don't know, but I do know that what we remember about last year's Christmas is who we saw and what we did, not the presents we got (unless you really did get that Lexus under the tree). People are what really matter to us, and Christmas tends to be a time when we see family and friends whom we may not get to visit with much during the rest of the year. Maybe that's the secret; maybe we could spend more of our Christmas budget on plane fare for Aunt Mary to come see us. Maybe connecting our kids with their extended family is more memorable for them than that new video game. I don't know, just a thought.

Anyway, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all our friends, associates and colleagues. May the coming year bring you joy and happiness, and maybe a quick visit by Aunt Mary.

I got whacked up side the head the other day. No, not literally, but in a sense, in a way even more painful than a physical blow. A very good customer called our rep firm and said that, in spite of their placing a very large order with AB&I, nobody from AB&I had called to say "thank you." When I heard about this, I got that hair-on-the-back-of-the-neck-standing-up-feeling, and immediately asked myself, how can this happen?

There was a time, and not all that long ago, when every order placed by a customer in the field crossed my desk. I knew who was buying what and when. But now, with computers and EDP and emails doing the

talking, I see less and less of the daily business of sales. For our rep firms, it can be even worse. Sometimes, they don't know that a customer of theirs has placed an order until they receive a commission check in the mail, several weeks after the order was put through. Needless to say, this state of affairs is intolerable. It is not adequate to just let machines take care of our customers. Sure, technology has made the buying process more efficient, but at what cost?

From now on, we are not going to do business like that anymore. We at AB&I are adopting new procedures that will ensure that we know, first hand, what the who-what-and-where of every order is. We built our business on personal contact, and if we have left some of that behind as we grew and "modernized," we apologize. Thank you, Greg.

By the way, thank you for your business and your friendship. If we have failed to say that often enough, shame on us. We really do appreciate you, and always have.

While we're saying thanks, let me take this opportunity to publicly recognize the most important asset our company has – our team members. AB&I has the best production, management, sales and support teams in the industry, bar none.

This is the time of year we provide profit sharing checks to our people, a tangible form of recognition that everybody receives. But in addition to these checks, I want to extend my personal "thank you" to each and every one of our people. Without their tireless efforts, AB&I would not be where it is today, and for that I am truly grateful.

Where Were You in 1906?

As part of AB&I celebration of 100 years in business in 2006, it's interesting to note what life was really like back when our company got its start. Consider these interesting facts:

The average life expectancy was 47 years. Are you older than 47 and still kicking? Be glad you weren't born 100 years ago!

Only 14% of the homes in the US had a bathtub. Where did people bathe? Don't know, but flowery perfumes were much more popular back then.

Only 8 percent of homes had a telephone, and a three-minute call from Denver to New York cost eleven dollars. What does that same call cost today? Try 15 cents, and we're still beating up the phone companies to make it cheaper.

The average wage in the US was 22 cents an hour. Maybe that explains why there weren't more bathtubs.

More than 95% of all births took place at home. Maternal death during childbirth was common.

90% of all doctors had no college education. Instead, they went to so-called "medical schools," many of which were condemned in the press as "substandard."

Most women washed their hair just once a month, and used egg yolks for shampoo.

The five leading causes of death in the US were: 1) Pneumonia and flu, 2) Tuberculosis, 3) Diarrhea, 4) Heart Disease, 5) Stroke. Cancer was not even on the list, and heart disease was #4, behind that dreaded diarrhea.

The population of Las Vegas was only 30 people.

Only 6% of Americans had graduated from high school.

Life today is so different from back then, and so is the plumbing business. We'll share more features of life in 1906 during future editions of the ITEMS newsletter.



Foundry Lauded for Environmental Achievement

AB&I has been recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency for making major reductions in the amounts of waste produced and Green House Gases (GHG) released into the atmosphere during 2005. These waste reduction programs have helped reduce the load on landfills and improve air quality, and represent a major achievement for the foundry.



AB&I's waste reduction program is ongoing, and will continue to show progress in the years ahead. We'll keep you posted on future developments.

No Price Increase Planned for January 1

Despite slowly-increasing prices for scrap iron, there will be no price increase on January 1, as had been previously contemplated.



"We've looked at prices from every angle and have concluded that an increase will not be necessary at this time," said AB&I vice president, Kip Wixson. AB&I is depending on increased production efficiency and other savings to offset the increased cost for scrap iron.

"We may have to come back to market for an increase later," said Wixson, "but for now, we're holding steady on prices."

As usual, AB&I will provide as much advance notice of a price increase as possible, and will continue to stay in close contact with all customers in the coming year.





Become an AB&I Stocking Distributor in 2006!

Becoming an AB&I stocking distributor just might be the best business decision you make in 2006. AB&I's stocking distributor program not only enables wholesalers to align with one of the strongest names in the cast iron DWV business, but provides tangible, measurable benefits that go directly to your bottom line.

"We've put together what we think is the best distributor program in the business" says Greg Seiler, AB&I sales manager.

"As an AB&I distributor, not only do you gain a reliable source for quality American-made cast iron DWV, but you see the potential for added dollars," says Seiler.



AB&I's five-point distributor program includes the following:

- 1) Assurance that AB&I products will be universally accepted in all jurisdictions;
- 2) AB&I sales reps will call on contractors in your area and drive business to your door;
- 3) AB&I's product engineering specialist will call on area engineers and

specifiers to make sure your products are either specified or allowed on all major projects;

- 4) Problems or complaints are handled by AB&I personnel within 24 hours, by phone or by personal visits to the jobsite, if needed;
- 5) AB&I will assist with the funding of appropriate advertising.

For more information, contact Greg Seiler at 800/GOT-IRON.

Just for Fun...

Quotes About Christmas...

The one thing women don't want to find in their stockings on Christmas morning is their husband.

Joan Rivers

I once bought my kids a set of batteries for Christmas with a note on it saying, toys not included.

Bernard Manning

What I don't like about office Christmas parties is looking for a job the next day.

Phyllis Diller

The Supreme Court has ruled that they cannot have a nativity scene in Washington, D.C. This wasn't for any religious reasons. They couldn't find three wise men and a virgin.

Jay Leno

Christmas is a time when you get homesick - even when you're home.

Carol Nelson

He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree.

Roy L. Smith

Christmas is a time when kids tell Santa what they want and adults pay for it. Deficits are when adults tell the government what they want and their kids pay for it.

Richard Lamm



Eleven Laws of Golf...

LAW 1: No matter how bad your last shot was, the worst is yet to come.

LAW 2: Your best round of golf will be followed almost immediately by your worst round ever.

LAW 3: Brand new golf balls are water-magnetic.

LAW 4: Golf balls never bounce off of trees back into play.

LAW 5: No matter what causes a golfer to miff a shot, all his playing partners must solemnly chant "You looked up."

LAW 6: The higher a golfer's handicap, the more qualified he deems himself as an instructor.

LAW 7: Every par-three hole in the world has a secret desire to humiliate golfers.

LAW 8: A golfer hitting into your group will always be bigger than anyone in your group.

LAW 9: Golf balls from the same "sleeve" tend to follow one another, particularly out of bounds or into the water.

LAW 10: The person you would most hate to lose to will always be the one who beats you.

LAW 11: The last three holes of a round will automatically adjust your score to what it really should be.

