



ITEMS

NEWSLETTER

March 2005

Engineers, Contractors Urged to Pay Closer Attention to Noise When Specifying Pipe



We've all heard that swooshing sound when water flows down through plastic pipe inside walls. It could be that somebody upstairs flushed a toilet, or is draining a tub or shower. Whatever the source, the sound is annoying to owners and residents alike. The good news is that the problem is easily resolved. The bad news is that it has to be solved during the engineering and construction phases, when material is being specified.

"We've been battling this noise problem for decades," says AB&I plumbing division manager, Gary Wickham. "If people were aware that they could dramatically reduce or

eliminate in-wall noise by specifying cast iron instead of plastic pipe they would jump at it, especially considering the low cost."

Plastic pipe in residential walls has gained favor over the years due to its perceived low cost. But how many owners would pay \$300-500 more in total construction cost to prevent the annoying sound of water flowing through pipe? Our field people tell us that plenty would, if they knew they had a choice.

"Too often, engineers and contractors aren't considering the noise issue when they choose pipe material," says AB&I sales manager, Greg Seiler. "They choose plastic because that's what they're used to doing, but when they learn about the advantages of cast iron and tell their customers about it, the project turns out better and the owner is more satisfied with the results."

Misconceptions about the relative cost of in-wall plastic and cast iron are still prevalent, and often form the basis for material decisions. "It's interesting to hear people talk about how much more cast iron costs than plastic," says Seiler, "but when you put pencil to paper on a standard bathroom system, it turns out to be peanuts compared with the overall construction cost. And the customer satisfaction that results more than offsets any minor costs."

The Cast Iron Soil Pipe Institute (CISPI) has long provided information to the industry concerning the advantages of iron over plastic. It's "Quiet Pipe" campaign resulted in much better awareness of the noise advantages of cast iron. Every piece of AB&I is painted with the words, "Quiet Pipe."

AB&I has undertaken a major effort to educate the engineering and specifier communities about the advantages of cast iron pipe in a wide range of commercial, industrial, and residential applications.

Gregg Carr, product engineering specialist for AB&I, is currently calling on engineers around the country to answer questions and re-acquaint the specifier communities with AB&I products and services. If you would like additional information, please contact Gregg at 510/632-3467.

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Perspective

Has Our Obsession with Professional Sports Gotten a Little Whacky?

I've got a bone to pick. I'm not sure whom to blame, so I'm just going to put it there and see what comes of it. Odds are you've had some of the same thoughts, and maybe, like me, didn't quite know what to do with them.

Professional sports in this country has taken on too large a role in people's lives, especially young people, and the role modeling that's going on seems more likely to set an impressionable fan on the road to San Quentin than to the local job market. You see it everywhere, from the language people use to the clothing they wear. Pro sports and the people who play them are influencing our culture in ways never before seen. At the center of this movement are the glorification of values and behaviors that, if acted upon in my own youth, would have sent me swiftly to the woodshed.

Take, for example, the rise of the celebrity culture in sports and the focus on the individual in team performance. It seems today that a "me first" attitude pervades the ranks of major college and pro sports, with "look-at-me!" being the prime attitude displayed, both on and off the field. Contributions to the team, apart from stellar personal performance, are hardly even acknowledged. The big salaries go the stars who shoot for personal recognition, sometimes at the expense of team success. Another thing that bugs me is the huge pay scale enjoyed by many pro athletes, a pay scale that totally distorts the value of everyday work and personal responsibility. Kids today talk about so-and-so being "worth" \$4 million a year more than the next guy. How does that train their mind when it comes time to find a job at ten bucks an hour? What effect is this sports reality having on people growing up with NBA/NFL/MLB "news" blasting at them on the tube day and night. Don't get me wrong; it's good to have role models and to aim high, but when aiming high includes getting high like the guy on ESPN, there is a problem.

It probably wouldn't be so bad if so many people didn't take this stuff so seriously. I remember standing in line to get a Personal Seat License for the Raiders a couple of years ago. Now, these PSLs weren't cheap, costing several hundred dollars apiece, and the two guys in front of me in line looked like they hadn't seen ten bucks in years. I could overhear their

conversation, and it was clear that whether the Raiders had a winning or losing season was a genuinely big deal to them. I wondered (to myself) what wasn't being paid or taken care of at home so that these fans could buy hugely overpriced seat licenses. I also wondered why in the world it was so important to them.

Now, I'm no sociologist, but it is interesting to me what in our culture leads so many people to put so much stock in pro sports. Let's be clear: I thoroughly enjoy sports and seeing truly outstanding athletes do their thing is highly entertaining. But I don't consider them anything other than good athletes. I would never buy a shoe because some big pro athlete said I should, or walk or talk like them. I wouldn't vote for a politician because an athlete said he (or she) was the best man (or woman) for the job. I just can't understand the connection between hitting homeruns and selling products. I know, I'm a marketing guy, and I should "get" what's going on here. But I don't.

Sports "journalists" are some of the worst offenders when it comes to exaggerating the importance of sports. When they talk about how hard a player "worked" to get where he is, I almost choke. Let's face it, athletes "play" their sports, and got to where they are by playing, not working. The guy with two kids and a mortgage running our pipe machine in the foundry "works" for a living. There is a difference, and it should be recognized. I'm not saying everyone should applaud our pipe machine guys (though I do every day); I am saying that putting sports in better perspective may make us all a bit better at what we do. My sympathies lie with the hardworking people who do the right thing, day after day, to put bread on their family's tables; those are my heroes, not the guys who run faster or kick a ball farther than the next guy. I enjoy sports, but they are not important in the true sense. At their best, they demonstrate excellence in human performance and, at times (as in the case of Jackie Robinson) incredible courage and valor. But today's pro sports seem to focus on all the wrong things - personal glorification, incredible greed, decadent lifestyle. Putting so much importance on sports today is bad for our culture and our kids. I have no idea what to do about it, but those are my observations. Maybe you have some comments. If you do, please share them with me.

A couple of people have written in to respond to our article last month on the home computer. Craig Johnson of Benham Companies, Inc. pointed out that this article was an Internet hoax (as it turns out, he was right). The "computer" was actually a submarine control console, digitally altered to look like something out of the 1950s. We were suspicious of the photo from the get-go, and wondered what in the world a computer would need a steering wheel for? Well, we found out when Tony Patterson of Thorson Keenan wrote in to say that the steering wheel was for playing Grand Theft Auto. Well, we admit we were snookered on this one, which raises an interesting question. How much of the media that we consume is bogus, is either intentionally or innocently passing along misinformation? At what point will we stop believing ANYTHING we read, hear or see? And what impact will that super-skepticism have on us as a people? Where will it lead us? Certain businesses have conducted themselves in ways that have led to extreme skepticism (e.g. lawyers, used car salespeople), much to those businesses' disadvantage. If our newspapers and TV/radio lose credibility, where will we all be for information? Just a thought, Dan Rather...

The State of California has just announced a tax amnesty plan that will allow people who have not paid their taxes for years to do so now without penalty or interest. I wish they would have announced their plans for this program some years ago, so I could have not paid my taxes until amnesty time came around. I could have put that money to much better use than our state government. Maybe I would have bought some more stocks, or a new car, or maybe taken a trip. I would have gladly had the use of that money for all these years, interest free. The state hopes to raise some \$85,000,000 through this program. Go figure.

Congratulations to Robert Garcia of *Plumbing Wholesale Outlet* of San Gabriel for being honored recently as the "Plumbing Wholesaler of the Year". Robert's company has grown dramatically in just a few short years. What keeps his customers coming back for more? "People come to us to hear a really good joke," says Garcia, reminding us all that people do business with people they like. Way to go, Robert!

New Book Sounds Warning Call to American Manufacturers

According to author and publisher Peggy Smedley, the decline of American manufacturing seen in recent years could portend some major changes for all parts of the American economy, as well as for the way Americans live and think of themselves.

"The United States could plummet into a second-class industrial power," writes Smedley in her book, *Mending Manufacturing*. According to this author, "unless action is taken by the government, the hemorrhaging of factory jobs could continue, greatly hindering the economic health and prosperity of the nation." Domestic consumers and producers alike need to recognize the dire straits American manufacturing is in, writes Smedley, and must help to turn things around before they affect the next generation of Americans.

The author points to the current manufacturing crisis as one of the key issues facing our political leaders. Until government sets a level playing field for companies seeking to sell their goods to the American public, domestic manufacturers will continue to shrink and even disappear from the scene.

"We'll certainly vouch for a lot of what she's writing about," said Kip Wixson, AB&I vice president. No industry has been harder hit by the hyper-competitiveness that leads to massive industrial displacement, consolidations and business closures than the foundry business. "When I started in this business,"

says Wixson, "there were dozens of small foundries producing cast iron pipe and fittings across the country. Today, there are three."

The foundry business has been put under intense pressure by

offshore foundries, mainly Chinese, who dump their products into the American marketplace at well below cost. To stay competitive, domestic producers have had to innovate like crazy to bring productivity up to the point that they can compete with relatively-inefficient foreign foundries.

"We've stayed in business by getting better and better at what we do," says Wixson. When other foundries were bailing out

in response to new environmental regulations and competitive pressure, AB&I made the decision to invest in new technology to increase productivity.

"We always knew we couldn't beat companies whose governments subsidize them unless we got very efficient at our production processes," says AB&I sales manager, Greg Seiler. So, AB&I invested in the technology to clean the air and water, and in the modern equipment needed to produce more in less time. Today, AB&I is a leading producer of cast iron DWV material, but like other American manufacturers, the struggle to remain in the lead is ongoing. We would feel better about competing with offshore foundries if we all played by the same rules. Maybe someday we will.



Brrrr. Cold States Losing Population

If you've been to Phoenix or Vegas in the past decade, you'll understand the trend of populations in more northern climes moving down south where it's warmer. A recent study of population trends showed the following six with more people moving out than moving in.

In Indiana, for example, for every 3.6 people moving in, 6.4 were moving out. North Dakota showed exactly the same figures. Michigan fared only slightly better, with 6.1 people moving out for every 3.9 moving in. Illinois, New Jersey and New York also showed net outflows, with 6 people moving out for every 4 moving in. At this rate, the entire Northeast will be sunbathing at an Arizona lake within the decade!



Disa 270-A Molding Machine Scheduled to Begin Working in March

The new Disa 270-A molding machine, long in the planning stages, has arrived at the AB&I Oakland foundry and is being installed.

This new machine will dramatically improve production at the plant, producing more molds-per-hour than was possible before, while at the same time, improving quality by reducing the need for finish grinding.

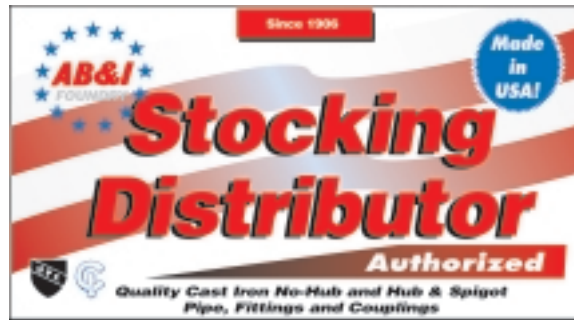
"We're very excited about the new Disa," said AB&I plumbing division manager, Gary Wickham, "and look forward to it coming on line later this month."

This new Disa is the first of its kind to be installed in the western U.S.

Become an AB&I Stocking Distributor!

To maximize profitability in the current plumbing supplies environment, it is critically important to form solid strategic alliances with suppliers and vendors. 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 the bottom line.

"AB&I's five-point stocking distributor program is so popular with our customers because it ties distributor success with our own success," says Gary Wickham, AB&I plumbing division manager. "As our distributor, the more you sell, the better off we both are," says Wickham, and to foster those sales, AB&I provides the following



five benefits to stocking distributors:

- 1) Assurance that AB&I products will be universally accepted by all plumbing codes and will meet all industry standards;
- 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 Gary Wickham at 800/GOT-IRON.

Just for Fun...

The Year's Best Real Headlines from 2004!

Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says
Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers

**Panda Mating Fails;
Veterinarian Takes Over**

**Miners Refuse to Work
After Death**

**Juvenile Court to Try
Shooting Defendant**

**Cold Wave Linked
to Temperatures**

Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges

Man Struck by Lightning Faces Battery Charge

New Study of Obesity Seeks Larger Test Group

Chef Throws His Heart Into Helping Feed Needy

Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half

Hospital Sued by Seven Foot Doctors

**Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery;
Hundreds Dead**



Headlines From the Year 2029!

Ozone From Electric Cars Killing Millions in Mexifornia.

**Overpopulation of Spotted Owl Threatens
Northwest Crops**

**Baby Conceived Naturally
Scientists Stumped**

**Couple Petitions Court to Reinstate
Heterosexual Marriage**

**Last Remaining Fundamentalist Muslim Dies in
American Territory of the Middle East (formerly Iran)**

**France Pleads for Global Help As Jamaica
Plans Invasion**

Castro Dead at 112

**Cuban Cigars Now Legal, But President Chelsea Clinton
Bans All Smoking**

**85 Year, \$14.2 Billion Study: Diet and Exercise
Key to Weight Loss**

**Supreme Court Rules Punishment
of Criminals Violates Civil Rights**

**Capitol Hill Intern Indicted
for Refusing Sex
with Congressman**

**Florida Voters Struggle
with New Voting Machines**

