



# ITEMS

NEWSLETTER

January 2006

## New Century, New Era Begins for AB&I!

**Kurt Winter Named President, Assumes Duties January 1**



three years, Winter served as president Allan Boscacci's right hand, learning the corporate traditions and management skills that would be needed when he assumed the reigns of top management.

"We've been planning this for five years," said AB&I vice president, Kip Wixson, who will be backing off on his management duties as Winter takes control in January. AB&I's commitment to being the Foundry of the Future not only extends to equipment and plant modernization, but to the grooming of tomorrow's management team as well. "Kurt has been a tremendous asset to the foundry," said Wixson, "and will do a great job as president."

Winter. Major plant improvements are a constant at AB&I, and are well underway. The sales team is knowledgeable, experienced, and will continue to serve their customers, just as they have all along. "It's a changing of the guard," says Winter, "but as COO for the past three years, I've been intimately involved in all major decisions and see no need to make any dramatic changes for change sake."

Many AB&I customers have already met Kurt Winter during recent years as he's traveled around the country. Those customers who have not yet been introduced to Kurt can expect a visit soon as he deepens his involvement in the sales and marketing side of the business.

Please join with us in sending Kurt a hearty Congratulations as he takes on his new duties. The entire team at AB&I wishes him well, and encourages all our friends, colleagues and customers to extend him a heartfelt welcome as AB&I embarks on its second century of service as the Foundry of the Future.

2006 promises to be a big year for AB&I. In addition to celebrating its 100th Anniversary, the foundry's current president, Allan Boscacci, has selected Chief Operating Officer, Kurt Winter, to be the company's fourth president, named to lead the foundry into the new century with fresh perspectives and a renewed vigor.

Winter joined AB&I in 1993, and has served in a variety of positions during his tenure at the Oakland-based foundry. Starting on the foundry floor, Kurt worked his way up to Plant Manager, overseeing all aspects of foundry production and operations. During this time, Kurt gained the valuable hands-on experience, with day-to-day problem solving, that would enable him to take his next position, that of Chief Operating Officer. As COO for some

As Winter settles into his new position, current president, Allan Boscacci, and vice president, Kip Wixson, will assume more consultative roles, remaining active in strategic planning and team mentoring, but leaving day-to-day management decisions to Winter, marketing manager (soon to be vice president) Gary Wickham, and national sales manager, Greg Seiler.

"We've spent years grooming this management team to take over," said Wixson, "and we're very confident that AB&I will be in good hands well into the future." Both Wixson and Boscacci will continue their duties on the Board of Directors.

Winter plans changes for the century-old foundry. "Our near-future and growth trajectory have been planned," says

### In this issue...

- ✓ Kip's Perspective
- ✓ Firestop Devices May Not
- ✓ Send Contact Info
- ✓ Companies Reduce PVC
- ✓ Just for Fun



## Perspective

# A Few Words About Satchel Paige and My Changing Role at AB&I

Joe DiMaggio called him the “best and fastest pitcher I ever faced.” His pitching was unique in baseball, and his flair for the dramatic on and off the playing field made him a favorite among baseball fans across the country.

By the time he made it to The Bigs in 1948, the best years of Leroy “Satchel” Paige as a pitcher were behind him, having been relegated to the Negro Leagues decades before. What records would he have set, or other team contributions would he have made, had he been allowed to play in the Majors from the beginning? We will never know. He retired in 1965, did a little coaching after that, and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971.

What truly set Paige apart in the annals of baseball history is his longevity in the game. He wasn’t sure when he was born, although he thought it was around 1905. There was no birth certificate, no hospital records (virtually all black babies in those years were born at home), no school transcripts, none of the normal government documentation that marks our lives. Paige was just born and lived to play baseball, serving to remind us all of the potential of the human spirit to overcome extreme adversity and achieve great things.

But Paige achieved those great things in one of the most competitive arenas in the world - the pitching mound of a Major League baseball field. And, amazingly, he did it longer than anybody else, before or since. If he was truly born in 1905, when he took the mound for the last time and threw three shutout innings for the Kansas City Athletics, he was sixty years old, facing batters that could have been his grandchildren, and frustrating them with the “stuff”

that had defeated hitters for at least 40 years in professional baseball.

Sportswriters and others would occasionally ask Paige how old he was. His typical answer was brief and to the point. “Age,” he would say, “is a question of mind over matter. If you don’t mind, it doesn’t matter.” And that was true for Paige. Since he didn’t know how old he really was, he didn’t set his personal expectations of his abilities by the calendar. He just pitched. And pitched. And pitched. And when he quit pitching, he coached.

Paige is a reminder to all of us that the years don’t have to slow us down as much as they often do. We all know people in their 70s and 80s. Some seem to act older than their years, some younger, and some fit our notions of what a person of that age should act like. The difference seems to boil down to enthusiasm. People who remain engaged in current events, curious about their world, open to new ideas, and enthusiastic about daily life, are the people we think of as “young for their age.” By all accounts, Satchel Paige remained young for his age, setting an example for us all.

I suppose what got me thinking about Satchel Paige is my own changing role at AB&I. As many of you already know, I will be stepping away from my day-to-day management duties to assume different responsibilities at the foundry. Instead of doing daily battle with the problems and challenges of running a leading iron foundry, I will now be taking on a more “consultative” role at AB&I, working on long-term strategic issues, but leaving the tactical decisions to the new crop of managers, led by our new company president, Kurt Winter.

Kurt has been with AB&I for over twelve

years, serving first in the foundry, then later as our Chief Operating Officer. Kurt’s a good guy with a solid background, and will do a great job for AB&I in the coming years.

In addition to my strategic and mentoring duties, I will continue to serve as a public face of AB&I at trade shows and conventions, and will still grace these newsletter pages with my profound wit and wisdom. I will continue to speak at industry functions when asked, and will remain in contact with the dozens (if not hundreds) of good friends and colleagues with whom I have interacted over these past 40 years in the business. I’m not going away, but I am slowing down a bit.

Marketing manager, Gary Wickham, will be promoted to vice president, and will assume some of my previous duties as well as managing his current sales territories. Greg Seiler will continue on as national sales manager, overseeing the factory and manufacturers’ reps on a daily basis. Customers should notice no difference in their dealings with AB&I.

Some people have already asked me what I think about these changes. The honest answer is, I have mixed feelings. We have spent at least five years preparing Kurt, Gary and Greg to take on these added responsibilities, and we are quite confident in their skills and abilities. The foundry will be in good hands. Still, part of me will miss the daily grind, the crisis management, the orchestration of a truly fine team to accomplish truly difficult tasks. Mostly, I will miss the pitcher’s mound and the feel of the ball in my hand. I’ll be coaching now, still on the field, but in a slightly different uniform.

I’ll get used to it.

## **Safety and Efficacy of Firestop Devices Challenged** *Environmental and health concerns prompt total elimination of dangerous plastic*

A leading Canadian producer of cast iron pipe and fittings has begun a marketing campaign aimed at educating the plumbing community to the dangers and problems associated with various firestop devices required by various codes when plastic pipe is used in building penetrations.

According to a study conducted by the University of Calgary, the lifespan of a firestop device is between five and twelve years. Beyond that, the devices may not be effective at stopping or reducing the spread of fire.

**It's easy to see that this doughnut is no longer fresh...**

**What about your firestop devices?**

A study conducted by Telephon Engineering Enterprises at the University of Calgary indicates the lifespan of these products to be between five and twelve years.

To this day, no firestop device manufacturer is willing to provide data proving the useful lifespan of their products!

**How long will the building occupants be safe?  
Are you ready to assume the risk!**

Contrary to plastic sanitary and storm water sewer pipes (ABS, PVC, and XFR™), cast iron is non-combustible and does not require a firestop device.

**bb** Cast iron, always a safe choice.  
**BBBY STE-CROIX**  
1-800-643-3488 www.bbby-stcroix.com

"We've questioned the effectiveness of these devices for years," said Gary Wickham, AB&I marketing manager and point person on technical details of DWV materials. "This study pretty much confirms what we have thought all along," said Wickham, "that firestop devices may not do what they are intended to do for the life of the building."

Contractors and specifiers are encouraged to consider the use of cast iron in all DWV applications. Not only is iron more fire safe, it conducts water more quietly, resulting in more satisfied consumers.

### **More Themes of 1906...**

As part of AB&I's ongoing celebration of our 100th Anniversary year, we are reminding ITEMS readers of what life was like during the year of our founding. Consider these facts...

**A dentist earned \$2500/year. A mechanical engineer earned about \$5000. The average wage earner made \$400/year.**

**The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10mph.**

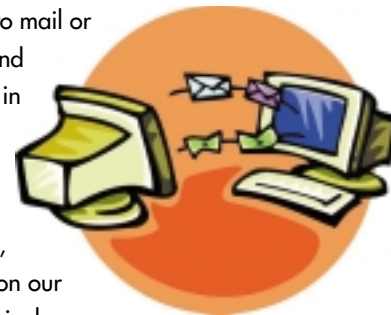
**With a mere 1.4 million people, California was only the 21st most populous state in the Union.**

**The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.**



### **Keep Those Cards and Emails Coming...**

Distributors are reminded to mail or email their store addresses and phone numbers for inclusion in the AB&I website. We're assembling what will one day be a complete listing of all AB&I stocking distributors, and will be displaying them on our website in order of geographical location. Please take a moment and provide your contact info. Just mail or email it to the following address:



Spectrix Digital  
428 Sutter Street  
Jackson, CA 95642  
ATTN: Kris  
graphics@volcano.net

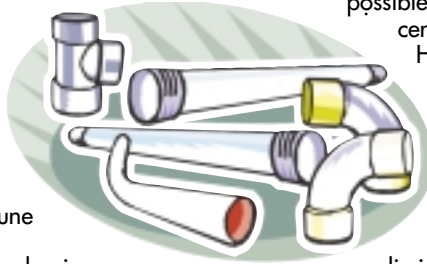
## Bay Area Companies Phasing Out PVC Plastic

A recent article in the San Francisco Business Times reported that many of the Bay Area's largest and most successful companies have joined forces to eliminate the use of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) in their operations.

The decision by these companies was based on the health threats posed by PVC as a result of leaching into groundwater, dioxin-forming landfill fires and the release of toxic emissions in landfill gases. Studies show links between the PVC lifecycle and cancer, reproductive and immune system disease, and asthma.

"We have eliminated PVC from all Microsoft packaging, effective December 31, 2005," said Pamela Passman, a Microsoft spokeswoman.

Environmental and health groups are praising the elimination of PVC. "We are seeing a major new trend," said Michael Green, executive director of the Center for Environmental Health. "Major corporations are phasing out PVC and switching to safer and healthier consumer products."



In addition to Microsoft's commitment to the elimination of PVC, Kaiser Permanente is reducing use of the toxic plastic "wherever possible" in its construction of new hospitals and medical centers, many of which are in California. Catholic Hospitals West has just awarded a \$70 million contract for the purchase of PVC-free IV equipment. And Hewlett-Packard has already eliminated PVC from all external case parts, and is committed to further reductions in the use of the material "as safer alternatives are available."

Other large companies are also reducing or eliminating PVC from their products and operations. Walmart, Firestone Building Products, Shaw Industries, and Johnson & Johnson have also announced plans to eliminate PVC use.

AB&I has long been on record reminding contractors and specifiers of the dangers of using PVC in plumbing applications, especially as they relate to fire and emitted gases. Plumbing professionals are encouraged to consider the use of cast iron as a safer alternative to PVC. For more information, contact AB&I or your field sales representative.

### Just for Fun...

#### Can You Believe This Garbage?

The following email solicitation letter was received at the AB&I offices recently. Not only is the premise of the message deceiving (an intercepted personal message to family), but the grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors in the message (this guy should have stayed in real school longer!!) are atrocious! Count the mistakes. The first reader to fax in a corrected letter with no errors will receive an official AB&I golf shirt (fax 510/632-8035).



Hey Family!

Just wanted to write you and let you know that the de\_gree program I tried out went... Well 3 weeks later, I graduated, & finished my masters in less then 2 weeks with No Study Required and 1\_0\_0\_% Verifiable!

Yeah mom, I know you and dad doubted it at first, but this turned out to be , 1.0,0% legit, The op,portunity exists due to a legal loophole allowing some established colleges to award degre.es at their dis.cretion.

I'm so excited mom and dad this was a life altering opp,ortunity & for once in my life I took advantage of it.

I already have jobs that wouldn't of gave me a chance before calling me off the hook now! This is really a Godsend.

Tell my sister and cousin Joey they better hurry up and call that # i gave them the other day because counselor James said they aren't excepting many more students for this offer.

here are the deg,rees they offer, B/A, B,S,C, M/A M,S,C, M.B.A. P,h,D and # to c,all again 1-(2,0,6,) - 984-4134 tell them to leave a brief message of the de,gree they want, and they will call back ASAP.

Anyways, much love and tell the rest of the family I said hello :)

love your son, Lindsey

