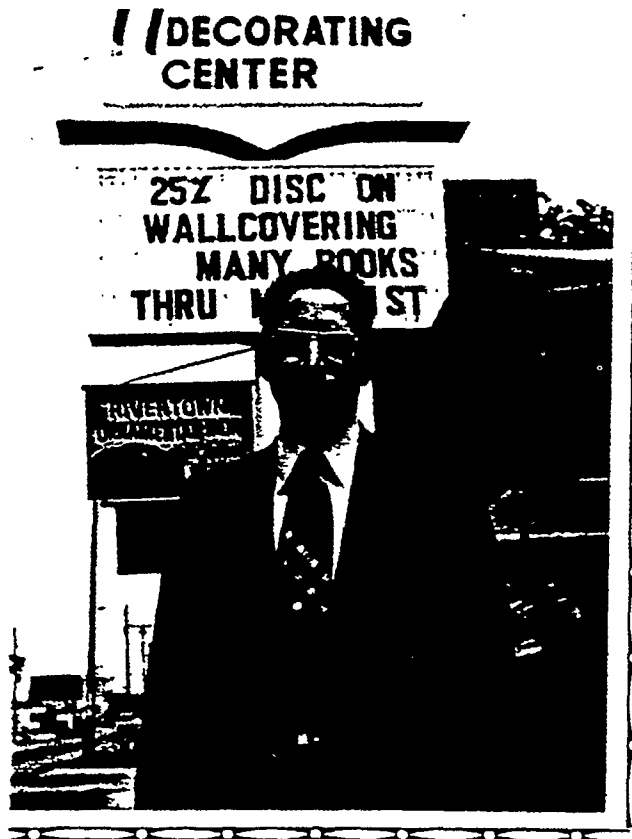




Who says
drywall work
hasn't changed
over the years?

Fred Hormuth in front
of decorating retail store
in Evansville, Ind.

FRED HORMUTH'S father, Marion—now deceased—got into the drywall installation and finishing business a lot earlier than most contractors who do that type of work today.

Marion Hormuth started his painting contracting firm in Evansville, Ind. in 1928, but it was not until after World War II that the new demand for cheaper housing created a new market for drywall contractors and gradually pushed the plaster business aside. Marion Hormuth went to California to study the new automatic drywall tap-

ing and finishing tools that were being manufactured there and brought some of them back to Evansville with him. Hormuth's painting company was probably one of the first companies east of the Mississippi to have the new automatic tools.

Today, Fred Hormuth, who inherited the business from his father, heads the Painting and Decorating Contractors of America Drywall Committee. The past president of PDCA's Indiana Council has built a thriving drywall contracting and decorating re-

tail business on the foundation his father started and is probably one of the most knowledgeable men in the country on the subject of drywall installation and finishing. At the PDCA convention in Washington D.C. in March, Hormuth presided over a seminar on drywall that featured a talk by Gene Johnson of San Francisco, Calif., representative of the company that manufactures the automatic drywall tools which Hormuth's father discovered on that trip to California over 25 years ago. Hormuth was also the author of a December, 1975 article in the Professional Painting and Coating Action magazine in which he urged that more painting contractors should try finishing wallboard joints instead of merely painting over joints that another contractor has already finished.

Hormuth's own company is equipped to not only finish drywall joints, but to install the metal studs and the wallboard itself. On some commercial jobs, Hormuth has even put together a complete decorating "package" which includes not only painting and drywall installation and finishing, but the installation of acoustic ceilings, wallcovering and carpeting. Hormuth said that the trend in drywall contracting is toward packaging in which a contractor offers a complete range of decorating services to his customers rather than concentrating only on drywall finishing. He said the packaging concept has helped his own company through a rather slow economic period this spring.

He said his firm has much more work under contract this spring than it did this time last year, but at present, there is not that much work to go around—at least in the Midwest. Hormuth figures that the business slowdown means that the recession has finally caught up with him. As the

**Second generation
drywall contractor,
Fred Hormuth,
talks about
his business,
the asbestos problem
and the present
state of the art**

last trade to get to a job site, the painting and decorating contractor is usually the last trade finished, Hormuth reasons, and probably is only now beginning to experience the economic slowdown that other building trades felt much earlier. The economy is starting to role again, but Hormuth estimates that there will be a two-to-three month lag before his men actually get on the job site to work.

Hormuth keeps about 25 to 30 men employed in drywall installation and finishing. He said that his company does mostly commercial work since the residential work has been taken over by the smaller—one- or two-man contractor. In the residential market, price still dictates who gets the work, Hormuth said, while the smaller contractors are not equipped to handle the larger commercial jobs.

Hormuth has discovered a surprisingly good market in drywall repair of



Hormuth's father, Marion, uses old-style drywall taping tool which operated on battery power. Picture was taken sometime in mid-1940's, according to Hormuth.

the interior of old churches. He said that the walls in many old churches are in need of repair and usually covering the old walls with wallboard is the only solution that makes economic sense. In many of the churches, the complex pattern of archways on the ceilings requires a contractor with Hormuth's expertise.

Some of the jobs Hormuth's men have tackled have been quite large. He recalled a 10-story apartment building his men had worked on in which they installed several tons of wallboard and finished the joints. Trucks loaded with gypsum board would start pulling up at the job site

early in the morning, unload and take off to get another load, he said. The wallboard was lifted to the upper floors of the building by a crane, he said.

A church job his men undertook recently called for the installation of metal studs to support the drywall that were 50 foot tall in some places. No straight wooden studs 50 feet long could have been found to meet the requirements of the job, Hormuth said, and even if wooden studs had been available, the general contractor, rather than Hormuth's men, would have installed them. Installing metal studs is usually left to the contractor

or subcontractor who handles the drywall work while the installation of wooden studs is usually the territory of the general contractor, Hormuth explained.

One of the problems with drywall work is finding good men, training them to operate the equipment and keeping them, Hormuth said. Most of his competitors in the Evansville area are men who once worked for his company and who later broke away and went into business for themselves. He said his firm has trained skilled drywall mechanics "by the dozens."

The asbestos problem

The drywall industry has undergone a gradual revolution since the day Hormuth's father got into the business. Concern over the presence of airborne asbestos particles as well as other materials in the dust at drywall job sites and pressure from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has led most of the major manufacturers of joint compounds to remove the asbestos from their products.

Last October, OSHA released a new proposed standard for concentrations of airborne asbestos that was even stricter than the present standard formulated in June 1972. (An emergency asbestos standard was established in Dec. 1971.)

The proposed standard would among other things lower the permissible exposure to 500,000 fibers per cubic meter (0.5 asbestos fibers per cubic centimeter for an eight hour time-weighted average exposure and also reduce the permissible ceiling exposure to five million asbestos fibers per cubic meter (5 asbestos fibers per cubic centimeter) for any period exceeding 15 minutes. Monitoring and record keeping procedures would also be increased by the proposed standard. The standard would not apply to the construction industry, but medical conclusions reached in the proposed stan-

Hormuth's firm has trained drywall mechanics by the dozens

dard will be used in the formulation of a separate asbestos standard for the construction industry. The preparation of the construction industry's asbestos standard is already underway.

The date for comments on the proposed standard closed last April although some comments were expected to drift in late. No hearing dates have yet been set for the standard although the dates will probably be set within the next two months. As of mid-May, almost 190 comments on the proposed asbestos



"Are you color blind or something?
That's not willow green."

standard had been received by OSHA, according to William Warren, industrial hygienist for OSHA based in Washington D.C. OSHA is still awaiting an inflationary impact statement about the economic effect of the proposed standards which is necessary before the hearings can begin, Warren said.

Separate but equal

According to Warren, OSHA's goal is to establish a separate asbestos standard for the construction industry that will provide the same protection from asbestos fibers for construction workers as the proposed standard would for workers in other industries.

The breathing of asbestos fibers has been linked with such diseases as asbestosis, a diffuse interstitial, non-malignant scarring of the lungs; bronchogenic carcinoma, a malignancy of the interior of the lung; mesothelioma, a diffuse malignancy of the lining of the chest cavity and of the abdomen and cancer of the stomach, colon and rectum.

Companies which use asbestos in their products have been attempting to refute some of the findings of studies cited by OSHA in arguing for a stricter asbestos standard. Some of the private studies have tended to show that the research cited by OSHA was not very realistic in determining how many asbestos fibers a drywall worker is likely to breathe in the course of his work, Hormuth said. He referred to a study reported in the January/February issue of *Drywall* magazine which indicated that concentrations of asbestos particles at many drywall work sites surveyed were not as high as indicated by research studies cited in the proposed OSHA standards.

"It now appears that the situation is not quite as serious as it appeared in December 1971 (when the emergency asbestos standard was proposed)," Hormuth said.

Although the manufacturers of joint

compounds have taken the initiative in removing the asbestos from their products, there have been complaints that the asbestos-free compounds are not quite as reliable as some of the asbestos containing compounds.

Gene Johnson, Hormuth's guest at the PDCA convention reported that some research indicates that the use of automatic taping and finishing tools versus taping and finishing by hand tends to keep dust levels at a job site at a minimum. Labor restrictions in certain parts of the country prevent the use of the automatic taping and finishing tools. Comparisons between New York City, where there are tool restrictions and Miami, Florida, where automatic taping and finishing tools are permitted, showed that where taping and finishing is done by hand, the dusting problem was greater, Johnson told those at the workshop.

Restrictions hurt labor

Hormuth told the *American Painting Contractor* that the tool restriction hurts labor in another way. Although more men may be hired to do drywall work by hand, the automatic tools make the drywall contractor more competitive and able to get more work, he said.

Hormuth said that the drywall business has changed in other ways. Even the automatic taping and finishing tools are much improved over the ones used by his father. One of the first taping tools his father used, he recalled, operated by battery power. Hormuth remembers having to recharge 40 or 50 batteries at the end of a workday to get them ready to hook up to the automatic tools the next work day.

Hormuth and his wife, Mary Ann, have four daughters and he laments that he does not have a son to take over his business one day. But he quickly added that he is happy that his two eldest daughters and his wife do help out at his decorating products store occasionally. ■

INDUSTRY NEWS

Largest United States flag painted at Kennedy Space Center

When last we visited painting contractor Demetrious Dourakos of Merritt Island, Fla., he had just donated his own personal bicentennial project to the city of Cocoa, Fla.: three 41 x 85 foot American flags painted on the side of that city's water tower. (See *American Painting Contractor*, December 1975)

Dourakos is back in the news. This time he topped his original act by painting a 209 x 110 foot flag on the south wall of the Vehicle Assembly Building at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

According to Lee R. Scherer, director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's John F. Kennedy Space Center, it is the largest American flag ever depicted. A red, white and blue bicentennial symbol is to grace the north wall of the Vehicle Assembly Building. Both symbols will be visible from a distance of 10 miles.

"The flag will be a major attraction at the U.S. Bicentennial Exposition on Science and Technology at the Kennedy Space Center, Scherer said.

The exposition, conducted on the theme, "Third Century America," is scheduled to be open from May 30 through Labor Day this year.

More than 500 gallons of paint were used in the completion of the project and rollers and brushes were used while applying it. The building was first cleaned with a high pressure alkaline wash to remove chalk, grease and dirt.

Dourakos said that painting the flag on

the side of the Vehicle Assembly Building took about three weeks. You may recall that he donated the flags painted by his Royal Painting Co. on the side of the water towers in Cocoa. The flag at the Kennedy Space Center was done for a fee by the Apollo Painting Co., another firm in which Dourakos has a business interest.

NPCA criticizes asbestos standard

The proposed OSHA standard for asbestos (See article on drywall problems, page 34) does not take into account the limited exposure of workers in the paint and coatings industry to the material and could include materials not intended to be regulated under the standard, the National Paint and Coatings Association told the Occupational Safety and Health Administration recently.

NPCA filed comments with OSHA on the proposed asbestos standard on April 9. The standard as proposed would allow workers to be exposed to an average of 0.5 fibers per cubic centimeter of air over any eight hour period instead of the present limit of 5 fiber per cubic centimeter. The standard would also define a fiber as a particle of asbestos longer than 5 micrometers. It would also require employers to maintain employee medical records for 40 years or the duration of an employee's career plus 20

years.

In its comments, the association explained that asbestos is an essential component of many coatings, sealants, caulks and glazing compounds for which compatible substitutes are not known.

"The nature of the use of asbestos in the paint and coatings industry, consisting of varied short and intermittent periods in which the possibility of exposure exists," the NPCA stated, "is such that it cannot be lumped into the general mining and manufacturing of asbestos. Regulations issued by OSHA must be responsive to these uses and should not impose unnecessary and inappropriate restrictions."

Train to reconsider mercury ban of Feb. 17

In response to motions filed by the National Paint and Coatings Association and three of its member companies, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Russell Train has granted a motion to reconsider his ban on the use of mercury compounds as in-can preservatives and as mildewcides in water-based paint and coating products. Early in March, the EPA granted a temporary stay order on the February 17 order which had prohibited further production of mercurial pesticides.

This recent order for reconsideration, issued March 26, 1976, covers only mercurial pesticides and mercurial mildewcides used in water-based paint and coatings. The status of registrations of mercurial pesticides for other uses, including as a mildewcide in oil-based paints, has not been changed by the March 26 order. The effective date of the cancellation was delayed by the stay, however.

In making the announcement, Train said, "In view of the stay of the February 17 order and in consideration of the allegations of factual and legal errors by the movants (NPCA, Troy Chemical Corp., Tenneco Chemicals,

Inc. and Cosan Chemical Corp.) I find that sufficient basis and opportunity now exists to reconsider the matters alleged in the aforementioned statement of Matters Erroneously Decided and Errors Committed. Accordingly, the foregoing motion for reconsideration is hereby granted."

The NPCA and the suppliers of phenylmercurials were given until April 16, 1976, to file briefs with the EPA.

NPCA President Robert Roland said, "We appreciate this unprecedented opportunity that the administrator has given us to show that his order of February 17, 1976 was not based on substantial evidence in the record and was not in the best interest of the general public. We hope this reconsideration proceeding will lead to a reinstatement of the use of phenylmercurial compounds as in-can preservatives and as mildewcides in water-based paints and thus avoid, costly, protracted litigation."

PPG hosts meeting for painting contractors

Ten painting contractors from across the United States were delegates to the 1976 meeting of the Pittsburgh Paints professional contractors marketing council.

The two-day session was the third such event sponsored by the Coatings and Resins Division of PPG Industries, makers of Pittsburgh Paints. The council met at the firm's Pittsburgh headquarters.

"These meetings give us the opportunity to listen to the painting contractors' problems and discuss possible solutions," said C. S. Wells, the division's market manager of professional products. "We review the information gained, take appropriate action and report our progress to the council members during the coming year."

At the third bicentennial council meeting, each contractor participated in discussions of overall business condi-