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Customer Service, Excellent Team are Key for Smokey Mountain Tops

Shannon Carey

Over the years, Smokey Mountain Tops has become a go-to name in stone in Tennessee and throughout the southeastern U.S. Owner Todd Scott will be the first to say that this success isn't just his. It's owned by the whole team, now 85 employees strong in two locations, Knoxville and Nashville.

Projects like the University of Tennessee's Neyland Stadium club levels, the Grand Ole Opry, the personal homes of many Nashville music celebrities and athletes, skyboxes and locker rooms in Bridgestone Arena and Miami Heat Stadium, have heaped accolades on Smokey Mountain Tops.

But just as important to the Smokey Mountain Tops team is the one-on-one project for a single homeowner.

"Whether it's Neyland Stadium or your bathroom, we treat every customer, every project, the same," Scott said. "We pride ourselves on making sure that at the end of the day people want to do business with us."

Starting Out and Making it Big

Scott started out in 1993 with brother Tim. At the time, they were doing business as Scott Labs, installing laboratory equipment, including solid-surface counters. Scott "gravitated towards commercial" and they split off a separate company – Smokey Mountain Tops – to sell a Corian-type product for commercial and residential projects.

"Back then, there was no direct-to-customer," he said. "There was limited opportunity for people to put in a showroom and sell it. We started selling directly to the public, and things started booming."

Soon, a friend approached Scott about a new product: quartz.

"He said, 'It's going to be the next big thing, and we'd like you to promote it for us,'" Scott said. "There were no quartz products in the state. I researched what was available and we became an exclusive dealer. We opened the shop in Nashville and were the Cambria rep there. We helped grow that brand throughout the state."

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Photo by Shannon Carey

Top: Todd Scott, owner of Smokey Mountain Tops, stands in the company's Knoxville, Tennessee, showroom. Smokey Mountain Tops has more than 80 employees at two locations, Knoxville and Nashville.
Above: Smokey Mountain Tops outfitted this residential kitchen in Black Pearl Granite for the island, and quartz for the custom wrap-around countertops.

"With Great Power"

Jodi Wallace
Monarch Solid Surface Designs

As Peter Parker's (Spider-Man) Uncle Ben told him, along with great power comes great responsibility. As business owners, we have a huge influence over people who step into our showrooms and shops and the decisions they make based on the information we provide them.

I spend a lot of time with my customers. When I am wearing my business owner hat, I consider the education of my customers to be the most important part of my job. I run my showroom the way I would like to engage with a business when I am on the consumer end of things. Teach me what I need to know, to allow me to make informed decisions that will ensure I am getting what I want and need, and what will match my needs and expectations.

Sometimes the day-to-day business of running a shop tends to blur one of the most important aspects of our businesses–customers put a lot of faith in us. They invest their choice with trust: that when they sign a contract and hand over their hard-earned money, we will do what we say, deliver what we say and the product will work the way we say it will. When you think about it, that places a big responsibility on our shoulders.

If I am ready and willing to take on a customer's business and trust I need to let them know what sets my shop apart from others and why they want to work with me. For us, it is always quality over quantity. Customers are spending a lot of money. I want not only my customer to love what we have done, but have someone else walk into their home and say, "Wow! That looks amazing, who did it?"

We believe customer care is a top priority. If there is a problem, we will do what it takes to make it right.

Although on occasion it has been costly and painful to have to replace something, at the end of the day, a problem resolved can turn a skeptical customer into a true fan. You only have one reputation, so do what you must to protect it.

Last, but definitely not least, never promise what you cannot deliver. If I can fabricate and install a job sooner than I anticipated, then that is a phone call I would be thrilled to make.

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Customer Service, Excellent Team are Key for Smokey Mountain Tops

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The project that launched Smokey Mountain Tops into the big time was their first Neyland Stadium club level, Scott said. When they won the bid, the whole team was energized.

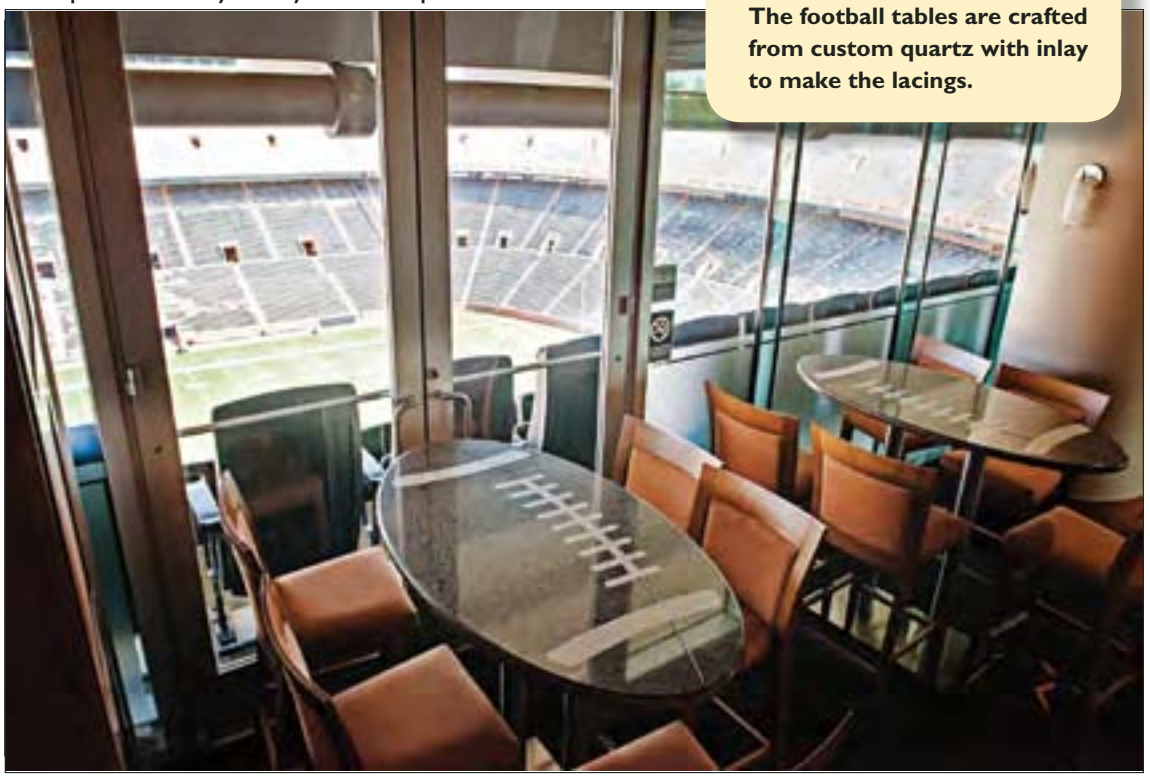
"I think everybody was excited," Scott said.

They came up with an idea for a football table crafted from custom quartz, cut the stone in the shape of a football, and added inlay for the lacings.

"It was high-end and unique and showed the quality and technical aspects that set us apart," he said.

Today, the team has many UT projects under their belts and they're about to finish the Neyland Stadium east skyboxes in the next three months, including a wet bar, seating and quartz countertops.

Photos provided courtesy Smokey Mountain Tops



The project that launched Smokey Mountain Tops into the "big time" was this club level at the University of Tennessee's Neyland Stadium. The football tables are crafted from custom quartz with inlay to make the lacings.

Weathering the Bust

When the housing market bust happened in 2008, Smokey Mountain Tops felt the hit just like everyone in the building trades. And like everyone who made it through that time, their business model changed so they could survive.

Suddenly, the orders from homebuilders for multiple kitchens in a development dried up. So, Scott and his team turned their attention to individual homeowners.

"We changed our business to become a lot more customer friendly," Scott said. "Now, it seems like almost every project we do is customer initiated. We had to re-educate, set new expectations and become more user friendly. We had to make it easier to buy from us."

That included expanding project selections, improving the showrooms, and adjusting communications from a customer service standpoint. In fact, Smokey Mountain Tops now has an entire customer service department.

Part of the effort towards selling to the homeowner included branching into different product lines. Smokey Mountain Tops still values and carries Cambria, but they offer Caesarstone, Hanstone and natural stone.

"We've started to analyze who's doing what and purchase quality products at competitive pricing," said Scott. "It gives the customer options. You can spend $40 per foot or $400 per foot. To us, it's all countertops."

Great Equipment, Great Team

Scott said Smokey Mountain Tops tries to stay ahead of techniques and processes in the industry, incorporating the best machinery and technology available. Both locations have Northwood and Park Industries equipment, including SawJets and CNCs, Marmo Meccanica edge machines, and more. They use Slabsmith software for efficient slab inventory control, countertop layout and processing. It allows them to produce vein-matched cuts so the stone pattern matches up. This helps to conceal seams when the countertops are installed. Both shops are MIA certified for safety.

But, it's the team that makes the magic happen.

"I could have a $400,000 piece of equipment, and if the guy running it doesn't know what he's doing, it's useless," said Scott. "The quality of the equipment has made it easier to put out a quality product. What hasn't changed is if you don't have people who understand the equipment, don't know how to set up and maintain it properly, it's not going to perform."

Employee development and education is a priority at Smokey Mountain Tops.

"For the last six or seven years, we've really focused on trying to put people in positions where they're going to excel," said Scott.

Scott mentioned Mike McGrady, one of the first sales reps at the Nashville location, now general manager in Nashville with 40 employees to supervise. He also gave kudos to production managers Jeff Brown and Greg Fairchild, Knoxville general manager Jason DeBord, and controller Emily Horner.

"We've got great people," Scott said. "All of them have contributed in one way or another. I think when you're blowing and going and trying to be successful, one of the hardest things is taking the time to thank everybody. It's their sweat equity that's made us successful. That's what we're proud of.

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Left: Smokey Mountain Tops crafted the White Carrara Marble countertop at the exclusive Draper James women's clothing boutique in Nashville, Tennessee.
Below: Detail of one of the inlaid UT football tables.

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As Seen at
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22511	Elipse® 6-Step Granite Wet Pad, Step 3, Blue	~~$41.95~~	$24.95
22512	Elipse® 6-Step Granite Wet Pad, Step 4, Green	~~$41.95~~	$24.95
22513	Elipse® 6-Step Granite Wet Pad, Step 5, Orange	~~$41.95~~	$24.95
22514	Elipse® 6-Step Granite Wet Pad, Step 6, Pink	~~$41.95~~	$24.95
22507	Elipse® Aluminum Oscillating Back-Up Pad	~~$49.95~~	$29.95

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Google AdWords

Sharon Koehler
Artistic Stone Design

Recently, Peter DeKok (founder of GranQuartz and stone industry leader) stated in a letter to the *Slippery Rock* that the only reason to run a business was to ***make money***. I agree. I don't do what I do for free. I dare say, neither do you. And I think I can really go out on a limb and say that if we took a survey we would find that most people do work for some sort of compensation. Now, I am not slamming charities or hobbies. I have hobbies and I do charity work but those things, even though they are important, don't keep a roof over my head or food on my table.

And surprise, surprise, Google feels the exact same way. They are in business to make money and they have recently made some changes to make sure they do so. Have you looked at your computer screen lately? Big changes are afoot.

It used to be that organic (free) listings would run down the page and for the most part the ads were on the side. What you wanted to do was stay above the scroll line on the first page. (Meaning: you wanted your business to appear on the top part of the first page so no one had to scroll or go two or three pages in to find you). If you worked your SEO (search engine optimization), had the right keywords on your website and used social media to its full potential, everything was fine.

However, recently Google made a BIG change. They took the paid ads off the side of the page and put them on top of the page. That really doesn't sound like a big deal until you stop and think about it. Those two, three or four ads, paid for by your competition are now at the top of the page, squashing the organic listings and moving them further down the page and possibly onto the next page where you don't want to be. What to do? What to do?

Photo by Sharon Koehler

Google AdWords is a pay-per-click program you can use to get your ad up above the scroll line. Recent improvements make AdWords a stronger tool.

Never fear my friends; Google has the answer to this problem they have created– Google AdWords. This is their **paid** program to get you back up above the scroll line and of course it costs you money. AdWords is a pay-per -click (PPC) format. This means that no matter how many times your ad appears on the screen, you don't owe Google any money until someone actually clicks on it. A simple enough idea rooted in good company. Facebook, Yelp, Bing and Yahoo to name a few, all have advertising with the PPC format.

AdWords used to be less a popular choice because the program had some issues. The biggest one was that since it is a pay-per-click (PPC) format, if you took out an ad, your competitors could just click on your ad until your daily budget was maxed out and you had nothing to show for it. Google monitors that now and after the second click from the same IP address, you stop getting charged.

So how does it work? It is actually very simple. Either you or your website/SEO person contacts Google online or by phone and you are off and running. The ads themselves have very specific guidelines to go by, but **keywords** are so important. You can pick the keywords that trigger your ads to be seen. AND you can put in keywords that trigger your ads NOT to be seen as well. Example: If someone searches "Limestone countertops" but for whatever reason, you offer natural stone countertops but not limestone countertops, your ad will not pop up. This keeps you from wasting money on accidental clicks.

Now, this is the best part, I think. You can use your competitor's names as keywords. For instance: if you are ABC Stone and Tile and your biggest competitor is 123 Stone and Tile, you can make 123 Stone and Tile one of your keywords and every time someone searches for 123 Stone and Tile, your ad will come as well. Very interesting!

How much does it cost? The simple although not concrete answer is, "It depends." Ads are placed on the page according to "bids." To keep the math simple let's say that you bid $10 per click and you set your daily budget at $100 per day. After you get 10 clicks, you max out our daily budget and your ad will not reappear until the next day. Note that I pulled these numbers out of thin air. They are not an indication of cost. The actual cost is between you and Google. You have complete control over the cost of your campaign. Actually you have almost total control over your AdWords campaign.

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The Stone Detective

The Case of Who is Paying the Power Bill

Frederick M. Hueston, PhD

IT was one of those hot, humid days here in Florida – the kind of day you just want to stay inside and sit in front of the air conditioner. It was so humid you could actually see the humidity in the air.

I decided to brave the heat for a minute and walk across the street for some of Flo's famous grilled cheese sandwiches and some sweet tea. Just as I was about to walk out the door my cell rang. "Stone Detective, here," I said, as my stomach growled like a bad-tempered watch dog.

The voice on the other end was very excited and had a strong accent. He was so worked up I was having trouble understanding him. He finally got me to understand that he was the manager of a high rise in Palm Beach. He had a condo owner that had installed white marble tile in his condo.

And I mean the entire condo, to the tune of 7,000 square feet. Not only was this flooring, but walls, showers, et cetera. He said the condo was still under construction and the owner was complaining because the stone was turning brown. He was wondering if could come take a look. Fortunately, Palm Beach is a short two-hour drive for me. So I told him I could be there that afternoon. That is, after my grilled cheese and sweet tea lunch. I was already out the door and over to see Flo.

Lunch was just as an expected – delicious, as always. I finished up and even managed to put away a slice of homemade hot apple pie with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. (Bet I'm making you hungry!)

I got in the old Woody, turned the air on high (love my retrofitted AC), and headed down the highway.

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Stone Pro Announces SR2 Rechargeable Rail Support System

Stone Pro has announced the release of an updated version of its popular SR2 Rail Support System.

"We have long heard from the stone industry how much nicer it would be if the SR2 had a rechargeable feature, rather than the AA battery power source," said Bran Winn. And that is exactly what they did.

Stone Pro's engineers have come up with a rechargeable power system, and also managed to maintain the same footprint and basic cup design. An available, retrofit master cup will enable present owners of the SR2 Vacuum Rail Support System to convert their old unit over to the newer rechargeable version.

"This can easily be done by simply sliding off the old Master Cup and on with the new. Replacing the standard cups won't be necessary because those really haven't changed, other than the color of the new series," explained Winn.

The most notable updates to the SR2 are the self-contained, rechargeable power supply, and the tougher, black polymer vacuum pods.

"Even better, we have also incorporated the same power supply in the new SR2 that we use in the Seam Machine.

"That means that we can utilize the same power plant and recharging plug for both devices. It will be the same stock item for both devices. Same battery and same charging plug!"

The new SR2 Rechargeable eliminates the need for AA batteries, yet keeps its streamlined look.

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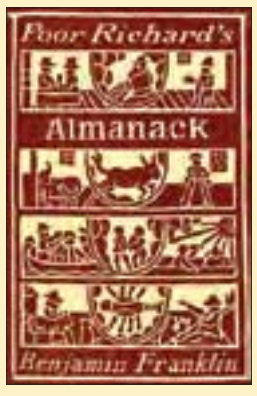

Excerpts from *Poor Richard's Almanack*

Act uprightly and despise Calumny; Dirt may stick to a Mud Wall, but not to polish'd Marble.

A false Friend and a Shadow attend only while the Sun shines.

There are three Things extreamly hard: Steel, a Diamond and to know one's self.

A lie stands on one leg, truth on two.

Nothing brings more pain than too much pleasure; nothing more bondage than too much liberty.

'Tis easier to prevent bad habits than to break them.

If you would reap Praise you must sow the Seeds, gentle Words and useful Deeds.

Beware of little Expenses: a small Leak will sink a great Ship.

Wink at small faults – remember thou hast great ones.

— Benjamin Franklin, from the yearly pamphlet *Poor Richard's Almanack,* published between 1733 and 1758, in the American colonies.

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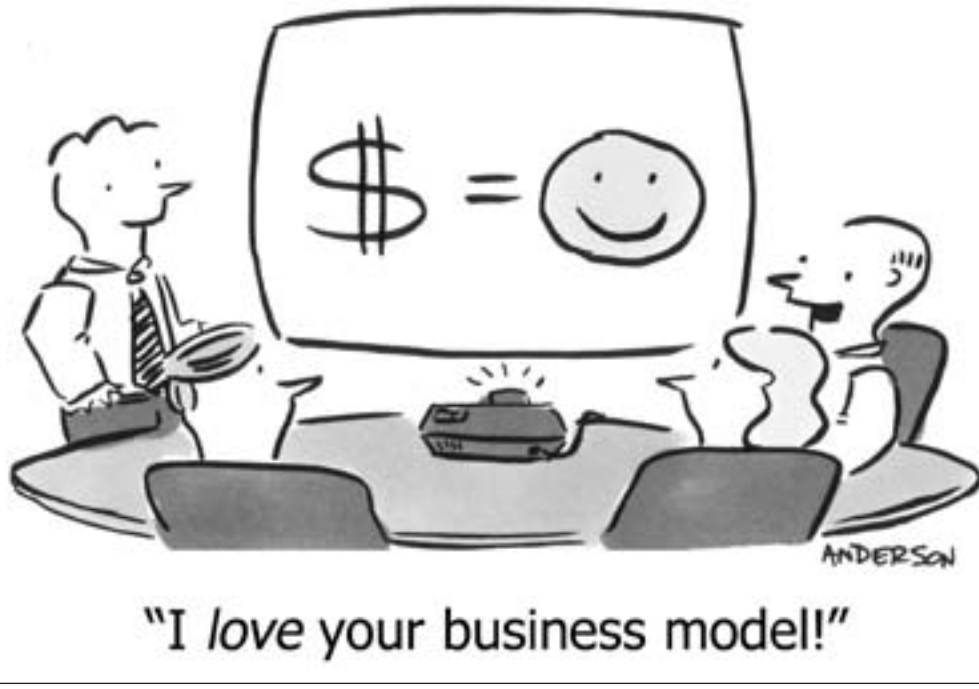

The Varmint County Chronicles

Varmint County's tax sale finds few bidders, but provides ample entertainment

Boomer Winfrey
Varmint County Correspondent

Here we are, already deep into a hot and dry summer in Varmint County, with the annual July 4th festivities just days away and graduation at Varmint County High well behind us. But the big talk around the county so far this summer has revolved around something far removed from schools, celebrations and even politics.

Varmint County just held its annual delinquent property tax sale down at the courthouse, and that started all the tongues wagging, from Smiley's Pool Emporium to the Dead Rat Tavern to Doc Filstrup's poker table.

The county, on occasion, hires lawyer Philbert McSwine to pull out the records of all property owners who are behind in paying their taxes, process the paperwork through Chancery Court and auction off the delinquent property to the highest bidders at the county courthouse.

Predictably, this auction draws a crowd, not just of potential bidders but curious onlookers such as Judge Hard Time Harwell, Mud Lake Marina owner Ike Pinetar and most of the wags who hang out at Smiley's Pool Emporium and Tobacco Mercantile.

Clan patriarchs Elijah "Big Poison" Haig and Caleb Hockmeyer always register to bid on property, hoping to turn some of their clans' ill-gotten gains from making moonshine and growing marijuana into more legitimate income such as real estate. Numerous real estate developers, slum lords from Burr County and other businessmen such as mortician Clyde Filstrup Jr. also show up, eager to grab an inexpensive house or two, or at least collect the 10 percent interest that the original owners must pay if they manage to redeem their property after the sale is concluded.

The fact that Elijah and Caleb like to bid on delinquent tax property is especially ironic, since the Haigs and Hockmeyers have been squatting on county land for 54 years now. Elijah keeps the taxes paid on the 200 acre tract where he maintains his antebellum mansion and the distillery for the "legal" Spring Run moonshine that he sells to the Air Force as a jet fuel additive, but the remaining 10,000 acres in Haig Hollow were seized by the county for unpaid taxes a couple of decades back, when it was revealed that the Haigs had not paid property taxes since 1962.

The Hockmeyer lands in Stinking Creek Valley were also taken over by the county after it was discovered that the last time the Hockmeyers paid taxes was shortly after the conclusion of the Spanish-America War.

The county actually put Haig Hollow up for sale for unpaid taxes in 1995, but nobody had the courage to bid on the property and it remained in county hands. A few years later, the county tried again, and Cornelius Pearlman and Otis B. Hudsupple, two real estate developers from up north, posted a successful bid on about 500 acres of Haig Hollow along the flanks of the county's highest point, Flatiron Peak.

Cornelius and a couple of surveyors drove their Toyota Land Rover up to the newly-acquired land a week later to mark the property lines. That's the last time anyone has seen Cornelius Pearlman or the surveyors. Predictably, Otis B. Hudsupple declined to pursue the matter and a year later, the land was back in the county's hands when the new owners failed to pay the taxes.

The case of the Hockmeyer lands is even more complicated. A few years back the selfsame Otis B. Hudsupple leased land in McCracken Valley from Caleb Hockmeyer to develop an 18-hole golf course. The back nine holes proved to be so rugged that several golfing parties became lost in the wilderness, a caddy was consumed by an alligator in the water hazard on the 14th green and Hudsupple was sued by no less than seven families of missing players.

The lawyers tried to include the Hockmeyers in their lawsuits but soon learned that the land leased from them for the golf course had been taken over years before for unpaid taxes, the lease was therefore not binding and the Hockmeyers had no legal responsibility for the golf course tragedies.

The Hockmeyers also sold a large tract of their county-seized land a few years back to the brothers Mario and Antonio Cappizzi, Sicilians who purchased the property with money of, shall we say, dubious origins to put in a ski resort, complete with a five-star Italian restaurant in the new Flatiron Peak Lodge.

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Varmint County just held its annual delinquent property tax sale down at the courthouse, and that started all the tongues wagging, from Smiley's Pool Emporium to the Dead Rat Tavern to Doc Filstrup's poker table.

Blimp makes emergency landing at construction site, deflates

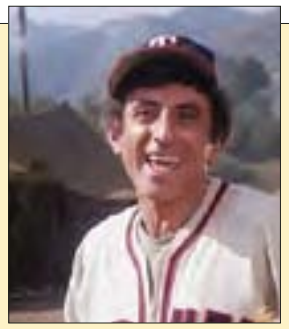
A blimp made an emergency landing and deflated at a construction site next to a Philadelphia highway.

No injuries were reported on the two-passenger blimp or on the ground where it landed, near the SugarHouse Casino.

The blimp floated over the Delaware River one Friday night before going down in the Fishtown neighborhood along Interstate 95. A section of the highway was closed briefly while crews secured the area and inspected the blimp.

It's unclear what caused the blimp to go down. Police say the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board were notified.

The blimp displayed advertising for adhesives company Bostik Inc., based in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.



"A good cigar is like a beautiful chick with a great body who also knows the American League box scores.
— Cpl. Klinger, M*A*S*H*, *Bug-Out,* 1976

FREE NEXT DAY DELIVERY!
What's the Catch?

Maybe you grew up hearing that *"When something sounds too good to be true, it usually is."*

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Let the team answer any questions you have about this incredible shipping policy. Go ahead, they can handle it.

AND… if you like this idea, buy lots of tools and supplies so the boss will keep it around. ;)

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Order online or call 1-800-575-4401 before 5:45 p.m. *Eastern* for Same Day Shipping.

Google AdWords

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You decide what the ad says; you control the trigger and non-trigger keywords as well as the click bid and the daily budget. Plus, you get to decide how many campaigns you want to run and when. You are in the driver's seat.

If that thought scares you a little bit, don't worry. Google will help you. Why? Because it is in Google's best interest for you to launch a successful campaign with a great ad. Why? Google doesn't make money unless your ad is successful. They only make money when someone clicks your ad. If no one clicks, they get zip, nada, nothing and that is not good for your business or theirs.

Something you do have to decide is whether you want to run your own campaign or if you want to hire someone to do it for you.

Managing a campaign can be time consuming. Google provides you with all sorts of data to analyze so you can tweak your ads and budgets to be successful. But it can be daunting. If you don't have that type of manpower or time, it might just be simpler to hire a company that will do that for you. Either way, it is the future of advertising, at least for the time being.

Writer's Note: This article explores the recent changes to Google AdWords. It has nothing to do with **AT&T AdWorks.** The names are very similar and it is easy to confuse the two programs.

Sharon Koehler is a 10-year veteran of the stone industry and currently head of marketing for ArtisticStone Design in Richmond, Virginia. She has been a regular contributor to various trade magazines for several years. Please send your thoughts on this article to sharon@artisticstonerichmond.com.

"I don't count the sit-ups. I only start counting when it starts hurting because they're the only ones that count. That's what makes you a champion."

— Muhammad Ali (1942 – 2016)

The Stone Detective

"Who is Paying the Power Bill?"

Continued from page 4

I thought about taking the Harley but it was too humid. Still, it was a nice drive, not much traffic.

I arrived at Jose's office, which was across the street from the condo complex. I tried to open the door but it was locked. I was a few minutes early so I figured I would wait a bit and see if he showed up.

When my set time had passed, I told myself I'd wait another 10 minutes and then I would call him. Just I was about to dial the phone number Jose gave me, I noticed a door bell next to the door. Duh. So, I pressed it, and within seconds someone (Jose?) came to the door. Boy, I wish I would have seen it sooner, now that I was dripping sweat from the humidity.

Well, it was Jose, and he took me back to his office and explained what we were about to see. More importantly, he explained that the owner is very wealthy and believes the problem is the installer's fault. I told him, "Let's take a look and see what I can discover."

We walked across the street, entered the building and headed toward the elevators. The condo was on the top floor. We walked into the condo, and the first thing I noticed was that the large format marble tiles on the floor were turning yellow and brown. Not all of them, but I would estimate about 80 percent of them. I looked over the entire condo, and I knew right away what the problem was. The stone was oxidizing! This is typical with white marble exposed to moisture.

But this was over 20 floors up, and wasn't on a ground floor where moisture could get in. I was pretty sure it had not been exposed to any flooding. So why was stone oxidizing — in other words, why was it rusting?

The answer was simple. The minute I walked in the condo, I noticed that the air conditioning was off. I walked over to the thermostat and the temperature was 84 degrees Fahrenheit. Luckily, the thermostat also had a humidity reading — and it was 64 percent That, my folks, is humid.

I took out my cell phone, called up a weather app, and looked up the humidity in Palm Beach. It was also 64 percent. I asked how long the air conditioning was off, and Jose told me that the owner did not want to pay the A/C bill, so he had it turned off… for over three months, so far! I looked at Jose and said, "That's the problem. The high humidity is causing the iron in the marble to oxidize."

Unfortunately, the staining was too widespread to attempt to remove it. I recommended it all be replaced, but this time turn the darn air on and have the owner pay the power bill. It would be cheaper than replacing the marble, again.

Another case solved. Too bad I didn't bring my bathing suit, I could have gone to the beach while I was there!

Fred Hueston is world-renowned expert on stone and tile installation, fabrication and restoration issues. He serves as an expert witness and owner's rep for projects across the world. He also trains others on these topics. His many cases can be seen on his website at www.stoneforensics.com.

For more details on his training seminars, see the training section at www.stoneforensics.com *for the Stone Inspection and Troubleshooting correspondence course, or call 321-514-6845.*

Dr. Fred's next live class in Las Vegas is January 16-19, 2017.

4 Reasons Why Fabricators Say...

"Viper Wet Polishing Pads Can't be Beat!"

Familiar Quote

At Braxton-Bragg, we hear this question about Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet Polishing Pads from fabricators all the time:

Are Diamond Pads Really Different?

Year after year, Viper® is the industry choice. Is this just dumb luck or is there a reason?

4 Things to Look for in a Pad

1. Consistency is the primary reason why the Viper® Polishing Pad is so popular, but how is this maintained? It turns out that Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet Polishing Pads are manufactured under precise computer controlled conditions from start to finish. Nobody is just sprinkling diamond powder at their own discretion. Computer controlled processes produce absolute consistency, reliability and dependability. Viper® has it, many others do not.

2. Quality is another key to Viper® being the preferred polishing pad. Diamonds with multiple cutting surfaces are the main reason Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet Polishing Pads perform at a high level from start to finish. Other pads start out working well but quit on you before the job is done, and yet appear to still have life remaining.

3. Bond of a polishing pad is as critical as the diamonds used. The Viper® Polishing Pad's bond achieves a balance of flexibility and strength. Our unique resin bond holds diamonds in place until their useful life is exhausted, providing great pad life. The bond also has good flexibility keeping the pad in constant contact with the work surface, even when polishing inside or outside radiuses.

4. Price of Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet Polishing Pads is the final piece to the puzzle. Combine our unbeatable price with consistency, quality and superior bond, and its no wonder fabricators say, "Viper Granite Wet Polishing Pads can't be beat!"

you Bet!

Viper®

GREAT LOW PRICE!

- ✓ High-quality diamonds (3x more than the competition)
- ✓ Computer controlled production for consistency, pad after pad
- ✓ Can be used at 1,500-5,000 RPM
- ✓ With the use of a buff pad, reach 102 reading on a gloss meter

Wow!

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
	Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet 4″ Polishing Pads Hook & Loop-Backed		
1730	Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet, 4″, 50 Grit, Lime Green	~~$22.95~~	$14.95
1732	Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet, 4″, 100 Grit, Red	~~$22.95~~	$14.95
1734	Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet, 4″, 200 Grit, Yellow	~~$22.95~~	$14.95
1736	Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet, 4″, 400 Grit, Light Blue	~~$22.95~~	$14.95
1738	Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet, 4″, 800 Grit, Green	~~$22.95~~	$14.95
1740	Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet, 4″, 1,500 Grit, Orange	~~$22.95~~	$14.95
1742	Viper® 7-Step Granite Wet, 4″, 3,000 Grit, Pink	~~$22.95~~	$14.95
55070	Viper® Granite Wet Polishing Pad, 4", Buff Light and Dark Stone	~~$59.95~~	$35.95

Also available in 3" and 5"

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"The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter."

–*Winston Churchill*

Rude Awakenings

7-year-old boy wakes up dad, pair escapes house fire

Authorities in Orange County, California say a 7-year-old boy didn't hesitate when he smelled smoke at his home, waking up his sleeping father so the pair could escape a spreading fire.

According to *The Orange County Register*, the boy was getting ready for bed one Saturday night when he smelled smoke and saw that the garage of his Costa Mesa home was engulfed in flames.

Fire Capt. Chris Coates says the boy ran to wake his father, who had fallen asleep watching television. The two ran out of the house as the fire spread from the garage to a motorhome in the driveway and then to a neighbor's storage shed.

Firefighters stopped the flames before they spread to the main living area of the house. The cause is under investigation.

Couple credits their cat with alerting them to fire in Vegas-area home

A Las Vegas-area couple is crediting their alert and persistent cat with alerting them to a fire in their home.

KTNV-TV in Las Vegas reports that a fire broke out at a home in the Summerlin community around 2 a.m. one Sunday.

The husband and wife told fire officials they were asleep when they got woken up by the cat noisily scratching kitchen cabinets.

The husband says he went to check on the cat and found a fire in the garage.

They immediately called 911 and evacuated the home, along with a nephew they were babysitting and the cat.

Firefighters say no injuries were reported.

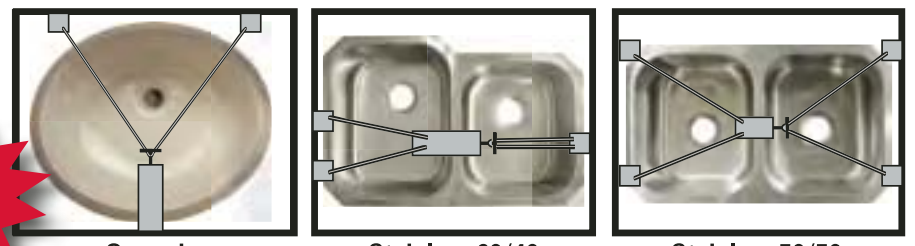
The damage to the home was confined to the garage.

The cause of the fire has not yet been determined.

You've Got To See This Video!

Patent Pending

Clips and Draw Bolt Assembly Locations



Why Pay More to Install a Sink?

Why pay more than $5 for a sink install kit, when you could use the Hercules® Universal Sink Harness and complete your install project in minutes, with no return trip needed?

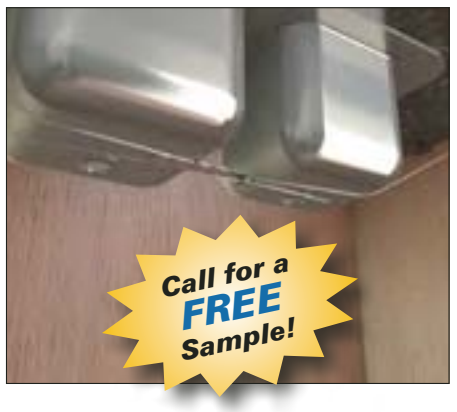
The Hercules® Universal Sink Harness from Braxton-Bragg is another great innovation that can save installers time and money.

At Last, a Simple, Fast Alternative

The Hercules® Universal Sink Harness is a simple, ingenious alternative to expensive brackets that only work on some installations, and a time-saving, more professional alternative to building a scrap wood support system to hold the sink in place while the caulk or adhesive dries. It installs without drilling into expensive countertops or cutting notches into your customer's cabinets, and without using messy epoxies or relying on adhesives to secure sinks. One of the most immediately recognizable benefits is that you won't have to make a return trip to remove bracing or jury-rigged 2 x 4 supports.

Fabricator Tested in Thousands of Installs

The Hercules® Universal Sink Harness has been fabricator- and installation-tested under demanding conditions, and can be used to install the most popular types of sinks, including ceramic, stainless steel, and even cast iron undermount. It is effective on either double bowl or single bowl steel or ceramic vanity sinks. Just imagine–one simple, inexpensive kit can do all of those sinks! Not only is the Hercules® Universal Sink Harness the fastest and most economical system available, it's also the most versatile.



See the animated video!
http://www.braxton-bragg.com/HerculesSinkHarness

Be the Go-To Guy to Repair Failed Installs

While the Sink Harness was being developed and tested, we discovered another notable benefit of the Sink Harness: it's a great system to repair failed undermount installations. Many fabricators are asked to repair someone else's poor sink installation job. The Hercules® Universal Sink Harness will get the job done quickly. You can become known as the guy who contractors and home owners in your area call for help.

Supports the Heaviest Sink Loads

Some clips and anchor systems rely on the countertop to support the sink–not so with the Hercules® Universal Sink Harness. Just like a suspension bridge, the Hercules® Universal Sink Harness helps to provide support and over-all strength to a countertop installation. It actually transfers all weight to the cabinet and doesn't add additional stress to the weakest and most easily damaged part of the countertop: the sink cut out. It does its primary function admirably well, support the sink under the heaviest of loads.

You Can Even Try One for FREE!

Braxton-Bragg wants to prove it to everyone who's faced sink-installation problem, or just wants to save money and keep their shop profitable. Call Braxton-Bragg and we'll send you a Hercules® Universal Sink Harness FREE to try! Visit www.braxton-bragg.com for the complete Universal Sink Harness video.

MADE IN THE USA

HERCULES®

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
17310	Hercules® Universal Sink Harness Kit	~~$9.95~~	$4.95

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Who's That Knocking at My Door?

A Florida family thought someone was trying to break into their apartment when they heard knocking sounds at four in the morning.

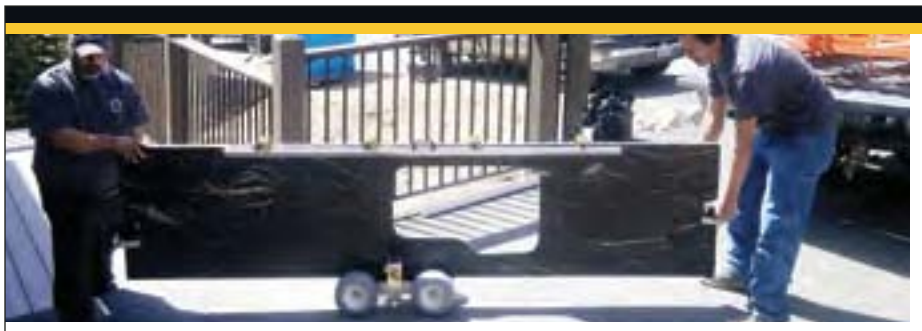
It turns out a 5-foot alligator was outside their front door early one Friday morning. And so were Tampa police officers.

Police and Florida Fish and Wildlife officers caught the gator and returned it to the wild.

It was the second such alligator-knocking incident in the South in recent weeks.

Preceding this episode, a gator wandered into a neighborhood near Charleston, South Carolina, and appeared to reach for the doorbell at one home. The incident was caught on video by Gary Rogers, whose daughter Danielle Barkley lives nearby.

Barkley says alligators have visited the neighborhood before, but it was the first time one seemed polite enough to use the doorbell!



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Save your back—roll when you can!

The **Pro-Dolly™ HD1** & **Pro-Dolly™ HD2** make transport and installation of heavy countertops faster, easier and safer. An integrated clamp holds the dolly securely on the stone, all the way to the final placement.

A low profile allows more clearance for tall pieces to fit through tight doorways, and creates a low center of gravity, making Omni Cubed's dollies extremely stable and easy to maneuver. The aluminum box frame construction makes these dollies lightweight, yet strong enough to accommodate heavy loads.

Every **Pro-Dolly™** features rubber-lined support rails to prevent damage, and non-marking, flat-free tires for excellent shock absorption. The tires have durable, powder coated, steel wheels and maintenance-free double sealed bearings.

Use Pro-Dollies in pairs for double the weight capacity.

The heavy duty **Pro-Dolly™ HD1**:
- 750 lb capacity; weighs only 21 lb
- 8" non-marking, flat-free, shock absorbing tires
- Wide clamp opening: 2.88" (73 mm)

The super duty **Pro-Dolly™ HD2**:
- 1,000 lb capacity; weighs only 35 lb
- 10" non-marking, flat-free, shock absorbing tires
- Extra-wide clamp opening: 5.13" (130 mm)

10% OFF TRANSPORT CARTS

Now through August 31st, 2016

Sale includes: **Pro-Lift Automatic**, **Pro-Dolly™ HD1**, **Pro-Dolly™ HD2**, **Pro-Cart AT1**, **Pro-Cart AT2**, **Tool Tray**, AT1 **Folding Kit** and AT1 **Multi-Top Accessory**.
**Excludes replacement parts.*

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Helping You Deliver Quality... Not Just Countertops.

Sasso Flying Flat

Engineered for Speed – Built to Last

The Sasso Flying Flat is a backsplash polishing machine capable of polishing countertops up to 36 inches tall. Sasso recommends the **Viper® 6-Step Inline Polishing system** to achieve a fast, professional polish.

- Two models available: five or six polishing heads, two or four bevelers
- Micro oscillation
- Calibrating/Drip edge spindle
- Corrosion resistant galvanized frame
- Easy to set-up, operate and maintain

Since 1974 Sasso has built world-class machinery for the stone industry.

Elegant Design
Sasso machines not only perform, they'll look great in your shop. We take pride in our products, and it shows in every machine we make.

Fast and Productive
Our innovative designs not only look great and last a very long time, Sasso builds machines that get the job done *fast*.

Corrosion Resistant
Every machine we build uses corrosion-resistant component. By using hot galvanized frames, fiberglass, stainless steel and aluminum, we your machine will be running long after its paid for. How many saw manufacturers can say the same thing?

Accuracy and Quality
Our engineering team works hard to use high-quality components to ensure your are the right size with the perfect finish. Every time.

USA-Based Tech Support
We understand that occasionally you may need tech support or have a simple question answered. When you call we'll be there to assist.

USA-Based Spare Parts
We stock spare parts in North Carolina. When you need a part, we can usually get it to you within 24 hours.

Now Recommending Viper
The Viper 6-Step Inline System from Braxton-Bragg is a perfect complement to the speed of the Flying Flat. Unlike other inline systems that require a slow speed, you can run it fast to achieve the ultimate, professional shine.

Viper®

6-Step Inline Multi-Edge Polishing System

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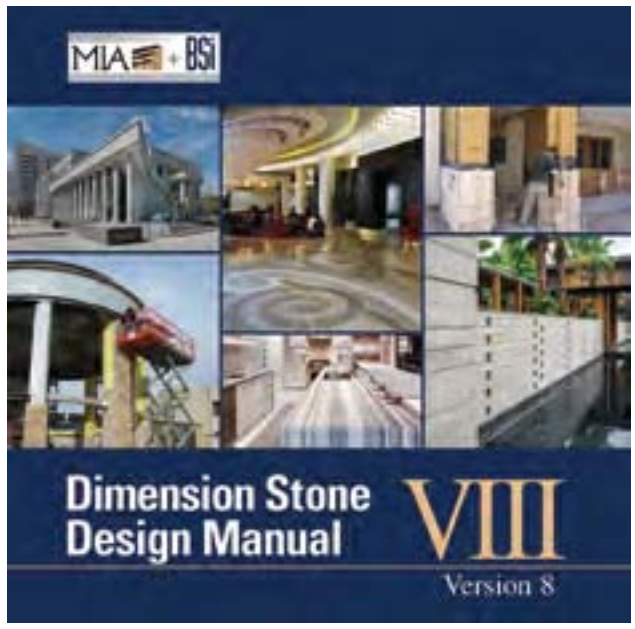
MIA+BSI Releases Dimension Stone Design Manual, Version 8.0



MIA+BSI: The Natural Stone Institute has released the Dimension Stone Design Manual, Version 8.0, the stone industry's single-source reference for dimension stone design and construction facts and details.

Major revisions and additions to version 8.0 include the following:

A New Restoration and Maintenance chapter, totaling 122 pages, covers equipment, repairs, sealers, restorative processes, and working with commercial and historic buildings. Additionally, a 16-page Troubleshooting Chart contains over 128 photos illustrating common problems and solutions.

A New Tolerances chapter incorporates the September 2014 technical bulletin "Tolerances in the Dimension Stone Industry," and all tolerances references from previous DSDM editions. This new chapter is formatted as an easy-to-read chart divided into three sectors: stone fabrication, installation, and substrate condition tolerances.

A Revised Wet Areas chapter incorporates the 2013 Wet Areas Technical Module and 19 additional pages of large-scale detail drawings. The revised chapter includes residential and commercial application details, conformance to current water vapor permeance standards, and endorsement of current ASTM, ANSI, and TCNA methods and standards.

MIA+BSI Technical Director Chuck Muehlbauer, stated: "The Cleaning, Maintenance, and Restoration chapters of the Dimension Stone Design Manual were the only two chapters that had not received significant revision in the past 10 years. This fact, coupled with the realization that the restoration sector of the industry is currently the fastest growing sector of MIA+BSI membership, made this project an essential improvement to our manual."

Keith Graves (Arc Granite & Marble), who was instrumental in completing the new Restoration and Maintenance chapter, commented: "I really think that this document will be an asset to the industry, and it is my hope to have it serve as a standard to preserve the integrity of the industry."

Please turn to page 13

"I know, I'm bored, too. Just two more innings though, and then we can go do something fun."

MIA+BSI

Continued from page 12

Following the publication of version 8.0, MIA+BSI is working on the first-ever translations of the manual. Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin translations are now underway as a means to enhance the applicability of the association's technical resources. The launch of the association's online Natural Stone Resource Library in 2015 now affords architects and designers easy access to this information. To date, nearly 12,000 downloads have occurred, with the highest percentages being information from the Dimension Stone Design Manual.

The Dimension Stone Design Manual, Version 8.0, can be purchased in the association bookstore. It is also available for download in the Members Only section of the website and the Natural Stone Resource Library. For more information, please visit www.naturalstoneinstitute.org.

MIA+BSI: the Natural Stone Institute serves more than 1,900 members in 55 countries who represent every aspect of the natural stone industry, offering them a wide array of technical and training resources, professional development, regulatory advocacy, and networking events. Two prominent publications—the Dimension Stone Design Manual and Building Stone Magazine—raise awareness in both the industry and the design communities for the promotion and best use of natural stone. Learn more at www.naturalstoneinstitute.org.

I recently purchased several **15-inch I-Braces** to support the granite overhang on my kitchen island. They worked absolutely perfect! I weigh 250lbs and was able to hang from them to demonstrate how strong they are (although I don't recommend any one doing that). For $15.00 each, they were a steal.

Corbels are a thing of the past!

– Thanks!

Stephen Waldeck

Three I-Braces were used to support this 30″ × 96″ island install.

WARNING: The Original I-Brace is ONLY Available from Braxton-Bragg

The other suppliers are selling knock-offs!

IT was bound to happen. Success breeds knock-offs! Hard work and creative thought is needed to create a product—not so much to make a look-alike copy.

But—as we know, not all copies are as good as the original!

The Original I-Brace has been real-world tested in thousands of kitchens. The design was analyzed, refined, computer modeled, and tested by highly trained university engineers. It is made in America with American steel by a billion dollar company. The Original I-Brace is protected with a three step anti-corrosion enameling process to prevent rust and possible staining of the granite. There are no sharp edges to catch on clothing or harm toddlers.

The Original I-Brace is **exclusively available** at Braxton-Bragg.

By the way, don't assume that a knock-off is cheaper! At Braxton-Bragg you always get the best for less!

Don't risk your reputation on a copy! Get the Original I-Brace at Braxton-Bragg today. Gain peace of mind and the satisfaction of knowing that you won't have a call back.

You'll be glad you did.

–The Original– I-BRACE

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
12458	The Original I-Brace Countertop Support, 13″x 2-1/2″, 3/16″ Thick	~~$16.95~~	$10.99
12460	The Original I-Brace XL Countertop Support, 20″ x 2-1/2″, 3/16″ Thick	~~$22.95~~	$14.99
12464	The Original Upper Brace Upper Bar Support, 10″ x 2-1/2″, 1/4″ Thick	~~$17.95~~	$11.99
12465	The Original Upper Brace Upper Bar Support, 15″ x 2-1/2″, 1/4″ Thick	~~$22.95~~	$14.99
12461	The Original L-Brace Upper Bar Support, 10″ x 2-1/2″, 1/4″ Thick	~~$23.95~~	$15.99
12462	The Original L-Brace Upper Bar Support, 15″ x 2-1/2″, 1/4″ Thick	~~$29.95~~	$19.99

Typical breakfast bar islands use 2–4 braces per side. Centers should be spaced every 18-24″.

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Detroit-Area Cop Rescues & Delivers Pizza

A suburban Detroit police officer stepped in after a pizza delivery driver was injured in a car crash to make sure a still-warm order made it to its destination.

Lincoln Park police Cpl. Joe Sparks tells *The Detroit News* that the collision sent the Jet's Pizza driver to a hospital with bruises and a sore head. Sparks spotted an oven bag in the wrecked car before it was towed and realized the delivery address was nearby.

The 16-year veteran of the force says he "just figured it was the right thing to do" knowing that "someone on the other end was waiting for their food."

Carl Babik, who got the pizza, tells WDIV-TV he initially thought that he had done something wrong when Sparks showed up with the order. It was not reported whether the office received a thanks his good deed.

"The secret of life is honesty and fair dealing. If you can fake that, you've got it made."

– Groucho Marx

NSM Florida Awarded Sunshine State Safety Recognition Award

NSM Florida Enterprises (dba NSMotif) has been awarded the Sunshine State Safety Recognition Award, after another successful completion of their annual voluntary OSHA inspection, done as part of the company's commitment to safety, setting higher standards, continuing to participate in the occupational safety and health of their workplace.

Karen Rothenberg, Omar Gonzalez, and Stephen Fiumara of NSM Florida Enterprises with their award banner.

Only 40 small businesses throughout Florida earn this honor annually. It was developed to motivate and support employers who proactively work with their employees and demonstrate a commitment to continuously improve the effectiveness of their company's workplace safety and health management system.

As a family owned business, Karen Rothenberg, and Stephen Fiumara, vice president celebrated the success of this "necessary approach to guaranteeing our employees and customers receive the highest level of safety. We've grown tremendously over the past few years and have always made safety our number one priority," said Rothenberg. The company boasts a coveted Accreditation from the Marble Institute of America (MIA+BSI), as a Natural Stone Fabricator, and the only Minority certified recipient in the state of Florida. Rothenberg stated "making sure we're doing our part to keep our employees and customers safe, as well as being environmentally conscious, boosts our shop production with empowerment, success, and minimal risks. We're all in this together, constantly reviewing ways to improve our operations and to improve industry practices. We like to meet often, exceed, and define standards set in the stone industry. And none of it would be possible without the unwavering passion and commitment of our management team, office staff, fabrication and installation teams."

Karen Rothenberg, known as a game changer within the stone industry, is the only female member of the Rockheads Group and is a vocal member of the Women in Stone, powered by the MIA+BSI (The Natural Stone Institute), as well as a participant in the group's mentoring program as a mentor. She was also recognized as an MIA Certified speaker this year, and has represented the MIA+BSI worldwide in various conferences and events over the past few years.

Karen explained, "Education in the stone industry is very vast and always evolving. To be able to represent the MIA+BSI and educate others in the stone industry is a privilege." After starting the company in 2008, Karen Rothenberg has been on a mission to become Central Florida's Top Choice for "All Surface Countertops" within residential and commercial industries, and her company's resume proves she's on target.

The company, NSMotif, moved to Sanford from Altamonte Springs last fall, and now has a fabrication facility that more than triples its previous location in size, offers additional office space for an expanding team, and will soon utilize robotic equipment for state of the art fabrication.

After 10 years in business, NSMotif has grown to become Central Florida's top choice for "All Surface Countertops" and more. Working with some of the largest commercial names in Florida, including builders, theme parks, attractions, and big box stores, NSMotif continues to grow with its extensive offerings of All Surface countertop materials. Accredited by the MIA+BSI in 2015 and the recipient of multiple awards, memberships, and nominations, NSMotif sets and exceeds standards that define the natural stone industry.

For more information on NSM Florida Enterprises, visit their website www.nsmotif.com.

Why pay $66.25 for Ager at GranQuartz?

Save $20 at Braxton-Bragg!

Stone Shield™ Enhancer & Sealer

Now Match the Edge to the Surface of Resined Stone.

Stone Shield Enhancer & Sealer brings out a deep, rich color in stone. Use it to get that wet-effect look for indoor and outdoor applications. **Apply it on polished, flamed, rough or sanded surfaces.** Works well to disguise small scratches on surfaces. It seals surfaces against oil and water.

- Enhances the natural look of granite, marble and travertines
- UV stable - Does not change color when exposed to the sun
- Offers a wet look indoors and outdoors
- Works as a stone color enhancer and a high quality sealer

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
46407	Stone Shield™ Color Enhancer & Sealer, 1 Quart	~~$61.95~~	$49.95

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Visit www.slipperyrockgazette.net for more Stone & Tile industry news

The Need for Truth in Advertising

Sam Venable
Department of Irony

IT is time to add a new, official oxymoron to the English language.

Right in there amongst such classics as "jumbo shrimp," "perfectly awful," "first annual," "even odds," and "long shorts," this glaring opposite begs to be included:

"Seedless watermelon."

Those two words constitute a lie on par with "Yes, I'll respect you in the morning," and "Don't worry; your check is in the mail."

Even the perpetrators of this "seedless" folly don't believe their own hoax. Just check the label slapped onto the skin of any of these green orbs. It says, "May contain occasional seeds."

"Occasional?" Ha.

That's like warning someone who is wearing short pants—short-shorts, knee-length, or otherwise—that crossing four acres of waist-deep grass in the middle of July may result in an "occasional" chigger bite.

"Seedless" watermelons most certainly are not seedless. Not even remotely. I haven't compared them side by side, but my guess is that "seedless" melons and their "seeded" cousins contain the same number of pits. The only difference is that "seeded" seeds are mostly black and stout, while "seedless" seeds are mostly white and flimsy.

The black "seeded" seeds are easy to see and simple to remove because they tend to separate from the melon's flesh. Those pantywaist white "seedless" seeds stay hidden. Removing them is like trying to pick beggar lice off of wool pants while wearing thick gloves.

By now you should have come to the realization that

I'm not a fan of "seedless" watermelons. Indeed, they are an abomination.

Mary Constantine, food editor for the Knoxville *News Sentinel*, says some people claim "seeded" melons are sweeter, a taste imparted by the seeds themselves—sort of how a pork chop or chicken thigh on the bone tastes better than one with the bone removed.

Perhaps this is true. Yet it's been my experience that sweetness, or lack thereof, has more to do with the variety of melon and conditions under which it was grown. In any event, I wish Congress would outlaw these ridiculous "seedless" monstrosities until they have been perfected.

If, somewhere down the pike, a truly seedless watermelon—attention food industry, this means no discernible seeds whatsoever—is developed, fine. If it can be further refined into one giant "heart" of firm red flesh—none of that soft, fuzzy, mid-level stuff—even better. But until then, keep these things where they belong: in the laboratory and off the market.

Admittedly, I am somewhat of a watermelon snob. Or slop, as the case may be. I prefer to clean an entire melon at the sink—seeds and rind removed and remanded to the compost pile and succulent chunks of red flesh placed in a plastic bin for the refrigerator.

Yes, this results in a bit of watermelon waste; my knife work does grow sloppier as the job progresses. But the result is a mound of pure, unadulterated, heavenly eating. With no seeds. As in none, zero, zilch, ixnay.

Not even an "occasional" one.

Sam Venable is an author, stand-up comedian, and humor columnist for the Knoxville (TN) News Sentinel. He may be reached at sam.venable@outlook.com.

"Somehow I can't believe that there are any heights that can't be scaled by a man who knows the secrets of making dreams come true. This special secret, it seems to me, can be summarized in four C's. They are ***curiosity, confidence, courage,*** *and* ***constancy***, and the greatest of all is confidence. When you believe in a thing, believe in it all the way, implicitly and unquestionably."

– Walt Disney

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Robots Are About People for BACA Systems

Shannon Carey

Chuck Russo, president and CEO of BACA Systems in Detroit, is quick to say that fears about robots replacing humans in manufacturing jobs are unfounded. In fact, robots create jobs, he says.

"The companies that install robotic systems as part of their manufacturing process are growing and consequently hire more people," he said.

And he should know. Russo started in the family robotics business just out of college in the 1980s Robotic Production Technology (RPT), created one of the first production robotic water jet systems for the automotive industry. Even then, Russo knew the worth of the human touch when it came to robotics technology. The people who invented and refined the technology, the people who purchased and used the technology, those were his focus.

Russo went on to leave the company in 2007 when he saw a similar opportunity for robotics in the stone fabrication market. But there was a problem.

"I had a lot to learn about the stone industry," he said.

Learning on the Job

Russo is a hands-on guy, choosing to be on the factory floor. He knew that to create the best machinery for the stone industry, he would have to become a stone fabricator. During the downturn, he bought the assets of an all-digital stone fabrication shop and in 2008, Surface enCounters was born.

As Russo built Surface enCounters, it allowed him to learn about the challenges that stone fabricators face in manufacturing their products, He began to develop the tools for a robotic solution. In 2014, BACA systems was launched and became the exclusive systems integrator for KUKA Robotics for the U.S. stone industry.

BACA creates the robotic technology, and Surface enCounters serves as the testing ground for that technology. Surface enCounters has grown to be a retail business that produces 1,000 square feet per day, using traditional CNCs alongside the BACA robotic equipment to benchmark the technology in real time. Russo knew that having the model where his fabrication company used the equipment would be "a great launching pad" for the BACA Robo SawJet. "It's allowed us to be very successful today," he said.

Customer Culture

At BACA, that culture is completely focused on the customer.

"When we sell a Robo SawJet, it's a relationship, not just a transaction," said Russo. "If we listen to our customers every day and empower our people to deliver those things, we'll have great success."

"We are a very small company and after the purchase of the Robo SawJet we have significantly noticed a difference with our production. We waste far less material with every job that is cut and are allowed the extra space for countertops."
– Andres Banuelos, A&R Countertops

At BACA, customers get to visit the factory floor and see the equipment in action, often speaking with Russo himself.

"The customer understands the whole process," said Russo. "The best place to get valuable feedback from our customers is to be right there on the factory floor."

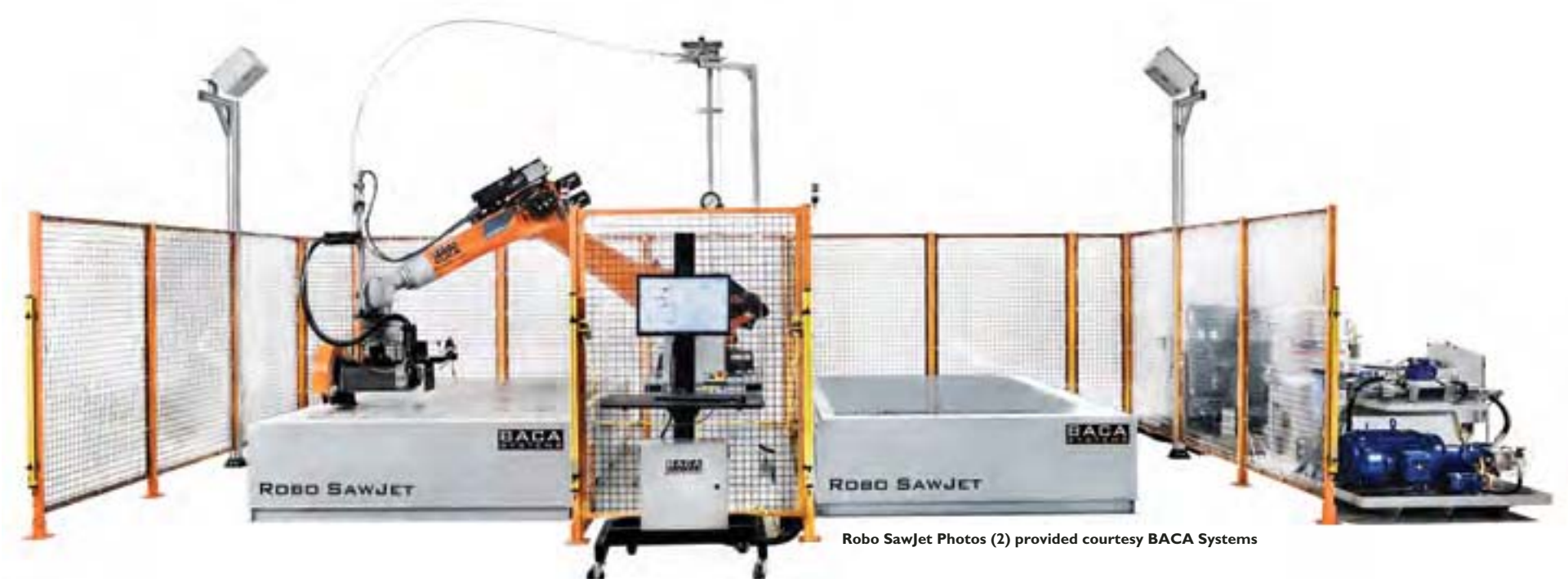
It's that listening ear that has led to many improvements in the hardware and software of the Robo SawJet. Rolling out this year are two enhanced features. Russo said Smart Touch will stop the Robo SawJet if the waterjet mixing tube makes contact with the stone, saving money and potential downtime, and is accomplished without adding any sensors. BACA Saw Wear automatically calibrates the blade to account for normal wear and tear, a task that used to be done manually.

"We're always about making the system easier to operate," he said.

Growing Business, Saving Jobs

Back to the "robots replace humans" myth. Recently, Surface enCounters merged with Cutting Edge Countertops of Ohio, balancing the business across a variety of markets, including consumer retail, commercial and more.

Please turn to Page 20



Robo SawJet Photos (2) provided courtesy BACA Systems

It's Better When Sharing

A minimum-security prisoner who escaped from a halfway house in Alaska came back three hours later, but it wasn't to turn himself in.

State Troopers say 20-year-old Joshua Yaska returned with an SUV and tried to help other inmates flee the facility in Fairbanks.

Staff members say Yaska was spotted leaving on a bike just after 1 a.m. one Sunday. Troopers say he returned at 4:20 a.m. and tried to "aid in the escape of other inmates."

Authorities say he tried to strike a halfway house employee with the vehicle. Troopers say they caught up with him that night after he broke into a relative's home.

Online court records show Yaska has past misdemeanor convictions for misconduct, assault and violating the conditions of his release.

He has been represented by the Alaska Public Defender Agency, which didn't return a phone message inquiring about the defendant's motives.

Killer Crocs in Florida?

Step aside, Burmese python — you may no longer be Florida's scariest invasive species. Researchers have confirmed that three Nile crocodiles were captured near Miami, and they say it's possible more of the man-eating reptiles are still out there, although no one can say for sure.

The big question, now: How did they get to Florida?

"They didn't swim from Africa," University of Florida herpetologist Kenneth Krysko said. "But we really don't know how they got into the wild."

Krysko and his co-authors just published a paper showing that DNA testing proved the three animals captured in 2009, 2011 and 2014 are Nile crocs, a species whose males grow to over 16 feet long and weigh upward of 1,600 pounds. Nile crocs are believed to be responsible for up to 200 fatalities annually in their native sub-Saharan Africa. Compare that with an annual average of six reported shark attack deaths globally.

Krysko, who works at UF's Florida Museum of Natural History, said the captured crocodiles matched genetically, meaning they are related to one another, but didn't match Nile crocs kept at Disney's Animal Kingdom and other licensed Florida attractions. That means the crocs probably were brought to Florida illegally by an unlicensed reptile collector who either didn't contain them properly, allowing them to escape, or, more sinisterly, planted them in the Everglades in hopes they would multiply.

Please turn to Page 19

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58002	6-Step In-Line Polishing System, Step 3	~~$115.95~~	$69.95
58003	6-Step In-Line Polishing System, Step 4	~~$115.95~~	$69.95
58004	6-Step In-Line Polishing System, Step 5	~~$115.95~~	$69.95
58005	6-Step In-Line Polishing System, Step 6	~~$123.95~~	$74.95
	Viper® 6-Step In-Line Polishing System 6″		
58006	6-Step In-Line Polishing System, Step 1	~~$132.95~~	$79.95
58007	6-Step In-Line Polishing System, Step 2	~~$132.95~~	$79.95
58008	6-Step In-Line Polishing System, Step 3	~~$132.95~~	$79.95
58009	6-Step In-Line Polishing System, Step 4	~~$132.95~~	$79.95
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Artisan Group 5th Annual Meeting Includes Workshop "Creating Competitive Advantage"

The fifth Annual Artisan Group Meeting & Industry showcase was again held at Architectural Granite & Marble's headquarters in Austin, Texas. The show featured some of the top exhibitors of the industry, including Park Industries and Kohler.

The group meeting included a workshop by Jaynie L. Smith, author of "Creating Competitive Advantage." Following the meeting and industry showcase, Artisan Group members and exhibitors were treated to an acoustical performance by local band Warren Hood.

"We always have a great time getting together to celebrate our successes of the past year,and our plans for the next year," says Chad Seiders, Artisan Group Executive Director. "However, this year was even more cause for celebration because we have added two new member companies (Premier Countertops in Tupelo, Mississippi, and Adobe Walls Stoneworks in Amarillo, Texas), in our quest to have an Artisan Group member in each metro area."

Artisan Group™ is a network of stone fabricators in North America. Its extensive network allows the organization to offer the best granite from sources around the globe. Utilizing the most technically advanced, automated shops in the industry, highly skilled craftsmen ensure that each installation meets exacting standards. From classic to exotic, Artisan Group offers the most extensive array of stone choices in the industry, and is dedicated to customer service.

For more information, visit www.artisan-counters.com or facebook.com/ArtisangroupCountertops.

The 5th Annual Artisan Group™ Meeting was hosted by group member Architectural Marble and Granite at their Austin, Texas headquarters.

Killer Crocs in Florida?

Continued from page 17

The Nile croc, if it became established in the Everglades, would pose another invasive threat to the area's teetering ecosystem. Through crossbreeding, they could endanger the smaller, less aggressive American crocodiles, which have never been responsible for a confirmed human death in the U.S. About 1,000 American crocodiles live in South Florida, mostly in mangroves and estuaries. Any hybrids would degrade the genetic integrity of the endangered American variety.

Nile crocs also are known to attack livestock, which would be bad news for cattle farms that border the Everglades.

Krysko and two co-authors, independent wildlife biologist Joe Wasilewski and UF wildlife ecology professor Frank Mazzotti, think more Nile crocs lurk undetected in the Everglades, but they aren't certain.

Allyson Gantt, a spokeswoman for Everglades National Park, where one of the reptiles was found, disagrees, saying no Nile crocs still roam the park.

Some Everglades visitors might not be aware of the differences between crocodiles and alligators, complicating efforts to confirm any remaining crocs. Crocodiles have angular snouts, and their lower teeth are exposed when their mouths are closed. Alligator snouts are rounded, with few exposed lower teeth. Nile crocs are usually bronze or brownish yellow; alligators are blackish green.

Wasilewsi said people are likely to notice the difference, or at least take photos that researchers can check later. And no, crocs and alligators can't interbreed.

Florida already has more non-native amphibians and reptiles than any region worldwide, including Burmese pythons, a menace that quickly reproduced into the thousands and is decimating the Everglades' small mammal population.

Giant toads, iguanas and another species of crocodilian, the spectacled caiman, also live in the state. But that species grows to only about 80 pounds and feeds on fish, crustaceans and the occasional small mammals.

All three Nile crocodiles were captured in extreme South Florida.

— The first, a hatchling, was found on a front porch and sent to a Louisiana reptile exhibit.

— The second, a female measuring 4 feet, was captured at a park. Wasilewski kept it, but later gave it to another licensed researcher.

— The third was captured twice. The first trapper didn't have the proper permit, so he released the female. The croc was recaptured two years later 18 miles away by water in Everglades National Park. It was euthanized.

Please turn to Page 35

"This four-step system is the best solution I have come across for polishing engineered stones. There is no color transfer from the pads. The process is quick and they work equally as well on our natural stones."

–Phil Kuczma, Shop Manager, Italian Marble and Granite Inc., Clarence Center, N.Y.

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18280	Talon™ 4-Step Quartz Wet Polishing Pad, 4″, Step 3, Orange	~~$38.95~~	$25.95
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"Life will always throw you curves, just keep fouling them off... the right pitch will come, but when it does, be prepared to run the bases."
— *Rick Maksian*

Robots Are About People for BACA Systems

Continued from page 16

The merger brought three additional partners into the operations of the business, resulting in more resources to focus on the day-to-day running of the fabricating business and allowing Russo to focus more time and energy on BACA Systems, and help other fabricators increase their profitability.

Russo said that the combined organization of Surface enCounters and Cutting Edge Countertops employs more than 140 people today, and it is a very automated company. Of course, employees need to learn new skills to operate the Robo SawJet correctly, but Russo said he can't recall a single customer who has laid off existing workforce due to buying a Robo SawJet.

"They typically develop from within. They still need someone with stone knowledge," he said. "We're typically training existing employees to use the machine."

The software is PC-based, but doesn't require any CAD knowledge for the operator, so it is easier to learn. Even better, a shop can cross-train three or four people on each machine.

And, the Robo SawJet can keep employees out of harm's way.

"Doing things manually is not the safest. Business owners are concerned for the safety of their workers and reducing the chance of damage to the materials that are being fabricated. Being able to hire the operators to manually do the manufacturing is challenging, but automated processes allow the people to be in a different environment."

"I'm glad to see that the bar is being raised in the stone fabrication industry when it comes to really understanding the needs of the fabricators and I am confident that BACA will play a major role in helping to evolve this industry."
-Eric Tyron, Premier Surfaces

Implementing a Robo SawJet system can add profit to a company's bottom line by helping to reduce the two biggest fabricating costs, material and labor, helping the company grow and hire more employees. "This piece of equipment allows the fabricator to nest pieces much closer, increasing the yield 15 to 20 percent as compared to a job cut on a bridge saw," he said.

Time is saved, too. Russo said the Robo SawJet can perform all work, including arcs, radius cuts, sinks, faucet hole openings during sawing. This eliminates a significant amount of labor and cost that would normally take place after the sawing operation. With the Robo SawJet, two slabs can be cut in 45 minutes, a task that would take six hours manually. That's a savings of over five hours every two slabs.

The equipment is reliable, too. "Virtually maintenance-free," added Russo. Fabricators can also improve the quality of the jobs by using the BACA VeinMatch software, which allows material flow to be matched for the best appearance and sent to the customer for approval.

Russo and the BACA Systems team are always keeping an eye out for future applications of robotic technology and ways to improve their customers' business.

For instance, Russo pointed out that there is a push in other industries towards collaborative applications, where robots work side-by-side with humans as an extra set of hands.

But no matter where the robotics industry is heading, BACA Systems keeps the focus on the needs of the stone industry.

"Nearly two years after launching the company, there is BACA technology all across the country. We have a combination of professional people with over 30 years of experience in the robotics field, plus professional people with equal experience in the stone industry. The biggest resource of any company is the people developing the culture of the company."

Kitchen and vanity photos (2) provided courtesy Cutting Edge Countertops

For more information and specs on the Robo SawJet, visit www.bacasystems.com.

"Because of the unique way we handle and process slabs, some changes to your software were necessary. You listened to our needs and then fulfilled our requirements perfectly... "
— Rick Maugeri, Surface Crafters

Robo SawJet photo provided courtesy BACA Systems

Above and below: custom kitchen, and Crema Marfil vanity, installed by Cutting Edge Countertops using their BACA System RoboSawJet (shown at left) for fabrication.

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Major Deposits of Grey-Veined and Pure White Marble Discovered

Rare discovery in the Hindu Kush mountain range could alleviate global shortages.

Cosmopolitan Marble has identified a previously unknown source of grey veined marble and some of some the whitest marble ever found. After extensive geological exploration and testing, Cosmopolitan's team of experts has started quarrying a sumptuous grey-veined marble named Royal White which is currently in production.

Also, an exceptionally high-quality pure white marble named Imperial White was discovered. The subtler but equally sumptuous grey-veined Royal White marble is currently in production at the quarry.

Relief for Global Shortages of White Marble?

Pure white marble has been in short supply in recent years because of extremely high demand. Cosmopolitan set out to find alternative sources, and the resulting discovery has excited experts across the industry.

"Due to the popularity of white marble in North America and across the world, slab suppliers and fabricators have needed an additional source of high quality white marble for years," says Jon Lancto, a former fabricator and current vice president of the Marble Institute of America, and Business Development Manager for Cosmopolitan Marble. "I think consumers will be thrilled when they see this material."

Royal White (slab shown above) and Imperial White are two varieties of the new, high-grade marble in production at the quarry, by Cosmopolitan Marble.

Ready to Supply

The deposits of Royal Imperial White and Royal White were discovered in a remote alpine area in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountain range. "We are delighted by the discovery of a grey veined white marble and of such a pure high quality pure white marble," says David Thompson, Chief Operating Officer for Cosmopolitan Marble. "Our first containers with bundles will arrive in the U.S. by June or July, and we expect many more future shipments as our quarries continue to ramp up production."

To learn more about Cosmopolitan Marble and the distribution of its products, contact David Thompson at david@cosmopolitanmarble.com, call 1-919-310-3146, or visit the website at www.cosmopolitanmarble.com.

Cosmopolitan Marble is a well-established Dubai-based company that supplies natural and engineered stone products to fabricators, slab distributors, architects, builders, contractors and related companies around the world. Staffed with skillful, experienced and highly competent professionals, Cosmopolitan has the experience to provide the right material for any project. Samples and quotes are available quickly with time frame and quantities guarantied. Contact Tariq Tyab at ttyab@cosmopolitanmarble.com for more information.

"With Great Power"

Continued from page 1

But I will never lie about delivery in order to close a job, and I have respectfully walked away from jobs because I knew I could not meet a customer's delivery date. I have a steadfast rule that I tell my customers right up front – you may not like the answer I give, but I will always give an honest one.

Delivering what a customer expects and what has been promised should never be an issue. I have always found it ironic when I hear people who sell inferior products or do shoddy work complain about the shoddy quality of something they themselves have purchased. Or companies that deliver a product with a problem and then don't/won't return phone calls or emails, and can't figure out why they don't have repeat customers or referrals, or wonder why they receive bad reviews online. My guys have learned that if someone asks me if something is acceptable, my comment will always be, "Would you put it in your mom's house?" If they have to give it some thought, or the answer is no, they already have their answer.

I'm also a firm believer in karma. I believe if you strive to do the right thing (even if it ends up costing you money to make it right), it will come back to you. It might be in repeat business or referrals, but more importantly, it is in knowing we are setting the right example for our children, our employees, and most importantly, ourselves. We should always aim high even if we occasionally fail. Never sell a product or install a job that is less than your best effort because you never know when karma may tap you on the shoulder!

Finding the time for my husband and me to do something together is tough, given the awful hours we work.

As a surprise gift two years ago, he purchased season tickets at our local performing arts center, and once every other month we get to enjoy each other's company and a wonderful production. This year we were excited when we were able to upgrade our seats and move 10 rows closer to the stage (without any additional cost, I might add)!

At our first show of the new season, as we were walking into the theatre we passed a couple. Both she and I recognized each other at the same time. We had completed their kitchen probably six weeks prior!

Although my husband is working another job he still helps out with certain things. There had been a technical question after the customer's original visit to our showroom and I had asked him to stop by to take a look at something, so he had met them as well. We all said a quick hello in passing and went our separate ways.

I told my husband although we had had a slight delay in completing the fabrication because of a small issue with the raised bar top, we had finished everything and the job had come out really nice. The customers were extremely happy with the way their new countertops looked (including full-height backsplash), but just as importantly, the product performs exactly as I promised.

Please turn to page 26

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies."
– Groucho Marx

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55149	Scorpion™ Brazed Sink Wheel, 1/2" x 2", 400 Grit	~~$61.95~~	$53.95
10431	Scorpion™ Brazed Sink Wheel, 1" x 2", 50 Grit	~~$134.95~~	$89.95
10432	Scorpion™ Brazed Sink Wheel, 1" x 2", 100 Grit	~~$134.95~~	$89.95
10433	Scorpion™ Brazed Sink Wheel, 1" x 2", 200 Grit	~~$134.95~~	$89.95
10434	Scorpion™ Brazed Sink Wheel, 2" x 2", 50 Grit	~~$149.95~~	$99.95
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This year, the rubber-necking crowd around the courthouse was packed in to see if anyone would be foolish enough to again bid on the lands in Haig Hollow or the now-defunct golf course and country club, as well as the shattered remnants of Martio Cappizzi's five-star restaurant on Flat Iron Peak.

The Varmint County Chronicles

Continued from page 6

Unfortunately, some of you may recall, a freakish winter weather event led to an avalanche on the day of the grand opening, which buried the brothers Cappizzi and their ski lodge under tons of ice and snow. Only a pan of cold Veal Scallopini was found during the frenzied search for survivors.

Mario's widow used the money from her lawsuit against her late husband's partners to open Mama Cappizzi's Bakery in Lower Primroy and has remained in Varmint County, her products making a significant impact on the waistlines of most county officials and courthouse lawyers.

Eventually the Flatiron Lodge, or what was left of it, re-emerged during the spring thaw and predictably ended up in the county's hands when the taxes remained unpaid by the defunct Flatiron Resorts, LLC.

So this year the rubber-necking crowd around the courthouse all packed in to see if anyone would be foolish enough to again bid on the lands in Haig Hollow or the now defunct golf course and country club, as well as the shattered remains of Mario Cappizzi's five-star restaurant on Flatiron Peak.

Instead they got a front row seat to another tax sale drama, the proposed sale of the home of loopy Vietnam veteran Cooter McBean.

Cooter, you may recall, is the lovable hermit who retreated home to Varmint County after spending years being tortured in a North Vietnamese POW camp. For decades he survived by doing various odd jobs around the county, fishing and hunting for game and living in a one-room shack on land loaned to him by his old high school buddy, Sheriff Hiram Potts.

Five years ago, as evidence that there is indeed a compassionate God, a tornado blew through Varmint County, picked up a $250,000 geodesic dome belonging to the developer Otis (That's right, the very same) B, Hudsupple and dropped it three miles away, undamaged, on top of Cooter McBean's shanty home.

Hudsupple, the successful developer of the Whitetail Bay gated community over on Mud Lake, ended up deeding the dome to Cooter to avoid a damage lawsuit. Cooter's attorney, former County Judge Hugh Ray Jass, claimed that as a result of having a house dropped on him from the sky, he was now afraid to leave his home without a helmet for fear of falling objects.

Hudsupple's lawyer, Philbert McSwine argued that Cooter had always been afraid to leave his home without a helmet out of fear that Viet Cong guerrillas might be waiting in ambush. Judge Hard Time Harwell, however, convinced Hudsupple that the Varmint County jury would be sympathetic to Cooter and the developer deeded the dome over to the crazy old vet.

Shortly afterwards, the publicity from the freak tornado incident led Pentagon officials to finally locate Cooter, who had lived for decades "off the grid," so they could present him with the Medal of Honor he had earned in Vietnam for sacrificing himself to help 16 fellow POWs escape.

The only catch to Cooter's good fortune in owning a $250,000 home was that the property taxes were nearly $2,000 a year, while Cooter McBean had not earned $2,000 during the entire 44 years since he was released from a North Vietnamese prison camp.

Please turn to page 27

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> **"What counts is not necessarily the size of the dog in the fight – it's the size of the fight in the dog."**
>
> *– General Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Stone Restoration and Maintenance Corner

Bob's Honey Bees

Bob Murrell
M3 Technologies

Photos provided by Bob Murrell

WE all need an occasional break from our careers to relax and unwind. This month, I am going to take a break from the inorganic things (rocks) I normally discuss to tell you about some interesting (to me) organic things. The organic things I will be writing about in this article are honey bees, specifically *Apis mellifera*.

As most of you who read my articles know, I am into honey bees, among other things. I have been keeping honey bees for going on five years, now. I am considered a backyard apiarist (bee keeper). My apiary (physical location of my hives) currently consists of three hives, as the fourth died this last January, probably from condensation and/or queen loss. I am in a rural area with some suburban development but there are also urban apiaries. So don't think you have to have a farm to keep honey bees.

As you may have heard, honey bee loss or die-off has become a major topic of discussion in recent years. The contribution to the environment from honey bees and all pollinator-type creatures is paramount to our existence. It is estimated by experts that about 1/3 of all things we consume are directly dependent on these busy little creatures because of the cross-pollination required to propagate most plant species. Corn, strawberries, almonds, many trees, and most all crops in general rely on the bees and other, similar insects. This is so important that bees are trucked in to pollinate specific crops during their flowering seasons. These companies are called migratory commercial beekeepers, and the large-scale crop companies rely on these bees for their very survival.

Did you know that honey bees are not native to North America? They were imported from Europe with the early settlers in the 1650s or so. It took another 200 years before honey bees were established all the way to California. With the spread of large-scale agriculture, honey bees became an integral part in the crops' success. Of course, the honey was a valuable benefit, too!

Archaeological finds have revealed that people were keeping honey bees dating back before 900 BC, in hives made of straw and unbaked clay. However, in 1852, a guy named Lorenzo Langstroth developed a hive with removable frames. In this way, the honey could be extracted with less destructive effect on the colony. Also, it became easier to inspect and move the hives. The Langstroth hive is the most common hive in use today. Most Langstroth hives are made up of either deep, medium, or shallow supers (boxes) that contain eight, nine, or 10 frames in each super. They also have a bottom board (screened or solid), inner cover and outer cover on top, and other optional accessories.

Typically, the deep supers are used as brood chambers (where the queen bee lays her eggs) and the shallow supers are used mostly for excess honey storage during the main nectar flows. The brood chamber frames will have eggs, larvae, capped pupae, pollen, and honey to feed the quickly growing bees. Worker bees (all female) cycle from egg to adult in about 21 days. The average life of a worker bee in summer is about 45 days. Workers start their adult life as nurse bees, then generally progress to guard bees, and finally to forager bees. Queens can live for years. Drones live until they mate with a new virgin queen or are expelled from the colony in the fall by the workers, to help conserve the honey stores for winter.

Many recent topics about honey bees are related to how they are under siege and are in danger from many environmental aspects. Honey bees have many natural enemies including predators, pests, viruses and bacteria. Bears and skunks both love to eat bees, their larvae, and of course honey. You may also be surprised to learn that other types of bees, specifically of the hornet family, will eat honey bees. Hornets and yellow jackets are sometimes called meat bees. Have you ever seen a discarded chicken bone covered with yellow jackets or white-faced hornets, in the fall? I have seen the hornets hover at the entrance to my hives and knock down a honey bee and fly away with it. I have sat in front of my hives with a badminton racket (as a 7.62 or 9mm is probably a little too much overkill) for an hour, swatting those hornets that dare try to steal my bees!

Some of the biggest natural threats to honey bees today are the Varroa Mite, Tracheal Mite, American Foulbrood and European Foulbrood bacterial infections, Nosema fungus, and small hive beetles. Varroa mites are to bees like ticks are to woodland mammals. They suck the life blood from the bees while spreading infectious viruses and bacteria.

Please turn to page 28

Above: A typical urban apiary. Below: Inspecting a honey super frame. The comb is drawn but not full of honey yet.

Great brood pattern here. Notice the rainbow or arching pattern. Capped brood in middle bottom. Eggs and larvae are in surrounding brownish area. Then all is surrounded by capped honey (white area) to feed the quickly growing bee larvae.

Inspecting the Super. I didn't find the queen on this inspection, but did find plenty of evidence she is there. Eggs, larvae, and pupae all indicate a good healthy queen. Yes, I am doing this without hand protection!

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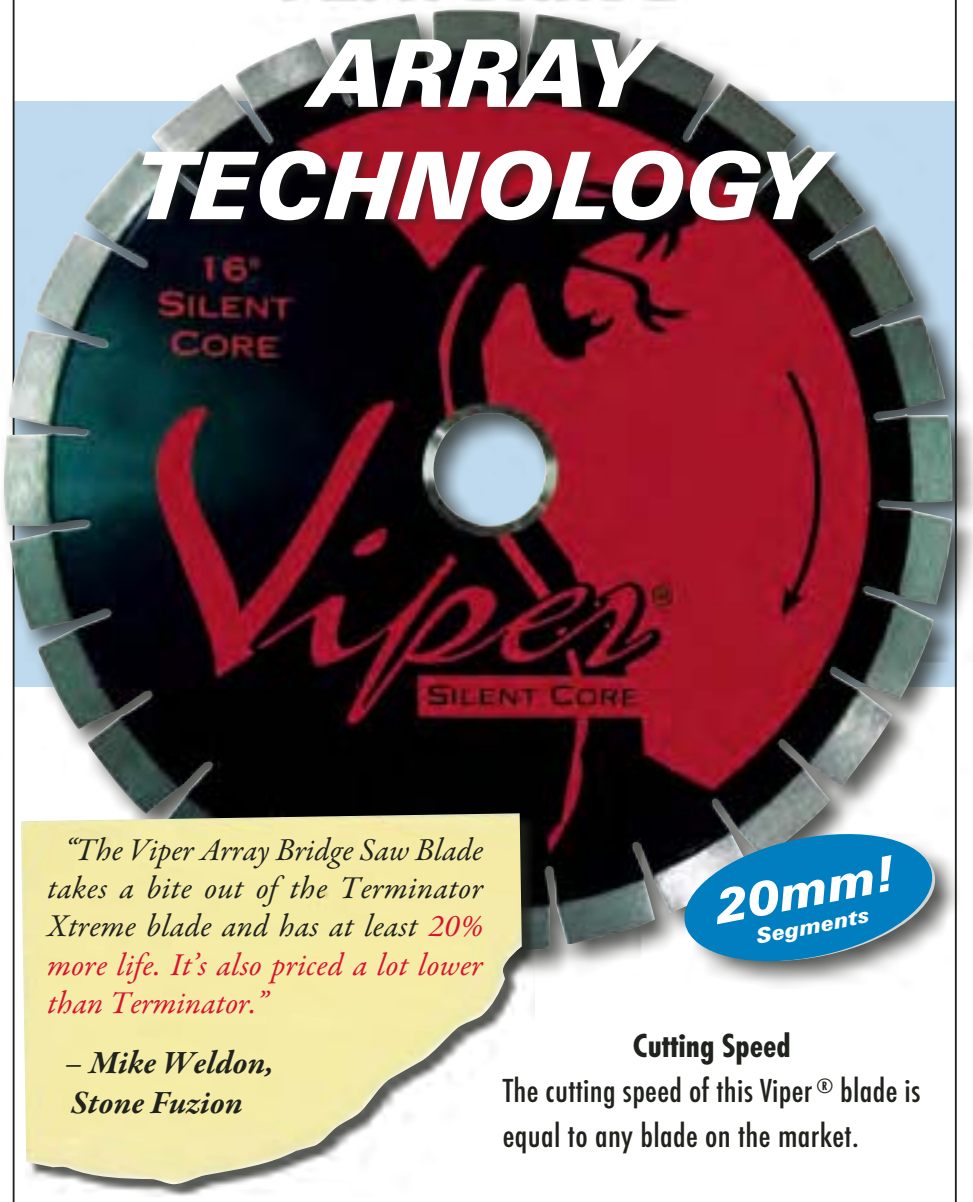

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"With Great Power"

Continued from page 23

For a customer who cooks every single day, that was a very important element.

We had completed their job and left on good terms, and they even sent pictures (see above!) a few weeks later so I could see how nice everything came out.

As we took our new seats for the first performance, we looked over and realized the customers we had just bumped into were in the same row, only a couple seats down from us! We now see them at each new show and always make a point to say hello. I cannot imagine how awkward it would have been if we had installed a lousy quality job and then had to look them in the eye every other month. But I can feel good knowing we had delivered exactly what I had promised with the final results exceeding their expectations. I feel pretty confident they will think of us if anyone they know is in need of countertops.

I know my situation may be slightly different from other shops since I am the business owner, and also run our showroom.

But I truly feel anyone representing their companies to the public can and should always try to make someone feel that they are more than "just another customer." I want my (potential) customers to walk out of my showroom or have my guys leave a job site and have the adjectives associated with my business include honorable, honest, respectful, knowledgeable, and just plain "nice." Because at the end of the day, I want to look in the mirror and know that I have fulfilled my responsibility to my customer in the best way I possibly can.

Jodi Wallace is owner of Monarch Solid Surface Designs in San Jose, California. She volunteers as a Disaster Responder for the American Red Cross.

The Varmint County Chronicles

Continued from page 24

As a result, Cooter's dome was included in the county's delinquent tax sale this year, with over $12,000 in unpaid taxes, penalties and interest owed against it.

The courthouse was packed with onlookers as nearly everyone was curious to see if the county government would actually go through with selling the home of Varmint County's beloved, if not quite all there, Medal of Honor recipient.

It didn't get that far. Stanley the Torch Aslinger contacted a couple of the vets who had escaped the POW camp thanks to Cooter sacrificing himself by single-handedly attacking a dozen guards. Soon those vets contacted other survivors and an Internet fundraising drive brought in over $30,000, enough to cover the back taxes and future tax bills for the next 10 years or so.

Cooter, of course, wasn't present at the courthouse to hear the good news, and Stanley had to drive over to his dome house to let him know he wouldn't have to move.

"That's mighty nice of those fellas to do that for me but they didn't need to bother," Cooter remarked.

"Well, nobody wanted to see you without a roof over your head, Cooter. You saved their lives, they felt it was the least they could do."

"Oh, I wouldn't be left without a roof over my head. I've still got the old one-room shack I lived in all those years. It was plenty comfortable for me."

"What do you mean? That shack was flattened when this dome landed on your home."

"Well, I re-built the old shack in the downstairs bedroom. Always felt more comfortable sleeping in it than these big lofty rooms anyway. If the county sold the dome fer taxes, I was just gonna tell 'em to go ahead and take it, but they'll have to move it off Hiram Potts' land and my shack."

The other big question at the tax sale as whether Carlisle Gump would try to pay the taxes on any part of Haig Hollow or the Hockmeyer lands in Stinking Creek. Gump, also known as Chief He-Who-Runs-With-Wolves Blackfeather of the Kisokonee Band of Eastern Cherokees, managed to con Elijah Haig and Caleb Hockmeyer into signing a warranty deed for the lands held by the two clans over to the tribe, disguised as a "treaty of peace and reconciliation" during last year's Thanksgiving holiday feast.

The plot to grab land for a reservation and casino for his legally unrecognized tribe backfired when Carlisle learned that the deed came with an unpaid tax bill of $63 million plus interest and penalties.

To nobody's surprise, Carlisle did not show up at the sale and Haig Hollow again reverted to Varmint County, unsold and untaxed.

"I'm thinking we should just proclaim those acres as permanent public land and maybe give it over to the state for a Wildlife Management Area," Mayor Gabby Aslinger commented after the sale had ended.

"We tried that back in 2003 after the first successful bidder vanished while inspecting his land," former Sheriff Smoky T. Bandit chuckled. "They said they wanted no part of it, that the only wildlife living in Varmint County is the two-legged variety, and it can't be managed, period."

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Stone Restoration and Maintenance Corner

Bob's Honey Bees

Continued from page 25

Varroa mites are probably the single biggest natural threat to honey bees. So you see, there are many potential ailments that can inflict havoc on the bee colonies.

There are also man-made dangers to honey bees, like insecticides and loss of habitat. *Neonicotinoids* is the latest buzzword regarding insecticide problems for honey bees. Neonicotinoids are now the most widely used insecticides on the planet. Because of their low toxicity to mammals and birds, and their ability to be absorbed by the plants through the soil, it was thought they were the answer for the undesirable insect problem. They were originally thought to be low risk to desirable insects like bees and other pollinators. However, their toxicity to bees is becoming a major issue and much research is being done by agriculture departments in many universities.

All of the above problems for the honey bee can be grouped together under one general headline called CCD or Colony Collapse Disorder. That is the likely explanation you may have heard in the news for our declining bee population.

I hope I have not bored everyone to death about bees but I feel strongly that these small stinging insects are of great value to us all. I really enjoy keeping bees, and certainly enjoy the perks, like honey.

Lighting pine needles in my smoker. Cool smoke calms the bees before I open a hive. It's good to have calm bees!!

"I don't harvest enough to sell my honey, but I seem to have enough to supply my family and friends, every year."

I don't harvest enough to sell my honey, but I seem to have more than enough to supply my family and friends, every year. If you are interested in keeping bees, I suggest that you first locate and join a local beekeeper's association. There you will meet people from all walks of life who want to do the same thing, which is, find out if beekeeping is for them, and how to accomplish this goal as efficiently as possible.

If you decide beekeeping is for you, get a mentor who can help you learn — as there is much to learn. If you have any questions for me, simply contact the *Slippery Rock Gazette* and we will get you our best answers as quickly as possible.

One more thing about bees: I consider them to be an irreducible mechanism (Google it). I am not trying to discuss whether or not you believe in creationism or not but simply stating, that, if you remove one component of the honey bee colony, it cannot exist. There are other irreducible mechanisms in nature too, all of which seem to support my thoughts on intelligent design. And that's all I've got to say about that.

Next month, it's back to work. I'll return to subjects dealing with rocks.

"We are told that talent creates its own opportunities. But it sometimes seems that intense desire creates not only its own opportunities, but its own talents."

— Eric Hoffer (1898 – May 21, 1983) Hoffer, the author of 10 books and many essays, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in February, 1983.

MIA+BSI Introduces Spanish Safety Poster Set

MIA+BSI: the Natural Stone Institute is proud to announce that the 2016 safety poster set is now available in Spanish. Both English and Spanish poster sets are available for purchase in the association bookstore. The release of the Spanish safety posters continues a yearlong safety initiative that has included increased education, advocacy, and resources for the natural stone industry.

Ted Skaff, chair of the MIA+BSI Safety Committee and VP of Marketing at Lackmond Products, Inc., said, "We are pleased to see the introduction of the Spanish safety posters. Our safety committee has worked long and hard on this project, and it is nice to see it complete, allowing our safety message to reach more industry professionals. We are sure that this will help create a safer environment in both the short and long term by bringing awareness to safety. The safety committee will continue to strive forward, providing the industry new safety materials that will be beneficial to all. Remember—safety first!"

MIA+BSI would like to thank the following companies who assisted with translation: Lurvey Project Group, Dee Brown, Inc., Cosentino, and Laticrete.

To order the 2016 safety posters in Spanish or English, please visit www.naturalstoneinstitute.org/bookstore.

"Our safety committee has worked long and hard on this project and it is nice to see it complete, allowing our safety message to reach more industry professionals."
— Ted Skaff, MIA+BSI Safety Committee Chair

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8717	Talon™ Turbo Dry Diamond Cup Wheel, 4", Fine	~~$89.95~~	$59.95

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Santa Makes it Look Easy

Los Angeles County firefighters freed a 13-year-old girl who was stuck in a chimney at a home.

Officials say crews responded to an emergency call last month and freed the girl after about 15 minutes of patient work. She was taken to a hospital to be examined.

There was no immediate word on her condition or how she got stuck in the chimney of the suburban LA home.

What is even stranger is that City News Service reports it was the second time in less than a week that someone became stuck in a chimney in LA County, and it's not even December!

A woman who locked herself out of her Pomona home one Friday afternoon decided to use the chimney to get inside. She ended up stuck for about five hours before a neighbor heard her cries.

She was eventually freed by firefighters and suffered only dehydration… and acute embarrassment.

Break the Law, You Make the Call

A Coos Bay, Oregon homeowner was awakened by strange noises one night. He investigated, and caught three teenage boys who had broken into his house. The best part? He made them call 911 to report themselves.

Television station KATU-TV reports the three 14-year-old boys were all taken to the Douglas County Juvenile Detention Center on charges including burglary, trespassing and possession of marijuana.

The Coos County sheriff's office says the man was armed when he discovered the boys burglarizing his home. The homeowner held them captive, and emergency dispatchers say he made one of the teens call police and report the burglary in progress.

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2016 Classified Ad Deadlines

Issue	Ad Submission Deadline
August 2016	Tuesday, July 5, 2016
September 2016	Monday, August 1, 2016
October 2016	Tuesday, September 6, 2016

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Stone Care

Braxton-Bragg's Supreme Surface Stone Care Program. Braxton-Bragg firmly believes in offering not only the best products for stone fabricators and installers, but also in providing our customers with a way to retain and maintain great working relationships with their customer base. This is why we have launched Supreme Surface Stone Care Program for stone fabricators that purchase their supplies directly from us. It is easy to sign up and we do all of the work for you! All you have to do is let us know that you're interested in becoming a participant in this program and we will print for you custom postcards and brochures to hand out to your clients and prospective customers interested in your countertop services.

The postcards and brochures will be printed with your company name and address. The space |*Your Business Name & Address*| will be replaced with your pertinent information to let your customers know how to contact you directly. You will also receive a unique discount code that is linked to your Braxton-Bragg account, so that we can track your customers, for you to receive a rebate from us when someone purchases Supreme Surface Products. For more information about this program, please contact one of our salesmen at 800-575-4401.

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Since the perfect stone cleaning product didn't exist, Tom invented it. To learn what others thought of his new granite cleaner he gave it away—free. Log on to www.consumerstonecare.com.

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Why is installing the dishwasher always on the punch list? There are many reasons; after all, who is responsible for this task? Is it the granite guy, the plumber, the appliance delivery man, or the general contractor? If the granite installer is responsible and the dishwasher is on site, there is no problem, but many times this is not the case. So in order to preserve your good name and reputation it means an expensive return trip to install the dishwasher.

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The E-Z Dishwasher Bracket can be installed in 2 minutes and is a permanent solution. If the dishwasher is not installed or not on site, simply fasten the E-Z Dishwasher Bracket to the cabinet with the hardware supplied, apply silicone to dampen the sound, and install the granite. As simple as that, your job is done, with regard to the dishwasher.

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Only the Lonely

Aaron J. Crowley
Owner, Crowley's Granite Concepts

IT seems odd that one can feel alone in a small house with a wife and five kids, but it can happen.

This weekend, I made a decision that negatively affected certain members of my family and it was not the, "We have to cancel cable and stop eating out for the next two months" type of disappointment.

It was real and justified disappointment, and made worse because I waited until the last minute to deal with the issue and make the decision.

It reminded me of those difficult days during the Great Recession and the multiple layoffs I carried out…when everyone was upset with me, my decisions were having negative impacts on real people, and it was far from clear that I was even making the right decisions.

With no one talking to me in the aftermath of this most recent decision, I had plenty of time to replay

those memories over and over in my head which got me thinking about what it means to lead people, whether it be a family or a fab shop, and what character traits make people in leadership positions great leaders.

First, great leaders value the people they lead more than the objective they've committed to achieve, which is to say that employees in a company, personnel in a department, or helpers on an install crew are not a means to an end for the boss's career advancement or personal ambitions. They are human beings with inherent value, not mere resources to be managed like a budget, information or inventory.

Furthermore, because they understand that each person in their care is unique and possesses natural talents, they aligned them with work that requires such gifts and consistently achieve optimum results.

Second, great leaders go out of their way to boost their team's moral, remind them of their potential, and recall to them previous victories and successes. Such inspirations are essential in victory and more so in the aftermath of a defeat or missed objective.

Great leaders recognize that criticism, threats, and browbeating have no place on a high-performance team. Those are the tactics of petty tyrants, venting their frustration when their personal ambitions have been delayed by a failure of the team.

Third, great leaders communicate with their teams in two ways: outbound and inbound.

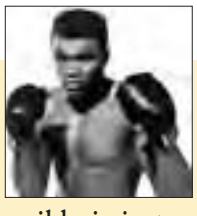
The outbound communication a great leader uses is the vision or the objective the team is pursuing. In addition to the big picture, the plans and incremental stages along the way necessary to arrive at the final destination are made available to the team and referred to regularly.

The inbound communication is the toughest part, and great leaders not only invite it in the form of suggestions, opinions, and yes, even criticism, they receive it with the purpose of factoring the team's first-hand observations and feedback into the plan so it is more likely to succeed.

It is said that "it's lonely at the top," and there is definitely some truth in that saying.

But for the CEOs, department supervisors, and crew leaders making difficult decisions on a regular basis, those that have a track record valuing, encouraging, and communicating regularly with their teams, it is a feeling rarely felt.

Aaron Crowley is an inventor of stone industry products like the Bullet Proof™ Apron, and owner of Crowley's Granite Concepts.



"Impossible is just a word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing."

— Muhammad Ali
(1942 –June 5, 2016)

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Self-Service Tour Bus

Two 15-year-old boys are accused of breaking into a secured lot in Portland and stealing a TriMet bus, right under the noses of the employees who were on lunch break.

Police say the boys boldly walked through the secure area at the Center Street Garage in Southeast Portland late one Monday night, while 12 employees at the garage were on their lunch break, leaving the area unguarded.

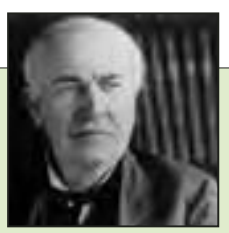
The teens drove the bus toward Milwaukie, Oregon, and were quickly arrested by Clackamas County law enforcement just after midnight the following day.

Investigating officers found an empty spot where a TriMet bus should have been parked, along with damage to a parked bus.

The teen who was driving was wearing a TriMet uniform when he was arrested.

He was charged with unauthorized use of motor vehicle, possession of a stolen motor vehicle, burglary, criminal trespass, interfering with public transportation, failure to perform the duties of a driver and criminal mischief. He was reported as a runaway and was wanted on an outstanding probation violation.

The 15-year-old passenger was arrested for unauthorized use of motor vehicle, possession of stolen motor vehicle and criminal trespass. He was listed as a runaway from Deschutes County.



"Opportunity is missed by most people because it dresses in overalls and looks like work."

–Thomas A. Edison

Finally, a Manufacturer Who Listens to a Repairman

Now the Strongest Guarantee in the Industry—12 Months!

*I am Bill Roberts and I **approve** this message!*

Hercules® Single Speed with Hydroplaning System

A Repairman's Story

My name is Bill Roberts and I repair routers for Braxton-Bragg. Over the years, I have worked on hundreds of routers made by most manufacturers including Sector, Stinger, MEM and others.

I Have Seen a Lot of Wear and Tear...

Routers get a lot of hard use. Some parts simply wear out, and some occasionally break. Over the years I saw patterns and often wondered why manufacturers did not beef up more of the critical parts.

Nobody Listened

From time to time, I communicated ideas but for the most part, did not see any changes.

Finally, Somebody Did

Then about three years ago, I was asked to provide detailed information on my experience with Hercules® Routers. Since Hercules® is our best-selling router, I had a lot of practice repairing them. Now I finally got the chance to take one completely apart and find the most worn components.

Little Things Matter

Often it was the little things that mattered. An engineer in a lab does not know the real world of a stone shop, and how the shape of the power cord, the thickness of a belt, or the type of bearings used can affect performance.

Single Phase Power

It costs more to produce a powerful router with single phase power than with 3-phase, but when asked about making it 3-phase, I told them that many shops only had single phase power...and they listened!

21 Improvements Later

Well, to make a long story short, the manufacturer has implemented 21 improvements in the design of the Hercules® Router. These improvements make it perform better and last longer. I believe you will agree with me that this is the most reliable router you have ever used.

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Because of the changes, the router is now backed by a 12-month guarantee—the longest in the industry. I would have to say that this is the most reliable router that Braxton-Bragg has ever sold.

Best Guarantee!

Bill R Roberts

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
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Killer Crocs in Florida?

Continued from page 19

The UF paper said all Florida wetlands and coastal areas of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas would be hospitable to Nile crocodiles. They require fresh water, abundant prey and year-round warm weather.

"Doesn't that sound like Florida?" Krysko said.

Fortunately, Nile crocodiles don't reproduce rapidly. Still, the researchers said, it might only take one adult male and female finding each other for an Everglades population to become established.

"I have two words: Burmese python," Wasilewski said. "If you would have told me 15 years ago we would have an established population in the Everglades, I wouldn't have believed you."

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Hammerhead Stoneworks Creates Custom Stone Logo Mosaic for Asheville Greenman Brewery

Peter J. Marcucci

When Stone mason/artist Marc Archambault was approached to create a large-scale mosaic logo for an Asheville, North Carolina brewery, he may have been just a bit ecstatic. You see, up until that moment, Marc, the founder of Hammerhead Stoneworks Incorporated in Asheville, North Carolina, had been producing exquisite but utilitarian work including patios, chimneys, walls, steps, walkways and fireplaces.

"I was very excited about the opportunity," said Marc. "I had been imagining creating large-scale (stone) mosaics like this for years. I've made smaller ones, as proof of concept or just for fun, and I've been waiting for a chance like this for a while."

Not to be confused with run-of-the-mill stonework, Marc's style since 1997 has always been a mix of rustic charm and local color, topped with his signature eclectic style. When viewed whole or partial, distant or close-up, his work is a decorative mixture of texture and color, combining different stones.

"The Greenman came about from two previous business relationships, one of which was Krista Lablue," continued Marc. "She does interior design and was working with Dennis and Wendy Thies, the owners of the Greenman Brewery, a local craft brewer where people can socialize while drinking or touring. I had worked for Krista previously and had done a very unique floor in Dennis and Wendy's house, during which time they talked about building their company logo into their brewery's outdoor patio. For whatever reason, that never came about. So when they decided to expand the brewery to take advantage of the tours along with the other breweries in the area, they again approached me to do the project. This time, however, the logo would be installed on the wall."

"The skin tones used on the face are made from stone quarried by the Tennessee Marble Company. They are just a few hours away from here and have a bone yard pile that I picked through. That's also where I got the Serpentine eyebrows. The whites of the eyes, I think, are from Georgia. The majority of the background is sandstone is from Crossville, Tennessee, only a four-hour trip away.

"The majority of the stones in the leaves are from Pennsylvania sandstone, used a lot for patios. The eyes are Malachite from local gem shops, but I believe it originally comes from Africa. The black used in the pupils is plain-old granite tile from a big-box store, and we are also using reclaimed slate from a house in Asheville, N.C..

Imagineering:

The implementing of creative ideas into practical form.

Lashley began the project by *imagineering* from start to finish how to get it done.

Gary, a gifted craftsman, has been with Hammerhead almost since the beginning and has a keen eye for aesthetics and detail.

Jonathan has been with Hammerhead for almost three years. He studied painting at LSU and brings his artistic gifts to every project.

Fred Lashley and Marc have worked together the longest, almost nine years, on and off. Fred has been working with stone for over 20 years and was Marc's first mentor in stone work.

Fleshing Out The Greenman

Marc continued, "We started by duplicating the pattern of the leaves, the contours of the face and that kind of stuff onto a paper drawing. This was one of the most challenging parts of the project, actually, because it was basically rendered in two shades of green and white. Taking each image and extrapolating them out to create the logo was very time consuming and a very back and forth process.

Please turn to page 38

"The background is mostly Crab Orchard Gray Sandstone from Tennessee. There are small fossils, geodes and pebbles mixed in, which are from our expansive collection of weird-cool stones."

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- Same geometry as Viper CNC profile wheels
- 8 & 10mm bolts included with all bits

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Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55000	Viper A-20 (2cm), Radius Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$275.95~~	$179.95
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3cm Radius Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55020	Viper A-30 (3cm), Radius Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$415.95~~	$270.95
55021	Viper A-30 (3cm), Radius Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$386.95~~	$251.95

2cm Demi Bullnose Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55002	Viper B-20 (2cm), Demi Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$388.95~~	$252.95
55003	Viper B-20 (2cm), Demi Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$379.95~~	$246.95

3cm Demi Bullnose Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55004	Viper B-30 (3cm), Demi Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$519.95~~	$337.95
55005	Viper B-30 (3cm), Demi Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$508.95~~	$330.95

2cm Bevel Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55010	Viper E-20 (2cm), Bevel Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$328.95~~	$213.95
55011	Viper E-20 (2cm), Bevel Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$312.95~~	$203.95

3cm Bevel Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55012	Viper E-30 (3cm), Bevel Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$472.95~~	$307.95
55013	Viper E-30 (3cm), Bevel Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$443.95~~	$288.95

2cm Ogee Router Bits

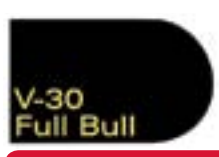
Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55006	Viper F-20 (2cm), Ogee Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$349.95~~	$227.95
55007	Viper F-20 (2cm), Ogee Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$334.95~~	$217.95

3cm Ogee Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55008	Viper F-30 (3cm), Ogee Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$423.95~~	$275.95
55009	Viper F-30 (3cm), Ogee Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$340.95~~	$221.95

2cm Full Bullnose Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55014	Viper V-20 (2cm), Full Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$362.95~~	$235.95
55015	Viper V-20 (2cm), Full Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$357.95~~	$232.95



3cm Full Bullnose Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55016	Viper V-30 (3cm), Full Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$555.95~~	$361.95
55017	Viper V-30 (3cm), Full Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$526.95~~	$342.95

4cm Full Bullnose Router Bits

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
55018	Viper V-40 (4cm), Full Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 1	~~$611.95~~	$397.95
55019	Viper V-40 (4cm), Full Bullnose Profile Wheel, Pos. 2	~~$583.95~~	$379.95

5cm Straight Z Profile Router Bit

Viper®

Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
10459	Viper Z-50 (5cm), Straight Z Router Profile Wheel, Pos. 1, 36 Grit, 2" OD x 2" H, 9,000 RPM Max	~~$292.95~~	$190.95

Hammerhead Stoneworks Creates Custom Stone Logo Mosaic

Materials Used and Quarry Locations for this Project:

- **The skin tones of the face are made of Quaker Gray from the Tennessee Marble Company.**
- **The eyebrows are serpentine salvaged from a scrap pile.**
- **The leaves are made of several different stones, including Emerald Gray, which is native to North Carolina. There's also green slate salvaged from a old house in Asheville, some full-color Pennsylvania stone, and other bits and bobs found here and there.**

Continued from page 36

"One of the interesting things about it was when I was drawing the lines of the pieces, the lines really stood out. But when you're standing back looking at the finished drawing of the mosaic, the lines become secondary and disappear. You only see the black against the white, so it was hard to translate what the finished product would look like. It's not like working in a Photoshop app. What the finished product looked like compared to the drawing is like night and day. That was also one of the challenges of the process."

When the preliminary drawing was approved by Krista and Wendy, Marc printed out sections of the face in full scale. These sections were then put together and hung at the correct height to critique the Greenman full size. It was here that Marc ran into another problem. "I realized that the Greenman was so high and viewed from so far away, that the lips looked huge, the nose looked huge and the eyes looked small. This was due to looking at it on the screen as opposed to looking at it on the wall. So this is where I made some significant changes."

With the changes completed and using felt roofing paper, Marc and crew converted the paper templates into more durable templates. According to Marc, the roofing felt paper doesn't get messed up by water or torn easily.

Show Me the Colors

"This was kind of a transition point in the project," continued Marc. "I had Krista and Wendy come over to the shop, and we laid out a whole host of different stones that we were thinking about using. I said to them, 'This is what I'd like to use for the face,' and, 'Here are the green colors for the leaves,' while putting the stones next to each other. We went through the process like that for at least an hour. The lips were the only place where people were unsure if they should be lighter or darker, and sometimes the crew made different samples of what it could look like one way or another. Fortunately, everybody from the beginning was on board, and it wasn't a major hurdle. No one had an opinion that was contrary to the general trend, and that made it pretty easy.

"Having worked with both Krista and Wendy before, they had a lot of faith in what we do and how we do it, so we were given a little bit of room to roam. There would be technical challenges with the cutting and the mounting and the materials, but the aesthetics and the decision making was pretty seamless."

Fabrication & Test Fitting

At this point, said Marc, everyone knew the Big Picture (no pun intended). For four weeks, every day, beginning with the leaves around the bottom, the crew painstakingly worked their way around by cutting and fitting each piece to the last, on the ground. Each leaf was its own art project for whoever was working on it. Marc, who'd been working on the face, could now begin to discuss things such as putting a little more of this color here, or it doesn't fit right, and we need to adjust this piece. When fit to satisfaction, each piece was epoxied onto small sections of diamond mesh lath, making the 16-foot-wide, 20-foot-tall project ready to transport.

Installation Day

"Beginning with the eyes, nose, forehead and cheeks, using thinset, we put up one section at a time and worked our way out, " continued Marc. "When we were sure that the face thinset had set up, the background was installed. We had most of the background cut by the time we started.

Please turn to page 42

"Since using Akemi Platinum we haven't used any other polyester. It's clearer and 'tints right.' Akemi Platinum is better than anything else."

Tim Nelson, Supervisor
Classic Stone Works
Linville, NC

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Akemi Platinum cures in only 30 minutes.* That means you have less down time with Akemi Platinum before you can safely mill, profile, polish or drill.

High quality resins and ingredients insure Akemi Platinum performs exceptionally in many applications such as seams, laminations and repairs. Best of all, it is ideal for working with granite, marble or engineered stones.

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Polycor Honors Four Industry Leaders

Polycor Selects Four Women for Outstanding Achievements In the Stone Industry

Genevieve Robichaud
Guest Contributor, Polycor

WE all love natural stone for its endurance through time, testing and trends. It can withstand great pressure and all the elements and still retain its integrity and natural beauty. Sounds like the definition of a strong female leader doesn't it?

In our industry, our leaders must have these same qualities of strength and endurance, especially those who are women, as they face an industry that is still largely occupied by men. At Polycor we're grateful for the women who have pioneered leadership in the stone world. Yet to say women in the industry have made great strides isn't enough.

To encourage more women to pursue a career in stone, and encourage the ones laboring in it to reach for leadership roles, we need to showcase the talent, experience and leadership of the women working there today.

That's why we partner with Women In Stone - the MIA trade group that provides resources and opportunities to recruit, retain, and advance women in the stone industry. Since we helped launch WIS two years ago in Las Vegas, its services to industry women have grown from simple networking to mentoring and now to a premier stage to show off these strong women in business who are an inspiration to many, including me.

Last week at the Polycor Black Equinox event in Chicago we honored four of these women who have built and maintained stone companies with excellence, through changes in society and the industry: **Barbara Cohen** of Miller Druck Specialty Contracting; **Brenda Edwards** of TexaStone Quarries; **Kathleen Stone** of J.C. Stone; and **Monica Gawet** of Tennessee Marble Company.

From left: **Kathleen Carle** of J.C. Stone, **Barbara Cohen** of Miller Druck Specialty Contracting, **Patrick Perus** of Polycor, **Monica Gawet** of Tennessee Marble Company and **Brenda Edwards** of TexaStone Quarries.

At the event, Polycor CEO Patrick Perus presented each leader with an achievement award hand carved by one of our employees, Steve Schrenk, from a block of Alberene Soapstone. The image on the carvings is as unique as the women we honored.

"I was thinking, What can I give these women that shows what it takes to be a leader in this industry? It must be something that is beautiful, strong, can weather any storm and a little bit hot-headed. What can I be? A ram?" he said with a laugh to the hundreds of stone industry members there. "I hope it will inspire other women."

Over time the stone will change, with softer edges and a deep patina that tell the story of where it's been, but its strength will never depreciate. And neither will the strength of these women or their accomplishments for their industry.

Barbara, Brenda, Kathleen and Monica, Polycor salutes you for your good work and perseverance. Rock on.

For more information, photos and video of this event, visit www.polycor.com.

"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it." — Lou Holtz

Inducted into the American College Football hall of fame in 2008, Holtz is known for both his winning record, and his scrapes with NCAA scholarship regulations. He is he only college football coach to lead six different programs to bowl games, and a 1988 championship (Notre Dame, 12-0).

Stone Pro Updates SR2

Continued from page 5

The second important upgrade is the SR2 is now made of a more durable black polymer. Beneath the rugged black housing of the "master cup" lies the new re-charging system. "It adds a little additional weight to the whole unit,"said Winn, "But not enough to make a noticeable difference."

The SR2 Rechargeable comes with its own charger, so there's no need to worry if you're on the jobsite and the power runs out. Simply plug it into an outlet and keep working.

"Just like our previous model, we have also incorporated a safety relief valve for quick release and removal of the device, once your task is complete, said Winn. "The new version comes in a little bit heavier than the previous model due to the onboard battery, but the compromise is worth it."

Features and benefits include:

- **Each SR2 has four adjustable suction cups connected in a series and is powered by a rechargeable master cup unit.**
- **Each cup can be independently positioned by sliding the cup into the desired position.**
- **Once the system is turned on, all cups will be actively vacuuming.**
- **Cup covers are provided to protect the reversible vacuum seal during transportation.**
- **Simply charge the device (a minimum of) four hours prior to using.**
- **A retrofit master cup (in white) is available for owners of the old system to upgrade to a rechargeable version.**

The SR2 is designed to be used as a final installation tool. It is not recommended for use in very wet fabrication environments such as a wet shop, where water could cause damage to the vacuum pump.

The SR2 Vacuum rail is not intended as a slab support during mobile transit, but it excels when used for installation purposes, even on textured surfaces.

The new Stone Pro SR2 Rechargeable is available from Braxton-Bragg, an authorized Stone Pro distributor. Call 800-575-4401 for more information or visit www.braxton-bragg.com.

Are You Paying More than 40¢ per Sink Cutout?

*Average sink is 4 linear feet

With the Scorpion CNC Granite Finger Bit, this customer is averaging 1100 feet per bit, which works out to about 40¢ per sink. With his previous bit, he was only averaging 500 linear feet.

"After running it extensively we took it off and it still had life after cutting 1,068 feet. We realized it had given us over double the linear feet of work from any fingerbit."

Josh, Stone Spectrum LLC

Scorpion™ CNC Finger Bits

Soft Bond for Hard Stone

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Item #	Description	MSRP	OUR Price
16017	Scorpion™ CNC Granite Finger Bit, 20mm x 40mm, 1/2 Gas Thread, Orange, Twin Seg., 5,500-5,800 RPM	~~$183.95~~	$119.95
16018	Scorpion™ CNC Granite Finger Bit, 20mm x 40mm, 1/2 Gas Thread, Orange, 5 seg., 5,500-5,800 RPM	~~$183.95~~	$119.95

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NYC's police, firefighters brawl at charity football game

The New York Police Department says a melee that erupted at a charity football game between police and firefighters just shows that football is a competitive sport.

Video of the aftermath of the game at Coney Island one Sunday shows dozens of players brawling and yelling curses. Blood can be seen dripping down the face of one firefighter.

The NYPD said in a statement that football "is a competitive sport whether it's the NFL Super Bowl or the annual NYPD-FDNY challenge."

The Fire Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The departments have a history of brawling at charity sports events. Multiple fights broke out at a 2014 hockey game between the departments at the former Nassau Coliseum on Long Island.

Just FYI: the Police Department won that Sunday's game, 29-13.

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41362	Talon™ Miter Cut Bridge Saw Blade, 14″, 60/50mm Bushing	~~$279.95~~	$209.95
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Hammerhead Stoneworks Creates Custom Stone Logo Mosaic

Prefitting the mosaic at the studio: "There were two things going on at the same time – fitting, and a color check. Then, most of the pieces of the leaf were epoxied onto diamond pattern lath. That's how we did the perimeter where the face meets the background. We could build it in our shop, transport it, and install it anywhere."

Continued from page 38

"Unfortunately, we were unsure about how the leaves would fit the background and couldn't effectively template around the leaves until they were installed. So doing one piece at a time we'd run out, cut, and run in to check the fit. It was basically like a tile application. We additionally drilled through the mesh to secure the pieces so they wouldn't drift as we were waiting for them to dry.

"After working our way out to the walls, we grouted it. Grouting hadn't been in the plan, but we figured it was the best way to unite all the pieces and clean up any discrepancies in the cuts. Some of the materials had a polish on them, some didn't. It was difficult to grout the ones that didn't (have a polish), because the grout would stick to them if we weren't careful, and it took a lot of elbow grease to get them clean.

"I love the way that the grout made it look like a continuous surface. I wasn't sure about it at first, but once we did it, I was happy that we did."

Marc's Final Thoughts

One of the things that meant a lot and brought a lot of satisfaction, added Marc, was that most of the stones he used were locally quarried. "I love exotic stone and do work with them on a small scale, but it made me happy to create the Greenman mostly out of stones that were nearby. I also think that it's a visually striking to mix and match materials that are honed and polished. It makes you want to run your hand on it to feel that contrast. All materials have a different feel to the texture, and I want to touch it and wonder about it.

"What I like about projects like this is that we can make it in the shop and go just about anywhere to do the installation. Build it in North Carolina and install it in Seattle, you know what I mean? I do like the shop work where I can wrestle with the creative stuff in my own space, and then bring it to the local jobsite and install it. Making the Greenman was really fun for the crew. It's the more creative challenges and the technical aspects that keeps us engaged, and it was great in that regard. There was definitely a learning curve, but now that I've figured out how to do it, I'm ready for the next one!"

For more information about Hammerhead Stoneworks, the Greenman Project or other projects by the crew visit www.hammerheadstoneworks.com.

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7563	Viper® SP Dry Core Bit, 5/8″-11 Threaded Arbor, 1-3/8″	~~$77.95~~	$54.95
7564	Viper® SP Dry Core Bit, 5/8″-11 Threaded Arbor, 1-1/2″	~~$82.95~~	$59.95
7565	Viper® SP Dry Core Bit, 5/8″-11 Threaded Arbor, 2″	~~$97.95~~	$64.95
7566	Viper® SP Dry Core Bit, 5/8″-11 Threaded Arbor, 2-1/2″	~~$119.95~~	$79.95
7567	Viper® SP Dry Core Bit, 5/8″-11 Threaded Arbor, 3″	~~$134.95~~	$89.95
7568	Viper® SP Dry Core Bit, 5/8″-11 Threaded Arbor, 3-1/2″	~~$149.95~~	$99.95

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An Extra–Friendly Neighbor

One hot summer afternoon, Barbara Simmons fell on the side of the road while checking her mail. Simmons, who is 78, called for help for nearly 30 minutes with no luck—until Thor heard her. The Pitbull-Rottweiler mix that belongs to her neighbors gently approached Simmons to investigate the situation. Once he saw that she was in danger, he ran home and alerted his owners that something was wrong. When they didn't respond right away, he ran back to where Simmons was laying with his owners in tow. They called 911 and the EMT who arrived on the scene told Simmons that Thor probably saved her life.

"He was just so gentle and like, 'are you okay, are you okay?'" explained Simmons. "It was like somebody asking, 'are you okay, are you okay?'"

Despite being part Pitbull and part Rottweiler, Thor has never attacked anyone or harmed anything.

"He's totally destroyed the stereotype you have of those breeds," said Thor's owner, Colin Heaton. "He loves people."

Thor's owners say dogs like him, which are rescued from bad situations, make great pets and their previous living situations don't really have an impact on the dog's behavior.

"He has on occasion saved our chickens from a fox, survived being bitten by a copperhead, wrestled another fox, chased a coyote away, and learned dozens of words and commands," Thor's owner Anne Lewis said.

No Emergency Exit, Thanks

The flight attendant on our trip was handing out plastic pilot wings to some kids. As I stepped forward to board, she jokingly offered me one, but I passed. Pointing to the Airborne wings on my Army uniform, I explained, "The last time someone gave me wings, I had to jump out of the airplane."

Col. David Jessop (Ret.), Rineyville, Kentucky

"This country has gotten where it is in spite of politics, not by the aid of it. That we have carried as much political bunk as we have and still survived shows we are a super nation."

- Will Rogers
Daily Telegram, 1938

Imagine If I Were a Customer

Let's consider the first impression your shop gives customers, and what you can do to improve it

Mark Lauzon
Special Contributor

Over the last ten years I have visited hundreds of stone shops. These days, mostly I am calling on customers for Sasso, attending SFA workshops, visiting friends or working as a professional consultant. I thought I'd write an article based on a class that I presented at the Stone Fabricators Alliance MegaWorkshop at TISE West, earlier this year. It was called ShopHack. The purpose of the class was to encourage shop owners to catalog a list of deficiencies and work on one item per week. Just one. At the end of the year you will wind up with a better company and help foster an environment of constant improvement and change that will add profit to your bottom line.

Let's start with the basics. This article will focus on what your customer experiences when they do business with you. I would encourage you to ask yourself a simple question: "Is this the best we can do?" If the answer is no… then fix it, one small item at time.

Let's get into it!

It's 9 a.m. and I just landed in Anytown, USA. I picked up my rental car to go visit a stone shop. I go to the web and do a quick search for the company's website. It's not coming up in organic search. Finally, I find it on Google Maps. Awesome! I set the GPS and head out. Twenty minutes later, I arrive at the location. The building is a crossfit gym! The shop moved last year and never updated Google. Imagine if I were a customer…

ShopHack Item One

Do you have a website? Does it create a great first impression? Can people find you when they search for you? Is the location information accurate on Google and Apple Maps? While this seems obvious, it actually happens: shops relocate and don't update the info on the web, or sometimes it's just wrong. You should regu;arly check and update Google, Apple Maps, Linkedin, Facebook, Yelp and any other social sites your customers might use to find you.

I pick up the phone, call the shop owner and it goes to voice mail. I call the office number, get the new address and drive another 20 minutes to arrive at the address they gave me. It's in an industrial park. Where is the sign? Which unit? Why don't they put out a sandwich board? Imagine if I were a customer…

ShopHack Item Two

Once a customer navigates to the shop location, is there adequate professional signage directing the customer where to go, and where to park?

What does your customer see upon visiting your shop for the first time, visiting your website for the first time, or just trying to find your shop? These professional issues matter more than you think.

I drive around a corner and see a pile of remnants leaning against a wall, a few slabs on an A-frame. That must be it. I can't figure out where I should park and pull into a random spot. Those remnants look like a circus balancing act (complete with clowns). Slurry runs out into the street from under a garage door. The front is a funky mess, and I now see a small sign on an A-frame. Imagine if I were a customer…

ShopHack Item Three

Clean and organize the front of your building. Like the website, the customer-facing part of your business creates an important first impression. This impacts the amount of money you can charge for your work, and it also sets a tone with your employees about what you, as the owner, think about your business and their place of employment. Does the showroom door have hours posted? Is there a number a customer can call if they show up and nobody is there? The details matter.

I open the front door and am greeted by a nice young lady buried behind a haphazard pile of paperwork. It looks like somebody wrapped a hand grenade in yellow sticky notes and exploded it on her desk. The displays and all flat surfaces are dusty. The floor has grey slurry footprints. A random sink sits in a corner and a stick template leans against a wall. While small, the showroom looked nice… at some point. Just not today. The overall impression is disorganization and a lack of attention to detail. Imagine if I were a customer…

ShopHack Item Four

Clean and dust your showroom on a daily basis. Clear all flat surfaces of paper. Those loose papers, contracts, deposit slips, work orders, sink specs, hand drawings, et cetera are critical items and should be treated as such and stored in appropriate ways. Some of those docs have information that your customers might not want others to see.

I ask to see the shop owner and discover he is out templating and is running a little late. Weird. He asked me to be there at 10 a.m. Imagine if I were a customer…

ShopHack Item Five

Do you find yourself always running late for appointments? Do your customers gripe about templaters and installers showing up late? Time management is a critical part of your customer's experience. Learn to use available systems (free or professional software) to manage your time. If you are going to be late, call and let the customer know as soon as possible. It's basic courtesy!

I say, "No worries. Where is the restroom?" She points me down a small, dark hallway.

I open the door. The sink is filthy. There are urine drippings on the toilet rim and a bare scrap of toilet paper hanging on the roll! Imagine if I were a customer…

ShopHack Item Six

I can't emphasize how important this next one is. Visitors can handle clutter and disorganization (it might even remind them of their own office space). But ask them to use a filthy restroom? Like McDonald's, having a daily cleaning schedule and clean restrooms are important. It seems obvious, and I hope this does not apply to you. If it does, fix this first, please. I'm just saying…

I'm bored now. I'd examine the displays again but the place is cluttered and distracting. The shop owner is still running late. I look at his business card. I notice the logo does not really match the sign out front. Then I ask the nice girl drowning in paper if she has a brochure. She shakes her head but hands me a postcard. "We had these made awhile back," she says.

I look at it. The fonts don't match the business card either. I ask her to show me the website (which I could not find earlier). She pulls it up, and it looks nothing like the business card. It was quite obviously built in flash at least eight years ago, which explains why it's not popping up in Google search. The site is small. The look and feel does not match the sign or the business cards. Imagine if I were a customer…

ShopHack Item Seven

Coherent branding is important. It instills a sense of organization and purpose. It's professional and what we, as customers, have come to expect. Look at all your documents, website, business cards, signage on building and vehicles, company shirts, and anything else that you brand with your name. Do they look and feel the same? Are they coherent?

So I ask the front desk person if I can go in the back and check out the shop. I walk down the hall past the funky restroom and check out the workspace. Dust. Slurry. Paper coffee cups overflowing from an over-stuffed trash can float in a puddle.

To my surprise, I look to my left and see a safety board. I look closer, and notice the earplug box is empty. The only thing in the first aid kit is a pair of tweezers, some random Band-Aids and a half-empty bottle of Pepto Bismol. Every corner and nook of the shop has a chunk of useless stone and random junk scattered about. Imagine if I were a customer…

ShopHack Item Eight

Like cleaning the showroom, bathroom, installation vehicles, et cetera, how you maintain your workspace is a direct reflection on your business. It sends a powerful message to your customers and employees. I often encourage shop owners to clean the shop. In my opinion, a dirty, disorganized shop is as bad, if not worse, than a dirty bathroom. Your workers don't spend their entire day in the restroom. Employees are more productive and product quality improves in a neat, organized workspace. Productivity and quality affect your bottom line.

Hopefully, not every one of these scenarios apply to you and your business. It is a mash-up of things I've seen, all around the country, over and over again. Even if all those situations resemble your own shop, don't despair.

Make a list. Prioritize it, and get busy. If you focus on one or two items a week, you could square these problems away in short order. When I ask shop owners why things are such a mess, or why they haven't bought company shirts for their guys, or whatever, the answer is almost always, "We are so busy… I just don't have time."

— Well, your competitors do!

Think on that, and get started brushing up your image.

Next month, we will touch on situations involving production. From the initial contract to the final sign off, and many of the steps in between, there's always room for improvement. As a former fabricator, I would like to encourage you to join the SFA and visit and participate in the online discussions. This article is just a small example of the ideas, methods and business practices our members share with each other on a regular basis. If you go to my website at www.marklauzon.com there is a download button on the bottom, right hand corner of the page. Download the checklist I made for the class. It covers about sixty specific items similar to the ones listed above. Let's get busy!

When Mark is not selling Sasso Five Axis Saws, CNCs and inline machines, he stays busy doing marketing and production consulting for stone shops.

Customer Service, Excellent Team are Key for Smokey Mountain Tops

Continued from page 2

Looking Ahead

Scott said Smokey Mountain Tops has many exciting projects ahead. In 2016, "we're focusing on brining more value-added products to our customers from quality manufacturers."

And of course, the team will keep honing their excellent customer service and technical skills.

"I don't think there are any secrets to our success," said Scott. "I hope that we keep thinking outside the box, staying ahead of the industry and putting the customer first.

"They're our best sales force."

For more information, visit www.smokeymountaintops.com.

Photos provided courtesy Smokey Mountain Tops

This long, curving bartop at the Lexus Lounge in Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee, is formed of Cambria Quartz.

This impressive reception desk at SESAC performing rights advocates in Nashville, Tennessee, is Caesarstone Quartz from Smokey Mountain Tops.

Marble countertops grace this residential kitchen by Smokey Mountain Tops.

"Fast and easy to install, very strong and effective..."

Troy Pilkington, Shop Manager at TNK Design, Maryville, TN

Restroom vanity pictures captured at a tavern in South Illinois

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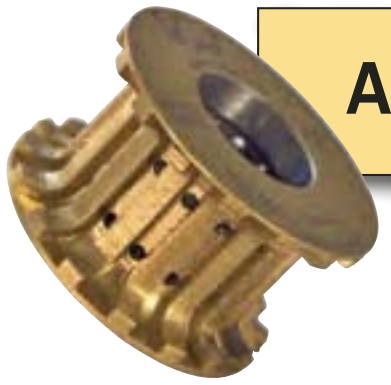

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- Standard 35mm bore

CNC Tool		Pos. 1 Segmented	Pos. 2 Sintered	Pos. 3 Sintered	Pos. 4 Sintered	Pos. 5 Metal Pre-Polish	Pos. 6 Ceramic	Pos. 7 Ceramic	Complete Set	Shape
A-30 R15	Radius	$356.95	$347.95	$347.95	$347.95	$149.95	$149.95	$149.95	$1,849.95	
A-30 R5	Radius	$407.95	$386.95	$386.95	$386.95	$149.95	$149.95	$149.95	$2,017.95	
B-30 R30	Demi Bullnose	$443.95	$485.95	$485.95	$485.95	$136.95	$136.95	$136.95	$2,311.95	
E-30	Bevel	$393.95	$393.95	$393.95	$393.95	$174.95	$174.95	$174.95	$2,099.95	
FG-30	Ogee Bullnose	$749.95	$549.95	$549.95	$549.95	$549.95	$199.95	$199.95	$3,348.95	
FZ-30	Ogee Straight	$459.95	$500.95	$500.95	$500.95	$197.95	$197.95	$197.95	$2,555.95	
T-20 R3	Double Eased	$319.95	$303.95	$303.95	$303.95	$128.95	$128.95	$128.95	$1,617.95	
T-30 R3	Double Eased	$392.95	$392.95	$392.95	$392.95	$145.95	$145.95	$145.95	$2,008.95	
T-30 R6	Double Eased	$392.95	$392.95	$392.95	$392.95	$145.95	$145.95	$145.95	$2,008.95	
V-30 R15	Full Bullnose	$473.95	$515.95	$515.95	$515.95	$164.95	$164.95	$164.95	$2,515.95	
Z-30	Straight	$401.95	$383.95	$383.95	$383.95	$172.95	$172.95	$172.95	$2,071.95	

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Design Excellence

Following his Design Philosophy of Simple, Durable, and High Quality, RYE Corp introduced the Husky Bridge Saw. This saw has been designed for sawing countertops as well as architectural stone. An easy blade tilt system allows for 45-degree miter cuts as well.

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Made in the USA of durable quality parts and components, the saw uses common parts for fast repairs in the event of a breakdown that are readily available at Grainger or Motion Industries. **Never wait for expensive parts from Italy again.** The Husky is ruggedly built and weights in at 10,000 lbs.

Easy To Use

The Husky Bridge Saw's controls are easy to use and you can operate the saw using the control panel and the wireless remote at the same time. Options include an 8″ touch pad for programming dimensional cuts.

Key Features

- Machined rail and bridge with overall dimensions of 15′ wide, 13′ deep, 9′ tall
- Wireless remote control with 2 speed 3 axis control, saw motor stop & start and forward cut
- Digital read out
- Direct drive AC heavy duty motors for all 3 Axis
- Alignment laser for aligning cutting material with blade
- Amp gauge for determining proper cutting speed
- Rotating 6′ x 10′ tilt table with 0, 45, 90, and 135 degree stops and innovative variable degree table locking system
- 20 HP, 220 Volt, 3 Phase direct drive motor can handle up to an 18″ blade
- Easy blade tilt system allows for 45-degree miter cuts
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