

Pfister Roofing . . .

Old Fashioned Values Blend with State of the Art Technology

Dieter Pfisterer, CEO of Pfister Industries, Inc., was recognized as the 1996 RSI Roofing Contractor of the Year. As he accepted the award, his thoughts centered on just how much had been accomplished over the previous thirteen years since he had re-established Pfister Roofing. He remembered the stories of family history, in particular those of his grandfather, Ernst, who founded Pfister in 1889. Ernst was known far and wide for his craftsmanship and honest values. Those same values and skills were learned by Ernst's son, Herman, who took over the business in 1914 and finally to Dieter. He thought about the small one room office and single truck with which he began to re-tool the family business here in the United States in 1983.

Today, Pfister is one of the most well-known roofing contractors in the industry, particularly in the northern New Jersey / metro New York marketplace. Positioned at the leading edge of roofing technology, Pfister Industries maintains a commercial client base of several hundred firms including many blue chip corporations and thousands of private homeowners. Of course, this level of activity did not happen overnight. Pfisterer began his apprenticeship in roofing, sheet metal crafting and plumbing in 1953. He managed two mechanical contracting businesses during the sixties and seventies before becoming the maintenance engineer for a major pharmaceutical firm. After eleven years in that capacity, he joined a German roofing manufacturer in their quest to co-ordinate and implement German roofing technology in this country. It was during that time he decided to carry on the family trade and tradition of quality roofing.

"There have been many improvements and innovations in materials and application techniques over the past number of years," says Pfisterer. "However, no matter what changes in technology, our focus will remain on bringing complete value to the customer.

Our motto will never change: 'We build roofs the old fashioned way. Right the first time.'" Commenting further on the companies customer service he said, "Some customers have told me that they are pleased to have been 'Pfisterized', and in fact, we now serve many who started with us in 1983."

Pfisterer is still quite active in the company and leads a team of three executive managers, George Piasecki, Steve Schmidt and Peg Mullins, who are responsible for day to day operations as well as the long-term direction of the firm.

In January 2000, Pfisterer was busy working on the layout for his firm's newly acquired 25,000 square foot headquarters facility

located in Paterson. The transition from the Fair Lawn headquarters to the Bunker Hill Urban Enterprise Zone was scheduled to be completed during the first quarter. Says Pfisterer, "This expansion will not only allow us to better serve our customers, but provides us with an opportunity to contribute to the revitalization of Paterson". Mullins, who is company treasurer, adds, "The incentives available to businesses like ours are attractive. There are also custom designed training programs that may very well assist us in our continual building of a skilled labor force."

Piasecki, Pfister's president, runs the company's commercial roofing business and has been in the industry his entire career. As he visited a major customer's job site in Morris County to review progress with the foreman he noted, "This is a detailed single-ply installation, the kind of work we're noted for. We are licensed to apply all the major manufacturers' products and install their systems for the likes of BASF, Lederle Laboratories, Paine Webber, International Paper and many others." Pfister's reputation for the skillful application of a myriad of systems led to their being chosen to install the new roof on a national monument, Grant's Tomb. He added, "Just because we hold a manufacturers' license doesn't mean we automatically use or promote the system. All products we use must meet our approval first."

The company is now investigating the feasibility of adding sprayed-in-place urethane systems to its offerings. They continually seek new products to evaluate in an effort to offer alternatives to every customer.

Pfister employs over fifty roofers skilled in the application of the aforementioned single-ply products, modified bitumen systems, metal roofing, slate, tile, shingles and more. The company operates a repair and maintenance division as well. "We offer our customers 24 hour / 7 day emergency service", notes Piasecki.

Schmidt, as vice president of the company, runs the residential division and co-ordinates the marketing effort for the entire firm. Formerly president of V.G. Co., Inc., and manager with Exxon and Alcoa, he says of Pfister's future, "We've experienced dramatic growth over the past few years while staying in control of the basics. We're committed to continued expansion and acquisition but must never lose sight of what got us here." A significant factor in the success of Pfister's residential work has been the market acceptance of the maintenance free LeafGuard gutter system. As the pressures of modern day living and two breadwinners in the family increase, low maintenance homes are in vogue. "LeafGuard fits that lifestyle to a tee", he says. The residential

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group's focus is on weatherproofing the house envelope. They install shingle and metal roofing, siding, soffit, and more, using a variety of name manufacturers' products.

With the exception of Pfisterer, Mullins has the longest tenure with the firm. A former business owner herself, Mullins directs office operations, personnel and many of the financial aspects of the company. "Many of the good things we do for customers are a direct result of our being efficient and organized. Technology in systems and communications, including radio dispatched repair service, helps us respond better to their needs and to give them the feeling we care, which we do."

Pfister uses technology along side old-fashioned values and long established ideas to build the business. The company recently landed a \$500,000 contract in part because several executives of the client's firm took note of Pfister's clean, organized vehicles traveling the interstate highway near the client's building. Piasecki notes, "The fact that we do excellent work is often mentioned by customers in the same sentence with how professional the men act and appear on site." The company solicits customer feedback by forwarding a questionnaire upon completion of every job. The customer has the opportunity to rate Pfister's performance in several categories as well as to add any comments or suggestions. Every questionnaire is reviewed by the CEO before being forwarded to the appropriate department. "We take that feedback very seriously," says Schmidt. "There are times we receive a comment that really identifies an area we can improve.

Other times, it allows us to interact with the customer to trade information and ideas. Someone always comes out of it better informed."

An area of great importance to the company is safety. Job site and facility safety programs resulted in Pfister's receiving the prestigious Safety Commendation in 1998 from Liberty Mutual. Says Pfisterer, "We received that award for working eighteen consecutive months without a lost workday incident. I think our attitude on safety reflects our commitment to quality." In fact, Mitchell Ellman, field superintendent, who is responsible for quality control of commercial projects is also charged with maintaining the firm's safety program.

In addition to Ellman, the rest of the management team includes career roofing professionals. Bill Hund runs the Commercial Repair & Maintenance department; Dave Romansky heads Commercial Estimating; and Herb Pechfelder is the firm's controller.

The company is a member of the National Roofing Contractors Association, Construction Specifiers Institute and is on the faculty of the Roofing Industry Education Institute. Pfister is a New Jersey Department of Building and Construction approved contractor. Bonded to \$4M and insured to \$2.5M, Pfister can be reached at 800-367-2207 or by e-mail at pfister@bellatlantic.net. You can also visit their website at www.pfister-roofing.com. Of course, a personal visit to the Pfister offices and showroom is always welcome. ■