

Building Scene

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300



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Structural steel detailers produce drawings of every steel connection on commercial buildings. Fabricators make the pieces. Erectors put them

up. The result can be striking — like improvements to the Cobo Conference & Exhibition Center pictured here while in progress.

Building industry seeks detailers

By Doug Funke
staff writer

Steel detailers, who schematically draft every steel-to-steel connection for commercial buildings designed by architects, will be in great demand in the years ahead.

So a consortium of steel manufacturers and installers here has established a three-year cooperative education program — believed to be the only one of its kind now operating — to meet the industry's needs during the 1990s and beyond.

In the next five to 10 years, we will be losing a vast majority of detailers we have in Michigan," said Albert L. Frechette, executive director of the Great Lakes Fabricators and Erectors Association.

"The majority of the people in the business are in their late 50s and older. They're going to retire in the next few years, and we have no one to replace them. The industry has done a poor job of telling the world there's a career here," he said.

A formal co-op program put together by industry professionals and teachers at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn was launched a year ago.

Upwards of 20 will be chosen for the third group to begin in September. About 18 are now involved.

THE ONLY requirement to apply is a high school diploma or GED certificate.

"We are taking every student with the assumption that they don't know anything about steel, don't know anything about construction and don't know anything about drafting," Frechette said. "We'll teach them."

"What I'm looking for is a student who is ready to settle on a career, can fit into the work environment and ethic required in the business and has basic math skills. There's no age limit. It's wide open now."

Applicants should contact Frechette at the association offices (358-2620) in Southfield to arrange an interview. Applicants will take a career aptitude test and a basic math test during the initial screening.

Survivors will interview with all fabricators and erectors who want to sponsor a student in the work-study program. Frechette attempts to work out matches based on how applicants and employees rate each other after the interviews.

Sponsorship is a prerequisite for participation.

Students alternate semesters of full-time classes and full-time work with sponsors and a single evening class. Students are initially paid at about \$6 per hour while at work.

"Technical courses designed by the industry and taught by people in the industry include structural drafting and elements of commercial construction," Frechette said.

Students now in the program probably can expect to pay about \$3,500 for three years of schooling. About 75 percent of the students have tuition paid by their sponsor, Frechette said.

COURSES LIKE metallurgy, physics and failure analysis are taught by Henry Ford instructors. An associate's degree in architectural technology is awarded upon completion of the program.

Graduates could earn upwards of \$20,000 annually

when they join the work-a-day world in a couple of years, Frechette projected.

Job opportunities are expected to be ample. "They make contacts within the industry over three years," he said. And in economic downturns? "You always need detailers for whatever work you have going on."

Richard Burns, a Southfield resident, had worked as a drafting trainee for Allied Drafting before beginning the co-op program in February 1990.

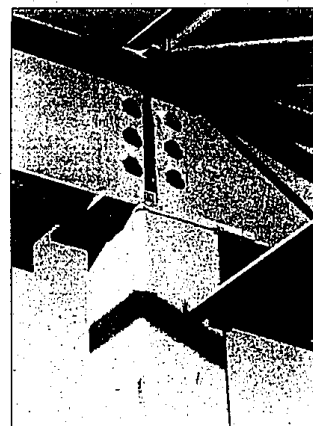
"SO FAR, so good," he said. "It will be great for beginners not in the business already. The school will advance you a lot quicker than if you came to the job and tried to learn by yourself."

"I learned how things work — contractors, bidding — rather than just drafting," said George Papazoglou, a Canton resident and co-op at Northville Fabricating. John Holmstrom, owner of a detailing service in Livonia, and Thomas Ross, owner of a steel fabricating company in Detroit, were on a task force that recommended the program.

"It (detailing) is an area that has been neglected many, many years," Holmstrom said. "Some larger fabricators used to train in-house. They have passed out of existence and no one picked up the training."

"There's really a crying need for new blood in this skill," he added. "Even with a recession well in place, there's still a need."

Said Ross: "Anybody that completes the program would probably have no problem finding a job. They could probably graduate 20 a year and have no problem placing them."



214 JACOFF LTD/staff photographer

Every steel-to-steel connection must be shown by a detailer. A couple hundred drawings may be necessary for even a small building.

Indemnification clause controversial

Our managing agent is negotiating its contract with us and has provided us with a form that provides that the management company should be indemnified by the association and placed as an additional insured on its insurance policy. We do not have a lawyer reviewing the contract and am wondering whether you see any problems. The management company has also suggested that it can't get insurance to cover us in the event that it is careless.

Management companies can obtain insurance coverage for their liability if they are willing to pay the price for it. It is not unreasonable to ask that the association be indemnified for the negligence on the part of the management agent that results in the association's being sued. Whether the association should indemnify the managing agent for similar activities is frequently a source of controversy and the subject matter of negotiations. You should not enter into the contract with the management agent until you have had an attorney who is clearly independent of the management firm to represent your best in-

terests and who explains to you the ramifications of these indemnification clauses and the lack of insurance protection by the managing agent as it relates to the association.

We are concerned about the developer of our condominium project absconding with our funds. We have not received an accounting from him and are wondering what legal recourse we have. He still controls the association and refuses to give us any records of the association's books. What can we do?

You have a serious problem that requires immediate action. Hopefully, the members of the association will be willing to expend the monies if necessary to get proper assistance. Assuming that you have made every effort to advise the developer through the advisory committee of your need to review these documents and he refuses, I would hire an attorney knowledgeable in condominium law with particular expertise in dealing with developers. It may be the your developer has merely been guilty of poor bookkeeping or conceivably has mishandled or misap-



condo queries
Robert M. Meisner

propriated the funds. In which case there may not only be civil but criminal ramifications. It is of the essence that you should exhaust your co-owners to assist you in undertaking these tasks.

We are having difficulty getting access to a co-owner's unit to repair a sump pump that services three units. Do you have any practical solutions?

A letter should be sent to the co-owner requesting cooperation and advising him or her of the rights of the association to gain access at a reasonable time. Make the offer in the letter to be as accommodating as possible, but the association not only has the right to obtain access on reasonable notice, but in the case of em-

ergencies, can literally break into the unit.

Try to establish a procedure where the co-owner can be reached in the case of an emergency, and if the association needs to gain access, short of an emergency, that it will give five days' notice, for example. If these efforts are not successful, have the association attorney write a more stern letter advising him or her of the association's right to obtain an injunctive order requiring that the co-owner comply with the condominium documents and that the legal fees and costs will be charged to the co-owner under the condominium documents and statute.

Robert M. Meisner is a Birmingham attorney specializing in condominiums, real estate and corporate law. You are invited to submit topics about condominiums that you would like to see discussed in this column by writing Robert M. Meisner at 30200 Telegraph Road, Suite 407, Birmingham 48010. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.

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by Jeff Manning

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