

Donna Reuter

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



# It's déjà vu all over again ...

Yogi Berra first said this in the early 1960s after he repeatedly witnessed Yankees Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris hit back-to-back home runs.

Once again, we are experiencing a sense of déjà vu at a time when home runs are unfortunately few and far between. It seems difficult to remain positive. However, with our exceptionally tough business climate, our job is to realize our strengths. We must develop new strategies to effectively meet present and future challenges and changing customer needs.

Those of us who have been in the precast/prestressed concrete industry for decades have seen several economic downturns, often eerily similar, though none quite as extreme as this. In fact, I could dust off some previous Chairman's Messages and print them verbatim today. The words would be as relevant as they were when those messages were first written:

- In 1975, G. Paul Jones Jr. wrote in his message "Financial Stability—Prerequisite for Future Growth" that "we must improve our financial stability," "we must improve and protect our accounts receivable," and "we must carefully control our costs."
- In 1988, David Hanson wrote in his message "Optimism," "The impression we have from the recent zone meetings is that business across the country is getting better, but there is room for more improvement."
- In 1990, John Nanna wrote in "PCI Will Lead Us in the 90s," "What all precast prestressed concrete producers have in common at this point is uncertainty."
- In 1991, Larry M. LaFollette wrote in his message "Will You Survive the Current Economy?," "Our industry is indeed facing severe economic conditions over most of the country. In visits with members from all zones, I have heard of low demand, overcapacity and depressed prices."
- In 2002, Ron Schlerf's March–April message said, "For many entrepreneurs, 2002 may rank as one of the more challenging years in recent memory."

I would love to take out my crystal ball to tell you when things will improve, but magic is not the answer. If history tells us anything, it is that eventually we will recover. With exploration and proper planning, the industry and PCI can become much stronger for having survived these unprecedented times. We have already trimmed our overhead, gotten lean in our factories, and out of necessity become more creative and open to change. So, on a positive note, when the going gets tough, we will get better! We must become more competitive and better able to further the industry to which we are all dedicated.

As Yogi once said, "90% of the game is half mental." With this in mind, stay positive and stay involved. ▮



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