Letters

Perlmutter, Sachter, Hanson first to use prestressed concrete double tee

In May of 2010 I was honored to be the recipient of PCI's most distinguished honor, the PCI Medal of Honor. In my remarks, I mentioned the achievements of previous recipients and credited Harry Edwards with the development of the first double tee in the United States. The full text of my speech is in the Fall 2010 issue of *PCI Journal*. I believe that I was influenced by Edwards's article that appeared in "Reflections on the Beginnings of Prestressed Concrete in America," a special issue of *PCI Journal* to commemorate the 25th anniversary of PCI in 1979. That paper has a figure of a double tee with the caption "Dimensions of original double-tee."

Sometime after that day, I was challenged on this, and the purpose of this letter is to set the record straight.

I was wrong.

To confirm who actually did develop the first prestressed concrete double tee, I reached out to people who I thought would know. These included Norm Scott, PCI's second executive secretary in Florida; Mac Taylor, who hired Scott into the industry; Wally Prebis, former executive director of the Colorado Prestressed Concrete Association; and Paul Zia, who worked for Edwards in the early 1950s.

The people who should be credited with this achievement are Jack Perlmutter, owner of Prestressed Concrete of Colorado in Denver; Nat Sachter, the architect on the first building using double tees; and George Hanson, a structural engineer in Denver.

Jack Perlmutter was so proud of this achievement that he had "Twin Tee" inscribed on his headstone.

The building was the Cold Storage Building for Beatrice Foods. That building is still in service today for a specialty steel supplier. The double tees are what we could call today a 6DT15: 6 ft (1.8 m) wide and 15 in. (380 mm) deep. The span was about 24 ft (7.3 m).

This building was constructed in 1952. The first prestressing beds in Florida were used for flat slabs in 1953, and the first prestressed concrete double tees in Florida were produced no earlier than 1953.

I confirmed all of this in August last year when I met with Wally Prebis, Mike Altenberg, and Leonard Perlmutter, Jack's brother. Altenberg and Perlmutter were part of Prestressed Concrete of Colorado at that time.

With all that said, I must still give credit to Edwards. While he did not develop the first prestressed concrete double tee, he refined it and did a remarkable job promoting the industry

during its early years. He also played a major role in the creation of the Prestressed Concrete Institute in 1954 and served as its first secretary-treasurer.

If anyone reading this letter would like more information on my investigation, please email me at hwilden@roadrunner.com. Also, if anyone has information regarding the development and use of any other double tee, please send that to me as well. It may be used in a paper to be published in 2015 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of *PCI Journal*.

Thank you for this opportunity to set the record straight.

Helmuth Wilden, PE, FPCI
Wilden Enterprises Inc.
Hilton Head, S.C.

Comments?

The editors welcome comments on the contents of this issue and on general matters related to the precast/prestressed concrete industry. Letters should include the writer's name, title, company, city, and email address or phone number. All letters become the property of *PCI Journal* and may be edited for space, clarity, and style. Letters are limited to 250 words and are published at the discretion of the editorial staff. The opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of PCI.

Please address letters to *PCI Journal* at journal@pci.org.