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High-Tech Concepts Enhance

BY JAMES G. TOSCAS, P.E.

As a plant-controlled, engineered product, precast concrete can be fabricated to precise specifications, enabling its use when tolerances are close or specific attributes need to be favored.

Today, precasters are meeting a widening array of design needs for parking structures with new technologies that contribute to the components' speed of erection, economy, aesthetics and other properties.

Designers are being challenged more often today by the growing interest in mixed-use properties. In blending retail, residential and other functions with parking, developers maximize the efficiency of their project's footprint and generate traffic throughout the day.

This creates the need for fire-rated separations between parking levels and residential units. Precast concrete double-Ts provide an ideal way to achieve this separation, thanks to their inherent fire rating and structural capabilities.

These projects are enhanced by the growing application of total-precast concrete solutions, in which the building's entire structural system and façade are constructed using precast concrete components. In these applications, some structural and architectural requirements are combined into one piece. A variety of textures



The Carolina Walk condominium project on the University of South Carolina campus in Columbia features a total precast concrete building system to create multifamily housing and parking facilities. The project, designed by Ard, Wood, Holcombe & Slate Architects, features precast concrete panels that combine contrasting architectural finishes using sandblasting and brick form liners with field-applied stain. Photo courtesy of Metromont Corp.

can be created using reveals, form liners and embeds of thin brick, granite or other stones while retaining the component's structural integrity.

This approach saves material and erection costs while producing striking aesthetic designs. It also eliminates the scheduling complexities and congestion caused by bringing masons or other trades to the site. The precast concrete components are delivered and quickly erected, either directly from the transport or from a staging area accessed by the cranes.



The Social Security Administration parking structure in Birmingham, AL, features a sustainable design using a total precast concrete structure that will help it obtain LEED certification. It includes a rooftop rainwater-collection system used for irrigating a rooftop garden on a new low-rise office building nearby. The 456,618-square-foot project was designed by HOK Architects and OPUS Architects & Engineers. Photo courtesy of Metromont Corp.

New Technologies Growing

Several new mixtures and casting techniques also are expanding precast concrete's capabilities. Self-consolidating concrete (SCC), ultra-high-performance concrete (UHPC) and carbon-fiber reinforced concrete (CFRC) help designers expand the range of capabilities.

The concrete mixture in SCC includes high-range water-reducing admixtures that significantly increase the material's workability and fluidity. As a result, it flows quickly into place, fills every corner of a form, and surrounds even densely packed reinforcement. SCC provides a high-quality, smooth finish with minimal if any bugholes, offering speedy casting, the capability to be formed into complex shapes, fewer inspection requirements, and high durability.

UHPC consists of a steel fiber-reinforced, reactive-powder concrete that provides a compressive strength of 30,000 psi, more than twice that of high-performance concrete. Even with lower-psi mixes, precasters today can achieve clear spans in arrangements that can exceed the needs of typical parking structures with double-Ts, eliminating material and erection costs for columns and beams while creating a welcoming, safe interior.

CFRC uses conventional steel for primary reinforcing and a resin-bonded, carbon-fiber grid for secondary reinforcing and shear transfer. The carbon-based prod-

Precast Concrete Designs

uct minimizes the potential for corrosion in the precast member. This in turn eliminates the excess concrete cover normally needed to protect the steel reinforcement from corrosion. As a result, costly sealers can be eliminated, and components can be made as much as 12% lighter in weight due to the reduction in cover.

Stainless-steel connections also are being incorporated into designs. They provide more durability and thus a longer service life for the entire facility.

Connections of all types are easier to reference, as the Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute has just released its first-ever Connections Manual. It features an overview of all types of connections and design examples that aid designers in achieving the best look and more effective option.

Several parking projects have even been certified by the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) pro-

gram produced by the U.S. Green Building Council. These take advantage of the array of attributes provided by precast concrete, such as lessened site impact, reduced heat-island effect, recycled content and use of local materials.

Maintenance needs, including caulking, can be reduced with precast concrete designs as well. PCI's Parking Committee has produced a comprehensive maintenance program that can be used by owners to ensure a long service life.

Safety and security in parking structures can be enhanced by lighting techniques that exploit precast concrete's long-span capabilities. Some designers have questioned the efficiency of lighting in these structures due to the use of double-Ts, which could block some fixtures. However, a 2007 study by Walker Parking Consultants in Denver, sponsored by the Colorado Prestressers Association, showed there was no difference in horizontal illumination on the floor or vertical illumination on perimeter walls in precast concrete or cast-in-place concrete structures.

Precast concrete enhancements don't stop with fabrication. PCI has instituted a Certified Erectors program, similar to the certification program mandated for all products cast by PCI members. Independent auditors track each company's erection techniques to ensure professional handling. These efforts ensure that owners and designers receive the project they envisioned, with tight tolerances, efficient erection, and long-term quality.

As sustainable design demands grow and available space is reduced, precasters will work closely with designers of parking structures to ensure that their projects are rapidly completed, aesthetically pleasing and cost-effective.

James Toscas is President of the Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute in Chicago. The organization, which represents precast concrete producers throughout North America, can be found online at www.pci.org. Questions can be sent to info@pci.org.

PT



The Hull Street parking structure on the University of Georgia campus in Athens features a load-bearing precast concrete structural system with integrated architectural finishes, including sandblasting, reveals and cast-in thin bricks. The project was designed by Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart, Stewart & Associates. Photo courtesy of Metromont Corp.

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Demise of a Reseller

BY SHERRY EVENS

The theme of last month's issue of **Parking Today** concerned dealer/distributors or value-added resellers. Many believe that you get the best price by going direct to the manufacturer.

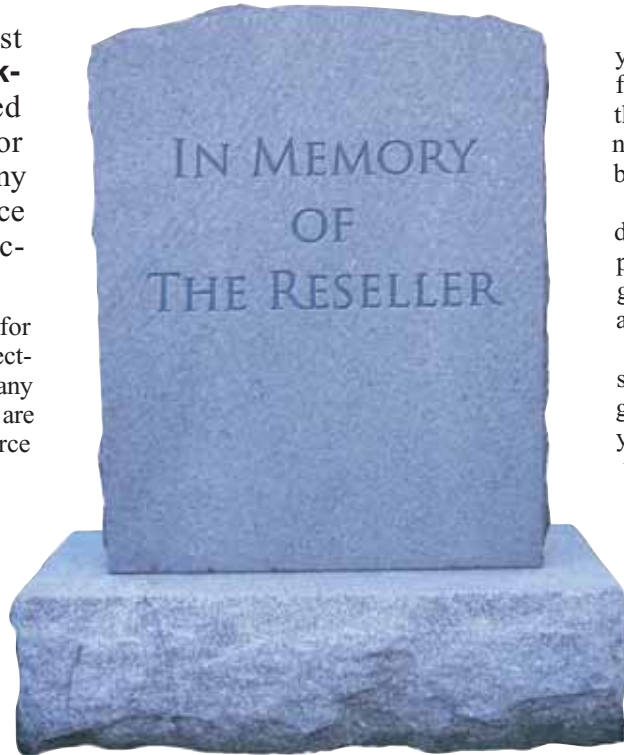
I'd like to give you some food for thought. First of all, why does the direct-from-manufacturer business thrive in any industry? Most of you would say there are two reasons: low price and single source of accountability.

Finding the lowest price isn't anything new. The thousands that stream in and out of my local Wal-Mart, Sam's Club and Costco stores can attest to that. And single source of accountability? Dealing with the manufacturer only vs. manufacturer and dealer/distributor seems easier.

But let's say you buy an electric blanket from Sam's. You get it home, place it on your bed, and the darn thing doesn't work. No problem, you say; it comes with a manufacturer's warranty.

When you do get back to Sam's 10 days later, you are informed that it no longer carries that make and model and you have to call the manufacturer directly. So, you go online to the website listed in the warranty information, and the only thing you can find that may help you is going to the "Contact Us" button.

You wait three days and receive no e-mail or return phone call from the manufacturer. So you call the toll-free number listed in the warranty information, and get the Famous Automated Attendant.



You know the next words: "Thank you for calling Hard-to-Reach Manufacturer. If you know your party's three-digit extension, please enter it now. For a complete list of staff members, please spell the last name ..."

I'm sure you know the rest of the drill. So, you press "zero" to get a real person on the phone. However, you are greeted by: "Sorry, the operator is not available at this time."

So, being ignored by your online service request and not being able to get through via the toll-free number, you use 30 minutes of your precious weekend time and write a letter and send it via snail mail to the manufacturer. Two weeks later, you receive a "form letter" acknowledging your request and asking you to complete an accompanying "Service Request" to ship back along with your blanket to the manufacturer (at your own shipping expense, of course).

The response: "Please allow 8-12 weeks for the resolution of this matter." Well, 12 weeks is three months, and you won't need the electric blanket then because it will be summer!

Now, if you had purchased this same electric blanket at a full-service store, do you think you would have had that much trouble and inconvenience?

We resellers have bemoaned the Internet (direct-from-manufacturer) selling crowd for several years now, and it's not going to fix itself. You have to decide if you truly want to be a value-added reseller or just a commodities broker.

Several steps are necessary to save the value-added reseller from becoming extinct.

Start with the manufacturers of the parking products.

Dear manufacturer:

If you want to sell to the end-users at dirt-cheap prices – sometimes going below what you charge resellers – then you'd better stoke up a separate inside sales department and a support department to handle trouble-shooting, over-the-phone or online installation, version upgrades, patches, fixes, and training.

That's what we resellers do right now! And since our employees work for pay, we have to charge for those services, as you will discover as well, since I'll bet you can't find any folks who'll work for free, either.

Oh, you say, we don't want to cut out our value-added resellers. We just want to move more products, so we'll have you sell direct to end-users.

Sooner or later, your end-user customers will get frustrated and decide your brand is not worth the trouble. Just ask any reseller. We have bailed many a frustrated end-user out of a situation that he or she got in over his or her head with a "self-install."

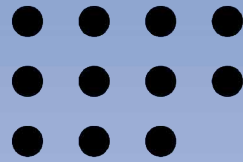
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"It's unwise to pay too much, but it's worse to pay too little. When you pay too much, you lose a little money – that is all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything, because the thing you bought is incapable of doing [what] it was bought to do. The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot – it cannot be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder, it is well to add something for the risk you run, and if you do that, you will have enough to pay for something better."

– John Ruskin, economist and author



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Demise of a Reseller

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Now what will that do to your reputation?

Do you not realize that maintenance agreements are huge profit areas if you do your job right? Do you not want repeat business in the form of add-ons, supplies and version upgrades? How are you going to know when any customer needs any of these things? Can you trust the customer to know which product best matches his or her work environment without doing a thorough needs analysis with that company?

And finally, for the end-user: You get what you pay for – simple as that. If you want to shop on price alone, then direct-from-manufacturer is heaven for you.

But there is a mean catch to that: If you run into any issues, remember that the product or system you got such a good deal on affects your entire parking operation. Do you really want to deal with all your customer's parking patrons when they raise the gates and lose hundreds or even thousands of dollars of revenue?

I hope you decide to take more pride in yourself as a reseller and put the "value" back into it. If not, we resellers are a vanishing breed.

This was adapted from an article originally published in *Marking Time* magazine. Sherry Evens is President of Evens Time in Indianapolis, IN. She can be reached at sevens@eventime.com.

PT

NPA Sponsors Financial Benchmarks Survey

The National Parking Association (NPA) is sponsoring a new financial benchmarks survey, which was to be distributed in June.

NPA has contracted with EConsult of Philadelphia to develop this survey, which will establish a set of industry benchmarks for parking facilities throughout the country. The survey will be distributed by Reed Group, a market research and consulting firm based in Philadelphia, to a wide variety of NPA members in numerous markets.

Ultimately, it will become an annual survey used to collect data on rates from several different types of parking operations. The survey will include nationwide information on many sectors of the industry, both on-street and off-street, including center cities, hotels, hospitals, airports, off-airport and meters.

"This survey is the beginning of a comprehensive effort by NPA to establish itself as the source for the most accurate and important parking rate data," said Robert Zuritsky, President of the Parkway Corp. and survey volunteer leader. "We plan to follow up with additional surveys every year."

NPA plans to announce the results of the survey at its annual convention and exposition Sept. 15-18 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

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THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN'

The New World of Parking

BY AYSLEY DELUCE

In today's increasingly high-tech world, consumer expectations have changed. Companies are being forced to be more transparent, accountable and consumer-focused. The Internet has opened up an entire new world of communication that allows consumers to talk to one another, share their knowledge and take advantage of that which will benefit their lives.

The result is consumers' expectation that the world really is at their fingertips. They want quick answers. They want immediate returns. Ironically, they are looking for simplicity amid the complex world that technology has brought – simplicity of the facts and simplicity within the options available.

The parking business is no exception.

According to statistics published in last year's Colliers Parking Survey, monthly parking rates in North America's urban cities grew an average of 4.4% in 2007 alone. About 60% of Canadian parking lots/garages have waiting lists, and that sits at approximately 20% for U.S. cities, with typical wait periods of six and five months, respectively.

Some cities such as New York are now witnessing monthly parking rates in excess of \$600; Boston with monthly median parking hovering at \$460; and even Toronto at a median price of \$300 per month.

But consumers are not idiots; they know they have options. They are becoming frustrated with the ever-increasing costs of owning a vehicle. From insurance and taxes to the cost of gas, they are looking for alternative ways to manage their expenditures. So what are they doing?

Consumers are changing the game.

It began with the basic concept of classified ads. Paper-based, local newsprint began seeing personals for extra garage space. Next were signs posted in condo-building lobbies and grocery store community boards.

Then the Internet took over, and a whole new era of parking sourcing was born. From local websites to multinationals with local bents such as craigslist.com and kijiji.com, the game was skewing toward the consumer.

They were in control of their search. No longer dependent on driving around their place of work or home to find convenient parking, they were suddenly being funneled into online classifieds to help them source and post their available spots.

What has been lacking, however, is a central website for commercial property owners and residential parking owners to post their spots in tandem. An independent site that allows consumers to search for spots of their liking while allowing the spot owners and managers to use the Internet for what it was intended – connecting buyers and sellers.

While many of the larger parking conglomerates have recognized the need to offer online search tools, what they fail to factor in is that parking is not a branded exercise. Consumers do not talk about the commercial name of the property where they are monthly parking; they merely give the street coordinates or intersection.

Until such time as the investment is made in branding and, frankly, an increase in the parking experience offered by many garages, consumers will continue to focus on location and not brands. What impact does this have? They aren't online looking for your brand, which means they most likely aren't going on to

Continued on Page 24



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The New World of Parking

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your website until they have already rented in your garage and need details of some sort.

What they are looking for are one-stop solutions to their parking needs, and a number of formidable options are springing up around the Internet. One in particular that is beginning to see some serious traction is www.parkingspots.com. The website, which I co-founded, is designed specifically to manage mixed inventory of commercial and residential parking.

Currently focused on monthly parking, the site is designed to make the business of finding parking seamless and easy – exactly what the modern consumer has come to expect.

Bottom line, consumers are searching for quick and easy ways to solve their parking issues in North American cities and beyond. It's time for the parking industry to take note of how crafty consumers have become and begin speaking to them where they are and in a way that takes the frustration out of parking.

The industry needs to embrace the new technologies that are out there and designed to help them market their parking spots to prospective renters.

What's that old saying? Oh yeah: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Aynsley Deluce and her partner Matthew Ball founded www.parkingspots.com. She can be reached at info@parkingspots.com.

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Rio de Janeiro after dark.

The Future of Transport in Brazil

BY SEBAS VAN DEN ENDE

The lack of investment in transport infrastructure is a big challenge for the Brazilian government. In fact, it is a stumbling block that needs to be solved in order not to decrease the economic growth that Brazil is experiencing.

The transport area is so important that the lack of modernization can bring loss in competitiveness. Looking at it this way, the importance of the government's program for accelerated growth, or the PAC, regarding transport is undeniable. And with its investment of (BRL) \$58 billion, it is undoubtedly the light at the end of Brazil tunnels ... and roads and ports.

We can say that the PAC, along with other initiatives from the government, is the entrance for Brazil into the future – competing at the same level in the country's development and, of course, improving all Brazilians' way of life.

Besides the PAC, some other factors make the transport restructuring crucial, such as the oil discovery by Petrobrás, which will make the ports' upgrade to international infrastructure standards indispensable. Export of products, manufactured or agricultural, needs to have modernized and integrated rail, road and port systems.

This conjuncture makes Brazil the most promising country in the transport infrastructure area. This market growth in the next three years should surpass 50% and keep growing and offering continuous modernization.

This year, there is a forecast of more auctions, such as for São Paulo's "rodoanel," the beltway around Brazil's largest megalopolis, and the privatization of some ports.

The United States, Canada, Japan and China are among the countries interested in the potential growth of the Brazilian transport market. We are talking about billions in investments, which in turn will result in jobs, growth, profit and progress.

For a long while, people have said that Brazil is the country of the future. So, with the PAC and other government programs, it looks like the future is coming. The country is being prospected as a good place for investments. So it is easy to see that the effective restructure and road, rail and ports modernization are unstoppable.

There is much evidence that 2008 will be a crucial year in transport for Brazil.

Real Alliance, a Brazilian company, will host TranspoQuip Latin America 2008 – an international exhibition for transport infrastructure – on Sept. 9-11 at Expo Center Norte in São Paulo.

TranspoQuip also will host discussions on pertinent industry issues, including safety, management and user comfort.

Brazil's auctions are a great step in what will be a wave of privatization. As a result, both the concessionaires and the government are, and will continue to be, looking for new technology. The latest in technological innovation will be present at TranspoQuip.

The signposts are pointing to Brazil. The suppliers and technology numbers that its transport modernization involves are enormous. Seize the opportunities and look to Brazil – a country that belongs to the future.

Sebas van den Ende is President of Real Alliance, which organizes TranspoQuip Latin America 2008. He can be reached at sebas@real-alliance.com. For more information on the exhibition and conference, go to www.transpoquip.com.

PT

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Since 2000

Ceramic Tile Sets off

BY LYNDA PORTELLI

The work of nine well-known artists is featured in ceramic tile murals that clearly and stylishly mark each floor of the daily parking garage at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. This project received an award of excellence from the International Parking Institute for best design of a parking structure with more than 800 spaces.

Given the size and scale of the garage, the art tiles provide compelling way-finding elements to assist travelers in navigating and noting their locations, while adding enhanced caliber and color to the garage interior. Showcasing the talents of painters, pho-



tographers, illustrators, sculptors, ceramicists and graphic designers, each artist's tile design imparts a unique character and palette to the floor it enhances.

The project was part of BWI's Architectural Enhancement Program. Selected for this site-specific enhancement, it was decided that the parking garage would provide maximum exposure to travelers and provide a positive impact. The goal of the AEP was to have the architects incorporate artwork or enhancements into the building

itself. Thousands of local artists registered with the project, but only nine were selected, one for each level of the parking structure.

Each artist was challenged to create a mural design for ceramic tile using only four different 12" x 12" tiles. The murals combine vivid color and bold graphics inspired by the regional resources of Maryland. The decorative ceramic tiles add eye-catch-



INNOVATIVE

look beyond. be creative.

For ACS, creating innovations in parking management takes more than good ideas. It takes teamwork. Collaboration. And the discipline to maintain a technology roadmap, while building innovation upon innovation. From license plate recognition systems and state-of-the-art tap and go payment technology, to parking guidance systems, closed circuit TV and sophisticated data security — ACS is a leader worldwide.

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