



Wessel Retires After 31 Years With The Gypsum Association

On April 29th, 2016, Robert A. Wessel, PhD, FASTM, Senior Director, Technical Services, Gypsum Association (GA) will report for duty for the last time. After more than 30 years of service to the Association and the industry, including overseeing every edition of the *Fire Resistance Design Manual* (GA-600) published since 1984, the man so many know from his work at the GA and his decades of service to ASTM, will answer his last technical call, pack his numerous ASTM service awards and head towards home and a well-deserved retirement.

ABOUT BOB

Bob was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1951. One of three siblings, his family followed his father's peripatetic inclinations, moving nine times over the course of his childhood. By high school, the Wessel family had landed in Battle Creek, Michigan. Within days of his graduation, Bob was in Navy boot camp. Next, he headed to Field Medical Service School at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Bob served two tours of duty as a Navy Corpsman. His first assignment was to an artillery unit of the 11th Marines, in South Vietnam.

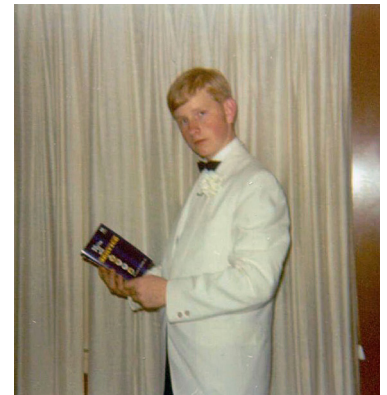
"I was only scared once while serving in Vietnam—from the minute I got there, to the minute I left," Bob says with characteristic humor. He received a Purple Heart during that tour of duty. Fortunately for Bob, his second tour, a seven month stint on the USS Brooke, was less harrowing.

After leaving the service, Bob returned to Michigan and a job in an automobile plant. Two years later, he decided to attend college. Bob received a full scholarship at Tri-State University (now Trine

University) in Angola, Indiana. At Tri-State he "fell in love with chemistry." By his senior year, he was completing his own studies while teaching five sections of freshman chemistry and working part time. Of that period, Bob says, "It made for a busy day, but it was fun."

Former GA member company Celotex offered the new college graduate a job as plant chemist in their Lagro, Indiana, facility. Within a few years, Bob was working at Celotex's Tampa, Florida, headquarters as a technical services director in the building products division. In that role, he was the point man for gypsum, foam plastic insulation, acoustical ceiling tiles, and UL follow-up procedures.

While at Celotex, Bob participated in his first GA-600 revision cycle. As an alternate to the Celotex representative, his responsibilities were minimal, but he can rightfully claim that he has



Bob Wessel age 18

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worked on every *Fire Resistance Design Manual* (GA-600) since the 10th edition. When the GA met in Tampa, Bob attended his first meeting of the Gypsum Association's Building Code and Technical Committees.

By 1984, Bob was weary of Florida's climate and was looking for new career challenges. He had enjoyed his committee work for the Association and considered the GA and its member companies "a good bunch of people." When a position at the Gypsum Association presented itself, he seized the opportunity to join the staff. Since then, he has served as liaison to the Building Code and Technical Committee (BCTC) and its precursors. The BCTC is composed of dedicated member company volunteers who produce all of the Association's technical documents, including code referenced publications *Application and Finishing of Gypsum Panel Products* (GA-216) and GA-600.

"A person doesn't stay with a single organization for 30 years unless he believes in what it stands for, enjoys the work, and likes the people he works with," Bob reflects. "I've had the opportunity to work with exceptional volunteers. The BCTC is truly a team with a single goal—advancing the industry."

Bob is similarly appreciative of his 34 years as an active ASTM International member and considers participation in its consensus process among his most significant career accomplishments. Fifteen ASTM committees have benefited from Bob's service, which includes chairing the Committee

on Technical Committee Operations (COTCO) for three years. For more than 20 years, he was secretary of Committee C11 on Gypsum and Related Building Materials. Recently, Bob co-chaired the C11 Centennial Symposium, *Advances in Gypsum Technologies and Building Systems*.

A founding member of ASTM Committee E60 on Sustainability, Bob also served as Subcommittee Chair of E60.01 on Buildings and Construction and recently as a Director on E60's Executive



Bob Wessel today

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FIVE FACTS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT BOB

- 1 Bob is a lifetime member of Mensa.
- 2 Bob was a Licensed Mortician's Assistant.
- 3 Bob drove an armored vehicle after leaving the Navy.
- 4 Bob was a War of 1812 reenactor.
- 5 Bob's family tree includes Mayflower passenger Stephen Hopkins, an attempted murderer, a union thug, and a governor of a former US Territory.

Subcommittee. A personal highlight of his ASTM years, was work as E05 task group chair leading the development of the hose-stream test and his contributions to publication E2748 *Standard Guide for Fire-Resistance Experiments*. What has he enjoyed most about ASTM? “Meeting and working with the leading brains in the various fields—the experts.”

Given the length and breadth of his service it is not surprising that Bob is an ASTM Award of Merit recipient (ASTM Fellow). Speaking on behalf of ASTM International, Staff Managers Thomas O’Toole and Stephen Mawn tell *Gypsumation*, “Bob’s technical expertise and managerial skills are only outmatched by one thing; his quick-witted ability to find solutions to both technical and administrative challenges. There is really no way to measure all that Bob has given to ASTM International. We will truly miss Bob and wish him all the best as he retires.”

PERSONAL

Many people who have met Bob are familiar with his wife Jill Schlessinger Wessel, a retired lawyer who frequently accompanies him on his travels. They are the proud parents of a large blended family that totals sixteen children and more than a dozen grandchildren. Although they have no children together, the Wessels have a, “Yours and mine are *ours*” attitude. They clearly enjoy their family and each other.

Bob’s interesting life, his lengthy career at the GA, his work with other organizations, including the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), could fill many more pages, but an important question remains, namely:

WHAT’S NEXT FOR WESSEL?

Bob and Jill will relocate to Adrian, Michigan, a beautiful farming community not far from Battle Creek. In addition to continuing to volunteer as a Family History Consultant for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), Bob plans to engage in a service mission for his church. Last, but not least, he looks forward to fishing Michigan’s many lakes.

Tech Question

I am designing a series of multi-story condominiums with open breezeways between the units. What type of gypsum panel product(s) can we use for the ceilings of these breezeways?

Answer: This is a common question. With the growing retirement-age population there is an increase in townhomes and condominiums built in this style. Think of these breezeways much as you might an overhang or soffit, with a wall on two sides instead of one. Section 18 of *Application and Finishing of Gypsum Panel Products* (GA-216-2016) deals specifically with exterior applications and the appropriate installation and finishing methods for exterior gypsum soffit board and gypsum panel products used in “carports, open walkways [and] porches . . . that are either horizontal or inclined downward away from the building.” Close attention should be paid to ventilation and finishing requirements, although the need for facia and molding may be very limited when constructing a breezeway.

Technological advances by GA member companies have resulted in new panel products for exterior use. As with all proprietary products; however, it is important to consult individual manufacturer specifications for use, installation and finishing.



All-New 21st Edition of the
GA-600-15

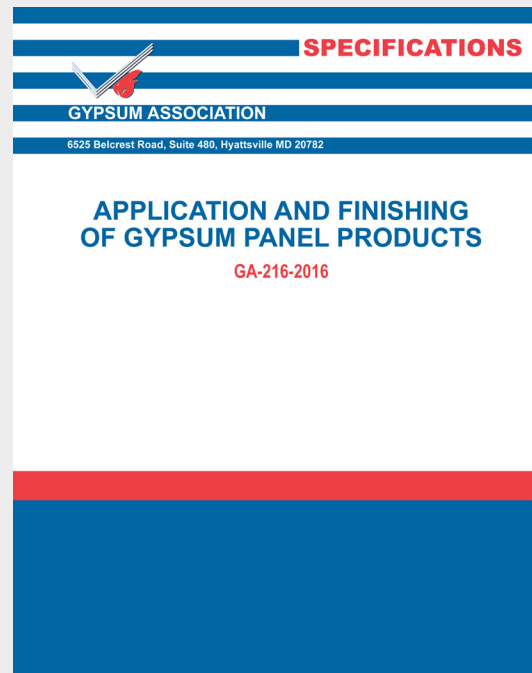
FIRE RESISTANCE DESIGN MANUAL

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Gypsum Association Releases Revised Application Standard: GA-216-2016

The Gypsum Association has revised and published application standard, *Application and Finishing of Gypsum Panel Products* (GA-216-2016.) The 2016 specification provides appropriate installation methods for most gypsum panels—from the more common regular and type X wallboards to specialized performance boards such as glass mat water-resistant gypsum panels and abuse-resistant and impact-resistant gypsum panels.

GA-216 is referenced in the International Building Code as an appropriate standard for the application and installation of gypsum boards and panels. Copies of the specification may be purchased through the Association's bookstore at: www.gypsum.org.



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