



Renaissance man Tamiazzo takes FCA helm

By Mandi Lindsay

Hailing from Southern California, former surfer, trumpet player and Las Vegas Framing owner, Mike Tamiazzo, is poised to take the Framing Contractors Association's top job in 2009.

Though his grandfather and brother adopted the carpentry trade, the new FCA president never dreamed of hammers and nails as a youth. Instead, Tamiazzo was drawn to music.

"Growing up, my idol was Doc Severinsen, and I would play the trumpet up to six hours a day. During high school I played in numerous bands," Tamiazzo reminisced. "Ultimately, my life's dream was to become a studio musician."

Agnes de Mille once said, "No trumpets sound when the important decisions of our life are made. Destiny is made known silently."

Tamiazzo followed his heart, married and started his family, creating an immediate need to make a living. He did as a carpenter, putting his musical dream on hold.

It wasn't long after that Tamiazzo's independent spirit and desire for self-employment emerged, driving him to acquire his real estate license. Tamiazzo worked diligently in this profession through the 1970s, but when interest rates soared in 1980, his career came to a screeching halt.

"Interest rates were at an unprecedented 16 percent. Even if we were able to find someone willing to buy, qualifying them for the financing was nearly impossible. Agents were leaving the business in droves," said Tamiazzo. "The intermittent income didn't bode well with the fixed bills."

During his real estate career Tamiazzo had supplemented his income by buying houses here and there, renovating them and selling them at a profit. As the firm's top real estate salesman for four years running, Tamiazzo's talents weren't unnoticed by his real estate broker, who quickly offered him major and minor repair work on the 20 rental properties he owned.

"It wasn't long before I realized there was a big difference between construction and real estate sales. Escrow could take six months to close. If the deal falls through, you don't get paid. In construction, I was getting paid for everything I did," said Tamiazzo. "Before I knew it, I was operating a full-time residential repair business which led me to obtaining my California general contractor's license. Repair work turned into remodeling and room additions to relocating to Apple Valley where I broke into the custom home market."

After purchasing some relatively inexpensive land, Tamiazzo performed almost all of the trade work himself on the first five homes built. With an eye to growing his business, Tamiazzo assembled a respectable team of subcontractors who kept an aggressive pace of 12 to 24 custom and spec homes at any given time. Tamiazzo had found his niche in selling his product to Orange County retirees who sold their smaller homes and purchased one of his High Desert homes for cash.

Never one to let the grass grow beneath his feet, Tamiazzo acquired a side job as an expert witness for the investigations unit of the California State Contractors License Board. He was called on regularly to conduct field inspections, draft reports of building code violations and occasionally testify in court. This experience

launched him into an expert witness working relationship with three independent attorneys. Tamiazzo spent five years as an expert witness concurrent to building homes.

“Working as an expert witness requires a lot of time, hard work and preparation. The work for the attorneys did not resemble the litigation mills of today instigated by questionable defect claims, but rather I found real homeowners with a real problems created by unscrupulous and unlicensed contractors.”

In 1990, the unthinkable happened, the High Desert dried up. When the Soviet Union dissolved, the U.S. defense budget did, too, particularly spending on construction and infrastructure.

“Businesses and suppliers were closing their doors and building stood still. I was faced with another career change or a move to where construction was thriving,” Tamiazzo said. “I had heard Seattle was booming so I loaded up a trailer with framing, concrete, plumbing, electrical, tile and roofing tools and headed that way. We stopped in Las Vegas overnight and a contractor spotted the tools and the 150 pound Rottweiler guarding them and offered me a job starting the following day.”

Tamiazzo earned his C-3 Nevada State Contractors Board License in 1994 and opened the doors to Las Vegas Framing.

The company started in Las Vegas by performing residential, track and custom home work and occasionally completed a commercial fast food or convenience store project.

“We set a speed record for building a Jack-in-the-Box in six days, with the previous framer averaging three weeks. Not only is a building inspector required to inspect and pass the work, but Jack-in-the-Box has its own special construction inspector who must also sign off the work. The inspector said it was the first time he had ever passed a framing inspection on the first inspection,” said Tamiazzo. “We definitely impressed our new client at the time, Kalb Construction, and have since become a commercial-only framing business.”

Despite his successes, Tamiazzo admits that sitting behind a desk, shuffling papers often leaves him longing for being out in the field again with bags on, a new slab before him and the progressive satisfaction that materializes as walls go up and the roof goes on.

Tamiazzo has outlined several objectives for the FCA in the year ahead under his leadership.

“I want to continue down our current path of upgrading our image with general contractors to show them that FCA members are the most educated, safest and most professional framing contractors available,” said Tamiazzo. “I would also like to encourage FCA members to take advantage of the broad range of educational classes the AGC offers and join in at FCA functions where they can meet building officials and hear from industry leaders and economic advisors to help them navigate these rough waters.”

Tamiazzo would like to see a logo campaign whereby members take the initiative to use the FCA logo on business cards, emails, contracts, vehicles and equipment. He is also looking forward to continuing the tradition started in 2008 of annual charity golf tournament.