



millwork ARCHITECTURAL woods

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE CERTIFIED CUSTOM WOODWORKERS ASSOCIATION

Training gives union cabinetry pros the edge architectural woodwork projects

CONTRACTOR/ PROJECT FOCUS

Editor's Note: The following article recently appeared in Midwest Construction Magazine. We've reprinted it here for those of you who may not have seen it...

John Farrell prides himself in being a "hands-on" type of businessman. As president of Inter Ocean Cabinet Company, Inc., a family-owned shop that has provided architectural woodwork and related services to America's Midwest since 1897, he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I walk through the shop many times each day, making sure all jobs are on par with where they should be so that delivery and installation are done when the customer expects it to be," Farrell said.

Inter Ocean Cabinet Company, Inc. is one of more than 100 union millwork/cabinet companies in the Midwest region which

hire from the 2,300+ millwork/cabinet labor pool from the Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters. These contractors partner everyday with the Regional Council to create one of the premier training programs for cabinetmakers representing the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

At the Chicago-area training facilities, cabinetmakers are trained in every type of project, from architectural woodwork, casework and display cases to trade show exhibits, custom cabinetry, staircases, doors, wall paneling, and more.

"We make sure our contractors have the most qualified, best-trained crews everyday," said Jim Kasmer, a business representative of the Chicago Regional Council who focuses on the millwork/cabinetry industry. "We know our commitment to training and attention keeps our contractors well staffed with the best craftsmen in the region."

Both Farrell and Kasmer agree that without a strong training program, union millwork/cabinetry contractors would not be able to deliver the amount of outstanding work each shop produces on an everyday basis. And that work is done on time, and on budget. And work is done right the first time, which reduces the need for redos.

For instance, while Inter Ocean completed projects at Merrill Lynch and Bear Stearns & Company, Inc., other union shops are responsible for redevelopment and restoration of Chicago's Navy Pier, McCormick Place, the Art Institute, the Museum of Science and Industry, Millennium Park and the Merchandise Mart.

Complementing the quality craftsmanship of these and thousands of other projects is the attention to scheduling that a union millwork/cabinetry shop brings to the table. Tight schedules or working in occupied spaces for tenant improvement work is a specialty skill that union contractors can rely upon.

Soldier Field, for instance, needed a complete restoration in a short time span, to be ready for the coming football season. Midwest Woodwork & Veneer, Inc., staffed with a team of well-trained, experienced union craftsmen, completed everything from plush skyboxes and miles of concession stands to contemporary locker rooms in only 20 months, a record for the shortest construction of a modern-day stadium.

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Soldier Field showcases union carpentry at its finest through curved walls of warm cherry casework, cool marble counter tops and stainless steel.

Traditions come in handy



Hand tools play key role in prepping for high-tech world of craftsmanship in UBC's Millwork and Cabinetry training program

Al Kuzmin picks up a gleaming wood chisel and places it on his wrist. "My father was big on

keeping tools sharp and in good shape," he says as he uses the chisel blade to delicately shave a few fine hairs from the back of his hand.

Kuzmin teaches cabinetry and millwork at the Northeast Ohio Carpenters' Joint Apprenticeship and Training Center in Richfield, Ohio. His classroom features the latest high-tech woodworking equipment available — but also an assortment of traditional hand tools.

Cabinetmakers and millworkers from the United Brotherhood of Carpenters are specialists in custom and architectural woodwork, creating cabinetry, moldings, panels, trade exhibits and furniture. They work from blueprints and architectural designs to cut, shape and assemble wood products, and they work with metal, plastics and glass when those materials are included in a product's design. These craftsmen must be proficient on a wide range of both hand and stationary power tools, and Kuzmin says learning the origins of these tools comes from understanding how traditional hand tools fit into the big picture.

Kuzmin's teaching approach emphasizes skill and ability says Bill Logan, who graduated from the training program in 2004 and is currently the foreman for an on-site carpentry saw shop for a major Ohio contractor. "Kuz teaches how to analyze a problem and select the best approach," Logan says. "He teaches how to use all your resources to take a project from the drawing table to the production floor."

Logan says Kuzmin taught him that there are "a myriad of solutions" for every project and that a craftsman knows how to select from an array of options to get the job done correctly and efficiently. "Kuz is a master of teaching how to select the right tool for the job," Logan says, "He taught me to keep an open mind. Tools are an accessory to productivity."

That understanding of material is part of the fundamental knowledge and skill required by today's high-tech tools. A Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) router, for example, can help drill, carve, rout, and cut materials with accuracy and speed. Because it can accurately repeat designs, a CNC router boosts productivity when the same part must be created many times to complete a project. The machine is also fast because it moves and cuts in multiple directions simultaneously — front to back, left to right and up and down.

A computer controls the machine's motion and cutting, so that means a CNC router is only as good as the detailed computer design that it follows. To program a CNC router, a craftsman must have an in-depth understanding of the material that is to be shaped, the techniques to be used and the calculations required to produce the desired result. And it's that kind of knowledge that can be reinforced by lessons with hand tools, Kuzmin says.

Honed for a Life in Woodworking

Kuzmin has specialized in cabinetry and millwork since he followed his father's footsteps into carpentry in the '60s. "As a teen, when other guys were off playing, I was working with my dad. I really enjoyed it," he says.

His parents were from southern Russia. His father served with the Russian army during World War II. His mother was in medical school when the war broke out, and she was commandeered "for slave labor" by the Germans. Her status as a medical student saved her from the worst of conditions during the war, Kuz says. When the war ended, his parents were given "displaced persons" status and lived briefly in Germany while waiting for the chance to emigrate. Kuz was born in Germany. "My parents were given some choices, and they decided to come to the United States because the three of us could stay together," he says. "We arrived in New York in 1951 — I was 13 months old."

His father's tools made it to the United States in the family's steamer trunk. His father fashioned a rough padlock for the trunk, and Kuz uses the lock to this day for his tool box. "Most of my hand tools were my father's" Kuz says. "But if someone stole this tool box, I would hurt for this lock more than anything else."

The family settled in Philadelphia, where Kuz's father resumed his work as a carpenter. The set of tools Kuz inherited includes hand saws, coping saws, sliding T-bevels, smoothing planes, a combination square and a hard-to-find bell-faced hammer. Every tool is in perfect working condition; every tool has the patina developed only through decades of use and loving care.

It's those decades of experience and passion for his craft that characterize Kuz's teaching. "Skill and craftsmanship are not fads or a passing fancy," Kuz says. "They're bonds among craftsmen, and I'm trying to keep these alive with my teaching."

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Training facility prepares tomorrows building trade professionals

The Northeast Ohio Carpenters' Training Center, a part of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners' national educational network The training center serves union carpenter apprentices and journeymen from 27 Ohio counties and four counties in West Virginia. Instructors are seasoned journeymen with proven mastery in their respective fields.

In addition to the cabinetmaker/millwork program, the facility offers carpentry, floor covering and millwright/piledriver programs. The programs combine classroom and hands-on instruction, and the facility houses individual shops dedicated to each building trade specialty.

Those accepted into one of the four-year center apprentice programs pay no fees for apprenticeship classes, training and associate degree college credit earned during the program. While active in the program, apprentices earn 40 to 85 percent of the journeyman-level wage and receive benefits after 90 days.

More than 900 apprentices are currently enrolled in one of the training center's four-year programs. The training center also offers year-round advanced training classes for journeymen to keep up with the latest methods and technologies.

For more information, call the training center's toll free number: 800-601-1800, or visit www.carpenterstraining.com.

Training gives union cabinetry pros the edge continued from page 1

“There is a definite cost-value to working with a union millcab shop,” adds Jim Cooper, also a business representative for the Chicago Regional Council, who also is a former instructor in the Council’s millwork/cabinetry apprenticeship program. “In addition to technology, safety is of great importance to the contractors, and we prepare every craftsman in a host of safety skills,” Cooper said. “This makes a big difference in their productivity, and helps a contractor save on workers compensation costs.”



Kasmer says choosing a union contractor to create the product instead of importing goods also keeps local money in the local economy. “We can keep the region’s economy strong when we put to work our own residents and have them contribute to the economic development of our own cities.”

Farrell’s company, like that of the majority of other union millwork/cabinetry contractors, is one of those “one-stop shops.” Technicians work closely with architects to transform architectural drawings into shop drawings, and then into the actual finished product. That piece is then installed at the job site by Inter Ocean installers.

“The only way that an architect or project manager can be sure that delivery and installation is done on time is to keep that project under one roof,” Farrell said. “And the only way to ensure a satisfied result is to make sure a union contractor does the work, because that’s how to leverage the best-trained and most experienced craftsmen in the Midwest region.”

The main floor restaurants of Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry feature metal and laminate materials that bend and curve in unique designs.

From your Labor-Management Committee Chairmen:



Perhaps more than any other specialty skill, the Millwork/Cabinetry industry is ever-changing. And as we all know, to be successful is to consistently reinvent your marketing strategies to match industry conditions.

We’re ready to meet that challenge.

With this issue of the Certified Custom Woodworkers Association newsletter, we are embarking on a new chapter of our work to promote union Millwork/Cabinetry to key stakeholders of our industry. There are many new things about the CCWA’s efforts to help you get more work.

First, we’ve updated our logo. The new look reflects the technological proficiency of our craft. We believe this new look will make a great impression on the decision makers we speak to on a daily basis.

Second, we’ve redesigned our newsletter, inside and out. We understand that this publication should be a resource for you to learn about best practices from your colleagues throughout North America. So, each issue will now feature a story on a contractor and/or project that offers a look at best practices in action. Training is the hallmark of our craft, and because it is the biggest factor that sets union Millwork and Cabinetry apart from our competitors, we also will dedicate space in every issue to illustrate the expertise of our instructors and the excellence of our training centers. Finally, to keep you informed about changing industry conditions, a roundup of industry briefs will be part of every issue.

Third, we’ve secured the green light to educate those responsible for project specifications - in a big way. The American Institute of Architects recently recognized the UBC’s Millwork/Cabinetry program as a certified provider of continuing education services to its members. We will build upon this prestigious designation to educate those responsible for specifying projects that include millwork and cabinetry. Read more about this later in this issue.

Times are changing. Competition is tougher. But your Labor-Management committee of the CCWA is dedicated to doing all it can to promote union MillCab professionals and signatory contractors. We believe our new look, revised newsletter and specifier outreach programs are just the beginning in supporting your mission and goals. As always, your feedback is welcome. Let us know what you think about our new direction and how we can make this newsletter a better resource for you.

INDUSTRY BRIEFS

AIA Taps UBC MillCab Program as a Certified Education Provider

The CCWA is committed to partnering with the architectural and design community to ensure the betterment of the building and construction industry. To do that, the CCWA is partnering with the American Institute of Architects to offer expertise in millwork, custom woodworking, and architectural woodwork to architects and designers wishing to build their knowledge base about this segment of the industry.

Business representatives say they hear from architects regularly about their need to understand the architectural woodworking industry, including the material selection and installation process in a more comprehensive manner. The CCWA is proud to present architects with opportunities to collect continuing education credits. CCWA is now a registered provider of the American Institute of Architects. To start, our programs will focus in the cities of New York, St. Louis and Chicago, but more areas will be added as the program grows.

About our program content

All content is developed by veteran custom woodworking instructors, each with an average of 20 years of field and classroom experience. All content is reviewed and approved by a 10-member Labor-Management Committee for the Custom Woodworking Industry, which represents some of the largest and most successful custom woodworking shops in North America. Finally, all content is reviewed and approved by master instructors at the Carpenters International Training Center, which works closely with educational consultants from the custom woodworking industry to review and refine all educational materials.

There are two programs currently approved by the AIA for presentation to architects: Hardwood Veneers for Architects and Wood Species for Architects. Architects in the three initial cities are being notified of the opportunity to hear from UBC MillCab experts regarding these topics. Check back here in the next issue of this newsletter to hear how the program is progressing.

Traditions come in handy continued from page 2

A member of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners since 1968, Kuz started teaching in 1980. He was invited to teach part time in a building trades vocational school program in Cleveland. Kuz found himself at home in the classroom as in the wood shop. "I don't mince words," says Kuz, who is fluent in Russian and is regularly contacted to act as an interpreter by various organizations in the area. "I love my trade. I love teaching people. I pride myself that I have no secrets. I show the students everything I know, and it's a rush when people try what I show them - and it works."

When the Northeast Ohio Carpenters moved into their new 60,000-square-foot training facility in 1990, they put Kuz in charge of setting up the cabinet maker/millwork classroom. Safety was a top consideration, Kuz says. Power tool work stations in the classroom are set up so an operator has a clear view of the classroom entrance. "That way, students won't be startled if someone enters while they're working with power equipment," Kuz explains. "In all these years, no one has been seriously injured."

Safety is emphasized throughout the four-year program, which teaches students all aspects of cabinet making and millwork: assembly/gluing/clamping ; working with laminates and veneers; creating display units; fashioning drawers; creating clean, strong wood-to-wood and wood-to-non-wood joints; evaluating and selecting lumber and sheet goods; crafting mill-worked pieces and panels; reading specifications and creating layouts; constructing table tops, legs and rails; and stair design and construction.

The union training center also has a cooperative program with the Cuyahoga Community College, so students enrolled in the apprenticeship program may also pursue an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Applied Industrial Technology as they complete their union training.

Automation and inexpensive foreign goods have reduced the demand for hand-crafted goods, Kuz says, and today there are only a dozen union cabinetry-millwork programs in the United States. He believes the lack of appreciation for quality craftsmanship can be changed with consumer education. "When today's adhesives and finishes are coupled with craftsmanship, pieces will last for decades," Kuz says, and investing in quality workmanship is far more cost effective in the long run.



www.woodindustry.org

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