

Industry Loses BFS' Schenkel After Tragic Accident

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It is with great sadness, SBC Magazine reports that Fred Schenkel, VP of Manufacturing for Builders FirstSource, passed away on April 6, 2013.

Directly below is the company-wide announcement issued by BFS, followed by a tribute article contributed by one of his many friends in the industry, Joe Kannapell, Senior VP of Sales for MiTek USA, Inc.

"We are saddened to report that Fred Schenkel, our Vice President of Manufacturing, passed away following a skiing accident in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Although there were initially encouraging signs of recovery, his condition deteriorated and he passed away quietly on Saturday with his family at his side.

Fred was fully committed to both his family and Builders FirstSource. He joined our predecessor, Builders' Supply & Lumber Co., as a Truss Plant Manager in 1993 and was promoted to Vice President of Manufacturing in 1994. Fred made the transition to Builders FirstSource in 1998 as a Vice President in the Atlantic Group. He was promoted to Vice President of Manufacturing for all of Builders FirstSource in 2002. In this capacity, Fred opened 11 new truss plants and 9 new wall panel plants and was the primary architect of the plan that increased our truss and panel sales from \$100 million in 2001 to half a billion dollars in 2006. Fred also started the Emmitsburg Design Group, which serves many of our locations.

Fred also had a very impressive career before joining our company. In 1971, he began his career with Stylex Homes, a modular home company in Rochester, New York. Fred went on to manage several plants for Ryland Homes, Ryan Homes, and Regional Building Systems, Inc. and eventually served as manufacturing manager for The Ryland Group, Inc. and Vice President of Manufacturing for Diversified Homes of Maryland. He was a graduate of St. Bonaventure University in New York.

Fred's surviving family includes his wife, Debbie, and sons, Chris and Jeff. Chris is currently employed in our Point of Rocks, Maryland facility.

Family and friends are invited to share in a celebration of Fred's life at 11:00 am on Friday, April 19. The service will take place at the Coffman Chapel at Hood College, 401 Rosemont Avenue, Frederick, Maryland. A light lunch will follow. In lieu of flowers, the family graciously asks that memorial contributions be made to Hood College, Scholarship Program, 401 Rosemont Avenue, Frederick, Maryland 21701, with a note that the gift is in Fred's memory. Please share your memories and photos of Fred and offer your condolences on the CaringBridge guest book: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/FBS>.

With Fred's passing we lost a great coach and adviser, a dependable and enthusiastic co-worker, and a wonderful friend. We will sorely miss Fred."

In Memory of Fred Schenkel

by Joe Kannapell

On April 6, Fred Schenkel, 63 year old Manufacturing VP of Builders First Source, succumbed to injuries sustained during a skiing accident. Fred had built BFS's component operations from a single startup plant to a \$500 Million business. Through his 20 years of leadership, BFS developed systems to serve the most demanding clientele, the top ten homebuilders, enabling its survival through the toughest economy in modern history.

Fred came to BFS with a lifetime of construction experience, learning first from his father, a successful upstate New York homebuilder. Then, from the largest vertically-integrated builders, Ryan and Ryland Homes, he mastered the technology of component manufacturing. Both companies operated multiple plants, and employed well-developed systems when Fred joined them. Fred also experienced closed wall panel and modular manufacturing while in their employ, which helped him understand the limits of prefabrication.

When Fred arrived at the distribution company that would become Builders First Source, he would need all the skills he had amassed. While that company knew how to sell materials to tract builders, they had little manufacturing expertise or personnel on board. Recruiting was a daunting task, as experienced people were in high demand during the Nineties housing boom. And competition was formidable in their primary market, Metro-DC, which was already well-served by large, established component plants.

Undaunted, Fred moved into a motel near their new Culpeper facility. With hands-on intensity, he fashioned a team from mostly-local talent. Not only did they begin satisfying customers, but Fred inspired them to create systems to enable them to sustain their success. Thus were born “Master Filing” and “Truss Manager,” back-office systems second to none. It wasn’t long before Fred tucked a wall panel operation into a warehouse on the Culpeper property, satisfying the full range of component needs of typical DC-area builders.

Long before things were running smoothly, it was time for startup number two, serving the demanding South New Jersey market. As would become standard practice, the location chosen was ideal for distribution, but marginal for manufacturing. Hurling obstacles was Fred’s forte. If the building was too short for truss production, Fred would say, “We’ll just blow-out the back wall.” If the ceiling was too high, “We’ll just mount the lasers on the overhead crane.” As the economy expanded, successive plant locations became even less ideal. In Charlotte, the column lines were too narrow. In Tampa, the production floor was dock high. Never hesitating, Fred maximized what he was given. Instead of allowing complaints about less-than desirable circumstances, Fred always challenged his team to develop “best practices.”

Fred was a great builder, in the image of his Father constructing houses mainly with his “own two hands”, before the days of subcontracting. He tackled every problem as if he were doing the work himself, which he often did. It was not unusual for Fred to scale a roof to repair a truss; or to hire a crane to remove an entire roof; or to move a wall panel operation over a weekend; or to move an entire plant over a few weeks. Fred led by example. There was no job he would ask others to do that he wouldn’t do himself.

At this time, all who were honored to work with Fred should recall his inspiring energy, his unmatched stamina, and his unrelenting quest for best practices. Most of all, we must never forget that we are Fred Schenkel’s legacy.