

The RRC: The Apex of Roofing

By Kris Ammerman
Executive Editor, *Interface*

They are an exclusive club, with only 198 members in all of the U.S. and Canada. Ninety-four percent are members of RCI. More than one-fourth may be found in Region II — the Southeast. But the entire area of Region VII, including the states of Montana, Oregon, Idaho and Washington, has only two.

They are architects. They are engineers. They are individuals with no formal education past high school. They are men who grew up on the top of roofs and men who strove to reach even greater heights in their profession. One is a woman.

They are the Registered Roof Consultants certified by RCI who have passed the stringent requirements of experience, reputation, knowledge and testing to show they are experts at the apex of the profession of roofing. They are one of the primary reasons the Roof Consultants Institute was formed—to establish a benchmark by which professionalism in the industry can be measured and standards of practice can be assured.

As Bill Marcum, RRC, Class of '92, notes, "Things that are worthwhile in life aren't easy." With 16 years in the roofing industry and a two-year associate's degree in drafting and design technology, Bill first heard about the certification program in 1989. In 1991 he sat for the exam. "I crashed and burned," he notes. And it was then he found out that the process is "a true test of general industry roofing knowledge." He studied the subjects he felt weak in, got up the nerve to take another shot, and sat for it again in '92. This time he passed. "My RRC has brought me many opportunities I wouldn't have otherwise received. It's allowed me to share with peers in the industry, and it got my foot in the door to get work vs. someone who didn't have it." Bill will be RCI's next president.

"The educational process was probably the best part for me—getting to the ultimate test," says Mike DeFrancesco. For Mike, the "ultimate test" was taken four times before he earned the title which gained him "instant respect." At no time did failure deter the man with 20 years of roofing experience. "I hadn't taken a test since high school," DeFrancesco, now Director of Region I, recalls. "I kept hitting my head against that wall. But if

it starts to hurt, take a break or put a helmet on and go back in," he advises. "I got a lot of encouragement from other people... Rick Cook was the most helpful instructor. I read all the study materials the Institute suggests, including the Manual of Built-up Roofing, twice," Mike states. "But it took Rick explaining" a specific concept he had misunderstood for years that ultimately "turned the light on."

Tim Barrett, RRC #0094, and an Industry member, notes, "I was born under a roof and raised on top of one." As a fourth generation roofer, he recalls "working" as a waterboy on a roof at the age of 4-1/2. By the time he was 12 he occasionally acted as a foreman of non-union crews. But his formal education was in other areas. "The test and the extensive application process gave me newfound respect for the RRC title," Barrett states. "An RRC has

instant credibility with me. I would encourage anybody with the ability and experience to take it and not be intimidated."

Patrick Downey, a political science major with a minor in philosophy and one of the most recent RRCs, says, "If I could do it with my background, there's hope for everybody...When I started to consider credentials I realized so much of what we represent as consultants is one opinion over another." There needed to be something to separate

the opinion from the expertise. "I wanted some measurement of how I stacked up with the other consultants in the industry." The broad-based focus of the test, Downey believes, enhances its credibility. "We have to get out of our area of usual involvement...to understand aspects we're not normally involved with," and the RRC demands that. "People throughout the industry who are knowledgeable about the certification program respect it" because of its breadth and difficulty.

Bob Martin, RRC, a Fellow of the Institute and one of the three testing committee members who wrote the original exam, notes, "Some of my clients say to me, as a roofing contractor and consultant, 'We've never heard a discussion on roofing like this in our lives. Where did you come up with this?' And I can say, 'This is what RCI is, what it teaches, and why you have registered consultants.



If someone has RRC after their name, you know they know their stuff." RRCs are individuals who can speak with authority and knowledge about the industry. The State of New Jersey is now requiring the presence of a Registered Roofing Consultant with a firm that bids for public work on roofing projects.

"It's not so much what *we* think of the title," says Robb Smith, RRC and RCI's Second Vice President. "It's what the owners believe about hiring an RRC. In Virginia it's a requirement that an RRC be on a roofing project. That's the significant thing. This is the way the industry is moving."

Why aren't there more RRC's out there? Many believe it is the fear factor.

"There are people who will not take the test for the simple reason that they are afraid of failure," notes Bob Martin.

But Mike DeFrancesco, fourth-time winner, echoes, "I thought I was a smart roofer type beforehand. I found I had a lot to learn. The process of learning became the bonus for me, because I came out on the other end with both the title and the knowledge....If you hit your head against the wall and it starts to hurt, take a break or put a helmet on and go back in."

Call for Questions

RCI President Chris English asks all Registered Roof Consultants to send one potential question to enhance the RRC exam to Don Bush Sr., RRC Examination Committee chairman, Moisture Control Technologies Inc., 1706 W. Sunnyside Beach Dr., McHenry, IL 60050 (Fax: 815/385-0106).

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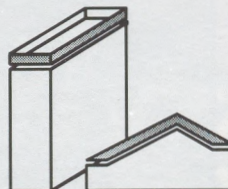


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