

Scientific, practical worlds linked in work of WT award winner

Dissemination of technical information on the subject of sawing technology through means that stress the practical application of scientific research has earned for Dr. Ryszard Szymani the 18th annual WOOD TECHNOLOGY Award for Excellence.

The presentation took place at the Wood Technology Clinic & Show during Wednesday afternoon's keynote session. Szymani is director of the Wood Machining Institute in Berkeley, Calif., which he founded in 1984.

"If criteria (for the award) include educational and information activities which have a significant impact on the industry, I think Ryszard would definitely be a worthy candidate," wrote 1995 WOOD TECHNOLOGY Award winner Eb Kirbach in endorsing Szymani's selection this year. Kirbach retired last year as research scientist with Forintek Canada Corp.'s Western Laboratory in Vancouver, BC.

"He has made tremendous contributions in the educational field. In earli-

er days, his workshops formed the only institution available for industry people to learn about saw technology," Kirbach continued.

Szymani "has actively and successfully promoted the scientific advancement of the industry for many years," wrote Gary Schajer, associate professor at the University of British Columbia.

He called the Wood Machining Institute a "one-stop source for wood industry information and services," and "a unique organization dedicated to enhancing the interaction and information exchange between the wood research and practical sawmilling communities."

A native of Poland, Szymani received his MS in wood science there, an MS in engineering science at the University of BC, and a PhD in wood science and technology at the University of California at Berkeley.

He was a research scientist at the Austrian Wood Research Institute in Vienna before becoming extension wood

processing specialist at the UC Forest Products Laboratory, Richmond, Calif.

"It was during his time at Richmond that he started to develop his unique educational outreach to the wood industry," Schajer recalled. "Until that time, the sawmill and the research/academic communities followed very separate paths, much to the detriment of both."

At the UC lab, Szymani organized a series of workshops aimed at mill personnel, but taught by leading researchers. These were forebears of annual WMI workshops which were conducted over the past decade on design, operation and maintenance of circular and band saws.

Szymani also organizes international conferences on sawing technology and computer applications in furniture and cabinet manufacturing, and has served as program chairman of WOOD TECHNOLOGY's series of International Conferences on Scanning Technology in the Wood Industry.

'Without logs, you're nothing,' says marketer

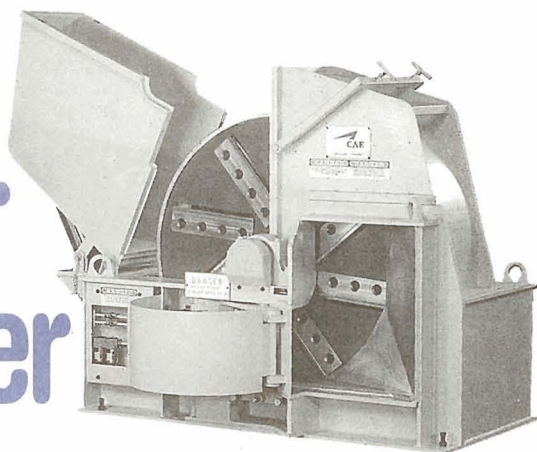
For the wood processing industry, the biggest short- and long-term problem continues to be log supply. Forest products marketing consultant Jean Mater of Corvallis, Ore., spoke Wednesday at the Wood Technology Clinic. She noted that the root cause for the industry's log-supply woes is public dissatisfaction with the forest industry, "dissatisfaction that has been successfully used by environmental organizations to help accomplish many of their environmental objectives."

Despite millions of industry dollars spent trying to convince the public that a healthy forest is a managed forest, "the public remains unpersuaded."

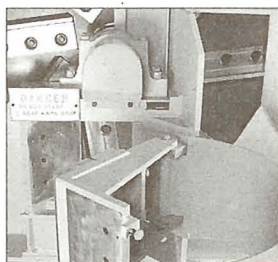
Mater added that attempts use the political system to boost timber harvests "have not been effective in feeding hungry mills, either." Attempts to get more timber from public forests run into Americans' strong support of environmental-protection laws.

Many people believe that forest activities are basically destructive. "One of the major complaints against the forest products industry and the root of much misinformation is the harvest of forests to produce paper," Mater said.

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Saw Doctor

The forest products industry would be several steps less out of the dark ages if not for men such as Dr. Ryszard Szymani, Director of the Wood Machining Institute (WMI) in Berkeley, Calif. Szymani (pronounced Shamani) has devoted his life to wood technology and in particular sawing and scanning technology.

His accomplishments at WMI have included several saw-oriented workshops and development of various sawing programs—among them the Saw Frequency Analyzer. Szymani is publisher and editor of the respected newsletter, *Wood Machining News*. He is also a research consultant with California Cedar Products Co. in Stockton, Calif.

Prior to founding WMI, Szymani was wood processing specialist at the University of California Cooperative Extension, and a project leader at the U.C. Forest Products Lab. He served as assistant professor at Oregon State University, and as research scientist at the Austrian Wood Research Institute in Vienna, Austria.

He holds MS degrees in Wood Technology from the College of Agriculture, Poznan, Poland; in Wood Science from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC; and in Engineering Science from the University of California at Berkeley, where he also earned his Ph.D. in Wood Science and Technology. His doctoral thesis concerned circular saw tensioning.

Szymani is the kind of guy you'll bump into at a machinery show in any corner of the globe, and even in places seemingly off the globe. He roams far and wide to gather wood technology insights. He enjoys it immensely.

For years the sawmill industry has benefited from Szymani's expertise and assistance. During

the first week of October industry will welcome his input again.

On October 2-3, Wood Machining Institute, in cooperation with the Forest Products Research Society and Wood Machinery Manufacturers of America, will sponsor SawTech '89, touted as the First International Conference on Sawing Technology. Site is the Claremont Hotel & Resort in the San Francisco Bay area.

Szymani, who will serve as conference chairman, says a major aim of SawTech '89 is to promote technology transfer between researchers and industry. The conference will feature speakers from eight countries. They'll come from research institutes, machinery supplier companies, and forest products producing operations. Sessions will address technical and economic overview, thin kerf sawing, guided circular saws, saw tensioning, vibration and noise, saw tipping materials and sawing machines and systems. Also, a tour of California Cedar Products Co. in Stockton is available on October 4.

Those interested should call Szymani at the Wood Machining Institute at 415-943-5240 or 644-8363.

Immediately following the sawing conference, Szymani will serve as program chairman for The Third International Scanning Conference, sponsored by Miller Freeman Publications. The event will occur October 5-6 at the San Francisco Airport Marriott Hotel in Burlingame.

Skepticism has always abounded in some traditional sawmill ranks when the academic world has come calling. Sometimes that skepticism has been justified. That's not the case with Dr. Szymani.