

Making It to the Bell



In my first *Editor's Letter* in this magazine five years ago, I used a rodeo allusion. I'm going to use another in this letter: It's been a great ride, but my eight seconds are up. I'm moving on, a very tough decision. In this job, I met a lot of great people: colleagues, authors, and readers. I think it's safe to say that I made more friends than enemies. Deck builders, it turns out, are uniformly fun and engaging folks, and holy cow,

do you guys build some wonderful stuff! I'll miss you.

Five years ago, I worried about coming up with a broad enough variety of articles to keep the magazine going. That turned out not to be a problem, thanks largely to the ideas you readers gave me, as well as to the times. I think deck building changed more in the last five years than in any similar time period in the past, so there has been plenty to write about.

Keeping you abreast of those changes was one of my main goals for the magazine. Some of the changes have been very well received. For example, the continuing evolution of synthetic decking has resulted in some great products. Hidden fasteners today are better and faster to install than ever. New screws that set with an impact driver have largely replaced time-consuming lags. Steel framing and helical piers present options and solve problems.

Other changes haven't been as well received. Not many deck builders think highly of the changes to the codes

regarding lateral loads or newel-post attachment. But code changes are an ongoing process, and you have the ability and the right to comment and to affect what happens. Here, I'd urge you to support NADRA and its efforts to bring deck builders' voices to the code process. The dues aren't cheap, but I think paying them is the best shot you have at controlling the regulations that affect your jobs. And that could prove to be a bargain.

Hardscaping is another issue deck builders face. It's tough competition — often cheaper than a deck, and certainly lower maintenance. But it also presents an opportunity for deck builders who embrace the idea of holistic backyard design, where a deck is used where it makes sense, and hardscape is used where it makes sense. It's a chance for smart deck builders to grab another piece of the pie.

So, it's still an exciting time, and you folks will continue to build outstanding decks. Certainly, I'll encounter many of you again, particularly if I can convince my new employer to send me to Deck Expo. Which, by the way, remains my all-time favorite trade show, and I've been to a lot of trade shows. It's hard to oversell the benefits of attending. Say hi if you see me.

As to the fellow who'll take my place, well, I've known him for 15 or 16 years (ironically, we met when I was taking his place as he left a job at another publisher). I have nothing but respect for his integrity and abilities. You guys and the magazine are in excellent hands.

Andy Engel
Editor

Unlike most of the people you know, we want your two cents.

While it's nice to hear about what we're doing right, it's more interesting to hear about what we're doing wrong. If you saw something you loved or hated, or if you've got a tip that could help out other readers, we want to know.

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