

The 2007 annual meeting of the Masonry Heater Association met at Wildacres April 13<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The business of running the MHA is always the first task at hand before moving on to the technical and practical workshops. With the threat of heavy rains and snow outside, the AGM began in a somber mood. The discussion, essentially, was about how the MHA would take the next steps as a growing organization uniquely positioned in a suddenly carbon-conscious world. It became abundantly clear that the workings of the Board and our accountability would have to improve. There is a general feeling that 'this is our time' and we should be prepared as individuals and as an organization.

Dick Smith introduced himself as our new Administrator and passed on membership statistics: we have 85 members; 55 attended Wildacres with 20 of those there for the first time. Ken Matesz presented the Ethics Committee report. He passed out an excellent, suggested, six point Code of Ethics for the new Board to consider.

The bylaws were changed to allow for a fifth Board member. Elected to the new Board as President was Norbert Senf; as 1<sup>st</sup> VP, William Davenport; as 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, Joe Parris; as Treasurer, Doug Hargrave; and as Secretary, Marge Padgitt. Stepping down were Jerry Frisch, Gary Hart, Rod Zander and Tim Seaton. Tim's parting message was to exhort all members to get more involved in supporting the Board and to promote the MHA so as to bring heater-building into mainstream thinking.

Dr Thomas Schiffert, director of the Austrian Tile Stove Association (Kachelofenverband) presented an overview of Austrian heater industry. His association has had a full-time research lab for over 70 years. "Master" builders in Austria endure a rigorous seven year apprenticeship. The annual meeting of their association sees over 2500 kachelofen builders attend from all over Europe. Dr Schiffert said that of the three million households in Austria there are 450,000 of these that have kachelofen units installed. They build 15,00 - 20,000 new units every year. At a later meeting, Dr Schiffert made another very interesting presentation on the low emissions and health effects of living with a Kachelofen. At a third presentation, Dr Schiffert presented the calculation software, screen by screen, channel by channel, until the heater is designed in balance with kachelofen principles.

The highly-detailed presentation by Doug Hargrave, of Mid-Atlantic Masonry Heat, on "Marketing Masonry Heaters" was well-received. The simplest and least expensive marketing tool is a web site. Doug uses a lot of TV ads which can be expensive, but he also suggested that a home show booth is a simple and effective way to meet customers. Doug suggested that the focus should be on value - not cost - and that items of value should never be offered at a discount.

Rod Zander and Tim Seaton reported on the on-going, challenging and time-consuming effort to establish masonry heaters as clean-burning units and secure EPA certification. It is possible that masonry heaters might get some kind of 'class certification' or 'alternative' designation. We have received a lot of help from the HPBA and may get a lot more. We need some \$15,000 - \$20,000 to continue the process.

Paul Tiegs of Omni Test Labs spoke of the goal of developing a widely accepted

construction/installation standard that would satisfy regulatory requirements, be technically feasible, be operator friendly and also be affordable.

On Sunday afternoon, as the wind picked up and the temperature dropped, we burst out of the meeting room and headed down to the barn area to begin the Outdoor Workshops. Thanks to the contributions of Tom Trout, we had a fresh pile of sand, bags of clay and pallets of brick and firebrick. Very quickly and with much energy, four projects were commenced. The wind blew harder and soon it began to rain and then snow. Undaunted, the hardy masons continued working until supper.

Four workshops were commenced using clay mortar to allow for later, simple dismantling: Alex Chernov, Stovemaster, Caledon, Ontario, led a crew in the building of a Russian outdoor cooking oven - a semi-circular arched oven with the door in the side of the barrel rather than at the end. At the side of the oven, some structural clay tiles were installed and filled with different materials to test which material was better to transfer heat. Interestingly, some channels were left empty and they transferred the same amount of heat as the filled channels.

Richard Jussel of the Austrian Tile Stove Association led a crew that built the firebox with an arched ceiling and first channel of a kachelofen. The wall thickness is some 9 inches with no airspace between inner and outer walls. The use of clay mortar in the firebox will prevent expansion cracks. It was mentioned that, to be effective, an airspace between walls should be at least three-quarters of an inch. Anything less will not allow convection.

Glen Overk of Solid Timber brought a very attractive, low-cost soapstone heater kit that he designed. The kit is manufactured by Green Mountain Soapstone in Vermont. The heater was assembled dry to give workshop participants the opportunity to see and feel what a soapstone heater is like to install. This heater retails for some \$5300 including the doors, splines, clips and inner firebrick.

A workshop by Norbert Senf & Jerry Frisch built a test heater to show the effect of air supply; demonstrate traditional Austrian "Sturzzug" (downdraft channel after firebox) configuration; experiment with secondary air injection into downdraft channels; demonstrate the difference between downdrafting and updrafting heat exchange channels; test the performance of standard 8"x12" terracotta flue liners as downstream heat exchange channels under stress conditions; perform a flue gas analysis and evaluation of the performance of the heater under different configurations; and learn what the different gas curves mean, and how this might be used to analyze the performance of the heater and tune the design. Detailed results and reports will be on the MHA website.

After supper we met to continue the indoor workshops but very quickly got bogged down with old unresolved issues that reflected personality conflicts and philosophical differences. By morning, however, there was a new spirit of cooperation and understanding - the cathartic process made us stronger. The sun came out and the snow started to melt. The new board was installed with a chorus of support from all members. New committees were struck and old committees reestablished with new enthusiasm.

After lunch, under sunny skies but with the wind still howling we continued with the Outdoor Workshops. All the projects were completed and a fire was lit in the oven to hasten the drying process and get it hot enough for the Pizza Party the next day.

That evening, Norbert Senf and Dick Smith presented the web page and how it can help a heater mason with marketing. There will be a new "Membership" button to quickly link interested new members.

Later, Richard Jussel of the Austrian Tile Stove Association showed us very interesting slides of his work in Austria, building combination cookstoves, domestic hot water heaters and radiant tile heaters. He also showed us his work in Africa and Bhutan building simple, efficient, low-cost cookstoves which would burn less wood and improve air-quality within the dwelling.

On Tuesday afternoon we had the pizza party. The oven was over 1000<sup>0</sup> F when we started. Tom Trout and his kitchen crew made enough dough for 70 pizzas. Pizza makings were chopped and laid out for anyone to shape dough and make a pie of their liking. The experience of building the oven, firing it and making the pizza is as unique and informative as it is fun. New members who had not seen this were impressed as to the marketing potential and business opportunities.

The Annual MHA Auction was held in the evening. MHA member, Dale Demary, is an experienced auctioneer and he did a great job moving the various donated articles. Over \$9000 was raised with over half of it coming from just two items.

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