



Back to the Future

- Al E. Bavry, Advisor, Kimal Lumber

Forty plus years ago, when I was managing a Wickes store in Venice, a “new” joist material came along...really two...T.J.I.s (engineered wood joists) and microlam beams. And I remember the first time I convinced a builder that he should try the microlams, which incidentally I felt would correct a severe deflection problem he was having with good old green Hem-Fir. When he innocently asked, “How is it going to cost out compared to what I’m using now?” I dead panned, “Only about triple what you’re paying now.” After his heart started up again (thought I’d lost him there for a moment!!), I added... “But your pesky deflection will go away, and you won’t be pinching those sliding glass doors six months later that make those doors inoperable!!”

Just so I could prove my point, I gave the builder a few microlams to try out for a long header. He used them and (surprise) no more deflection...Problem solved! That was the beginning of the future for microlams and T.J.I.s in our region. Yes, forty plus years ago, we started to segue into real engineered wood products. Need I add that it really benefited the businesses who jumped on the future bandwagon of cutting-edge building materials—well ahead of the competition?

Today, we’re just entering the arena of tall...no, *really* tall...wood buildings. Enter a brand-new arena of engineered wood! One of the latest proposed building structure is forty stories tall, and a billion dollar plus all-wood complex. It will house retail stores, living units, and a variety of other businesses--all built with engineered wood. No, I’m not suggesting that we get into this arena of futuristic wood possibilities in the near future. What it does portend, though, are more sophisticated beams, joists, studs, etc. These things we use on a daily basis. I could see the “marrying” of some unique wood materials, such as certain beam or column situations, that may mix (for example) Southern Yellow Pine with Bamboo...much as we add steel panels to some wood. That one is my thought, by the way, but I feel a real possibility.

In summary, some of these now “selective market” environmentally-friendly products will eventually become mainstream, and probably not that far down the road. So you can’t not stick your toe in the water and begin (at the least) to start to learn into them. As we get more and more into a world where sustainability, positive carbon footprint, renewable resources, zero waste, energy “neutral,” etc. just become the norm...we need to jump in sooner rather than later. We’ve pretty much arrived at that “party” anyway...Why not start now to learn into the exciting future that frankly is just around the corner?

The whole wood industry is changing rapidly...whether we are or not. Good selling and good “Learning.”