

Remember...

Put In Your 2 Cents Worth

Editorial By Jim Gauntt, RTA Executive Director

No, this is not an editorial about reminding members to pay their Railway Tie Association (RTA) 2 cents-per-tie dues. It is, however, a call for members to be aware of two important aspects of their responsibilities as an RTA member.

The first responsibility is to remain involved. RTA is an outstanding association dedicated to your business interests, to the engineered treated wood crosstie system, and to the maintenance-of-way interests of railroads. Over the years, it is the association's members that have been responsible for creating that specific mission. And, as a member, you should be very proud that RTA has been able to develop and maintain such a singular focus.

This would not have occurred had it not been for individuals who realized RTA membership comes with a price that must be paid over and above the financial support of dues. These members recognize that it is their individual, personal involvement in committees and programs and activities that keeps RTA going. It is this personal investment of time and energy that must be made.

Are you involved? If so, please accept all the thanks I can offer for that dedication. But, if you aren't, let me suggest a way to help. The best place is right in the middle of one of RTA's working committees. There are four standing committee—each one dedicated to the following areas of RTA activities: Education, Legislative Affairs, Manufacturing/Safety/Resources, and Research/Product Development.

This is where the work is done advancing the programs and services that RTA provides to the members and the marketplace. For example, take a look at www.rta.org. Everything on our website has originated in a discussion within our committees. When you think of it that way, you can see how powerful your influence through participation can be.

If you have been a member who has not been active in a while (or ever), please give this careful consideration. Maybe there is an up-and-coming person in your organization who is just right for an RTA assignment. Or, maybe it's time for you to be a participant in committee work. Either way, please know that we value and need your input and participation. We can help you find the right place. All you have to do is let us know you are ready and willing to serve.

The second responsibility has to do with producer members to make sure their participating sawmills are signed up as RTA members and are receiving all the benefits of that membership.

I ran across a couple of sawmill owners at the Hardwood Manufacturers Association meeting earlier this year. One of them, Skipper Beal of Beal Lumber Company, came up to me, made me right feel at home, and was proud to say he was an RTA member. He introduced me to a second fellow who owned another sawmill and told him he should join RTA. This fellow asked me a question or two

about RTA and said that he would definitely consider it since he liked our magazine so much.

I took a step back and said, "So you *are* receiving *Crossties Magazine*?" This fellow said, yes, and that he read it cover-to-cover. I told him that this means he is a member. A few minutes of additional discussion later and he recalled, "oh yes, that's why I pay my portion of the 2 cents per tie...now I remember."

That was an eye opener for both of us. It means that connections between RTA and some members are a little fuzzy. They know and like what RTA is all about and, in fact, are paying dues, but they have not had anyone lately reinforce the message that they are the reason RTA exists and is able to do all the things it does.

That's when I decided to write this article. First, to remind all of our sawmillers that they are valued members of RTA. Second, to ask each and every producer member to talk to their sawmills, make sure they are receiving *Crossties* and RTA mailings, and then empower all of their procurement people to enroll all of their supplier sawmills in the association.

There are a few very diligent members who do this every month. We hear from them regularly with changes and updates to their participating sawmill list. But, then there are some who may have forgotten about how this process works because we never receive any updates from them.

One of my favorite sayings about how important it is to talk about why we do what we do as often as we can comes from a member sawmiller. When he was a member of the RTA Executive Committee, Jim Duncan of Monticello Hardwoods reminded the committee that the church on the hill opens its doors every Sunday to tell people about something that happened over 2,000 years ago, so it would not hurt for us to tell our RTA story every once in a while, especially to our sawmill members.

So, my plea to you this month is...remember to put in your 2 cents worth. Participate. Empower your procurement people to engage and communicate with all of your supplier sawmills about RTA. We will all be better for it because we will be a stronger association capable of creating even more value in the future for your business and for your railroad customers. §

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