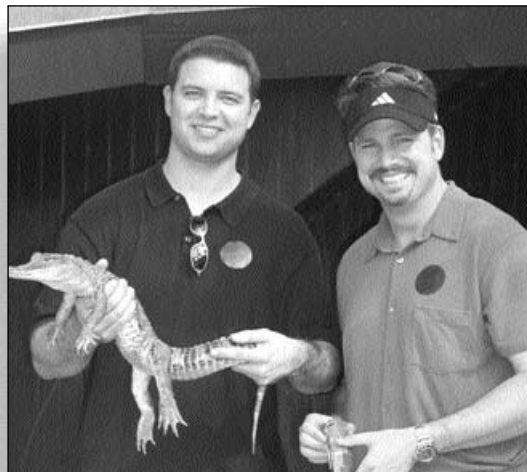


# PIPELINE

The Official Publication of the National Association of Steel Pipe Distributors, Inc. • March/April 2002

## Highlights from the Miami Convention March 7 - 10



*Clockwise from top left: Don Karchmer (center) pictured with John Mocker and NASPD President Gerald Merfish, receives the Knowles-Rubenstein Award of Excellence; Steve Nowacki and Matt Orban get to know the local wildlife; Susan Kallas and Fidel Nabor impress the crowd with their dancing; Robert Tanis, Wayne Conrad, and Gary Canonge (not pictured: Ray Davila) win the golf tournament.*

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# President's Message

## *Reviewing the state of the NASPD*

by Gerald Merfish  
NASPD President



*If you missed the Annual Convention in Miami, you missed a lot. We heard sterling presentations and participated in a two-hour open discussion of the potential impact of President Bush's recent Section 201 ruling. To supplement the activities of the NASPD for calendar year 2001 I have included a reprint of my State of the Association address given during our formal Annual Membership Meeting in Miami, 2002.*

**T**he past year 2001 has been a very busy year for the NASPD. Membership retention has been excellent in spite of the many consolidations in our industry and the economy. In fact, we renewed the highest total of companies ever and when adding our new members at this convention our association member list now numbers 165.

As you have heard in the Treasurer's report the association continues to be on strong financial footing and is using some of its equity to fund and underwrite two important projects.

One is the effort of the Education Committee. In 2000-2001 the membership dues increase was designated to underwrite the association's education efforts. In its wisdom, the NASPD recognized the value of developing a curriculum so that the NASPD is the "place to be" if someone wants to learn about the steel pipe business. Currently, through the efforts of Bob Rau and our consultants, A F Kelly Co., we will be using

the information we gathered last year as a "Body of Knowledge about Steel Pipe" to generate a first-class training manual. We should see some of the results of this effort at the next association meeting in Chicago. Jay Roccaforte and Robert Griggs have ably led this effort for the past year.

At our Fall meeting in Houston in October, the NASPD Board of Directors authorized three members to conduct a feasibility study for the creation of a Website whereby the association regular members could list their inventories that are available for sale. The feasibility study showed an easily achievable break even point and payback over a short period. Consequently, a contract was signed for the development of software for the NASPD's Online Listing Website. The anticipated launch date is late May. You may notice people walking around with a button suggesting you ask them about "E". I encourage each of you to discuss the Website with these volunteers and to sign up for the introductory listing offer. The more companies that have committed to the Website the greater the success. Don Porr and Yves Pognonec have generously contributed their time toward this project.

Although these are two of the most visible projects, your association has been hard at work reviewing its basic organization, including the recent establishment of an updated personnel policy handbook. Thanks to Glen Marcel, a lawyer specializing in labor law, who has reviewed the policy on a pro-bono basis. A special thank you also goes to Cullen King for his efforts.

It has been more than five years since the NASPD convened an ad-hoc long-range Strategic Planning Committee. The work product from the last Strategic Planning Committee was substantially implemented and, in my opinion, has allowed the association to mature and grow. A new Strategic Planning Committee with Ken Hayes as Chair will convene later today as it is time to take a new broader look at our association and our goals.

A special thank you to each member of our committees, to each committee chair person, to each member of the Board of Directors and to each Vice-President and officer. We could not run this association without you. Also please we should not forget the leadership of John Mocker as he and his committee have constructed an excellent group of directors and officers for 2002-2003.

Last, but certainly not least, it would be remiss to end this speech without acknowledging the superb effort the association receives from our employees. Susannah, Nancy, Elaine and Sue are excellent employees and association ambassadors who serve us well and always keep the betterment of the NASPD in their focus. Thank you for your hard work and devotion.

Finally, let me thank each of you for the opportunity to serve the NASPD for another year. This job, though at times engulfing, is rewarding. I promise to bring substantial energy to the position of President of the NASPD and to devote my efforts to the betterment of our association.



# From the Executive Director

## NASPD enhances member benefits



by Susannah Feux Porr  
NASPD Executive Director

**I**t is a very exciting time at the NASPD. This year alone we are producing two new services that will continue to increase the value of your membership in the NASPD.

We are producing a training manual that should be available in a first draft form by the time of our Chicago meeting in June. Members can use this document to train new employees about steel pipe or offer it as a reference guide to current employees. The manual will contain basic knowledge that all sales personnel and some support staff need to know to be able to work more effectively. We believe this document will contain all of that pertinent knowledge. The training manual should be a resource that your company must have to excel.

The NASPD Online Listing Website is another very exciting addition to the array of services that the NASPD offers. This is an opportunity for regular members to list products they want to sell and view products for sale by other regular members. No transactions will occur on the Website but rather will be done directly between parties. No prices will be listed on the site. With a minimal monthly usage fee, you will be able to list and/or view as much as you desire. We believe this will be a quick

and easy way to locate pipe as well as encourage even more business among our members. For more information, or

to sign up for this new service, please contact the NASPD office at 281-531-7473.



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*New year,  
new goals*



by Dennis Hayden  
Co-Chair

**T**he Annual Convention in Miami has come and gone but the NASPD year 2002 has just begun. We welcome seven new members and are proud to report that our current membership totals 164.

Your Membership Committee is challenged to continue the quality growth that has been experienced over the last several years. Difficult economic times and transitions in our industry will continue to shrink our available membership base. However, your Committee has accepted this challenge and has established a year-end goal of 175 members — a new record! To achieve this goal we need your help. The Membership Committee solicits your active participation and input.

Please join us in welcoming the following new members:

- Advance Corporation
- Carleton Unit at Crane Agency
- Commercial Metals Company
- Center Line Equipment & Consulting, Inc.
- Hamilton Metals, Inc.
- Midway Supply
- North American Pipe & Steel.

*Free-flowing discussion yields fresh ideas*

by Ken Hayes  
Chairman

**T**he ad hoc long-term Strategic Planning Committee met on Friday afternoon, March 8, during the Annual Convention in Miami. It began with introductions of committee members. Gerald Merfish, past Chairman of the committee, gave a brief review of the history and purpose of the committee. We challenged ourselves to “step outside the box” and offer, without limitations, ideas on how additional value can be provided to members of the Association. Thoughts from this process led to discussions of current issues along with suggestions for the future.

The idea exchange was broad-based, ranging from considering whether or not the name “NASPD” is still representative of our organization, to having assigned seats at one of our social functions to encourage members to “get better acquainted” with fellow members. Other suggestions were:

- Offering “breakout” sessions for the group’s varying interests
- Developing a member panel to act as an arbitrator to help settle disputes and avoid litigation
- Having NASPD members serve as liaisons for other associations to assist in the development of standard pipe sizes and specifications
- Having a third party develop and implement surveys on a regular basis to extract and convey useful and meaningful data to our membership.

As you can see, the ideas were free flowing within the committee. Equally important are your ideas. Please convey your thoughts to one of the committee members so we can discuss them at our next meeting at the Summer Conference in Chicago. Topics already on the agenda include a review of current membership types to determine the need, if any, to change, and review of our mission statement to ensure current applicability. We hope to present concrete recommendations to the Board of Directors during our Summer Conference. The Board must approve all recommendations prior to implementation.

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow committee members whose dedication and forward-thinking ideas will ensure the success of our Association.

Let's go to

# Chicago!

**NASPD Summer Conference**  
**June 6 - 9**

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# NASPD by the numbers



by Robert Griggs  
Chairman

**I**t was great to see everyone in Miami at the Annual Convention. What a marvelous city with a diverse population—just like the members of the NASPD. At the Finance Committee meeting we reviewed the major items from last year's budget. I'll list a few highlights here.

We had a surplus of \$31,700 for 2001, some \$17,000 over budget. The meeting results were as follows: The 2001 Annual Convention in Las Vegas was approximately \$6,000 under the budgeted surplus amount of \$19,000. This shortfall was due to speaker expenses and a need for additional event sponsors. While attendance at the Summer Conference in Cincinnati was lower than anticipated, our expenses were also reduced. The Conference had a \$2,200 surplus which was only \$1,000 below budget. The Fall Conference in Houston was a rousing success with a \$33,800 surplus, which was \$26,000 over budget. As they say, "Don't mess with Texas!"

Interest income was down in 2001, but so was member interest expense, so it was a good trade-off. Finally, membership dues were \$8,000 over budget. Great job, Membership Committee!

On the expense side, accounting expense was \$2,500 under budget. Internet expense was \$2,000 over budget due to upgrades to our Website. The *Member Directory* was \$1,700 under budget. *Pipeline* advertising

income was \$8,000 short of projections and expenses were \$3,000 under budget, resulting in a net expense of \$16,300, which was \$5,000 more than the budgeted amount. As with most associations, the cost of our magazine is only slightly offset by advertising, but it is an effective tool for communicating with our members and helps establish an image for the association.

Now we turn to 2002. We have a very conservative budget due to uncertainty in the steel industry. We budgeted for 150 members, and as of the Annual Convention in Miami we have 167 members. Again, thank you to all those who have recruited new members this year. We had 188 attendees at the Miami Convention, which is close to the normal amount. As of now, we are showing a tentative surplus of

\$2,000 on the Convention, compared to the budgeted amount of \$13,500. Registration fell \$10,800 short of our budget of \$77,850. Sponsorships were \$3,500 short of budget. These numbers are not final but they are very close. In making the 2002 budget, we discussed the Section 201 filing and how general uncertainty in the steel industry may affect us this year.

I hope that everyone will try to attend the Summer Conference in Chicago, June 7 - 10. I know that you will love the city. I would also like to thank the members for the honor of being chosen president-elect. I only hope that I can lead as well as the past presidents did. I promise that I will do everything in my power to make NASPD the place to be.

And now here are two questions to ponder before the Summer Conference: What committee are you going to join? Why do they call it the Windy City? I'll see you there.



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## Don Karchmer honored for service to NASPD

The Knowles-Rubenstein Award of Excellence was established in 1995 by the NASPD Board of Directors in honor of its founders Pete Knowles and Jerry Rubenstein. The award was established to recognize those individual members whose contributions and leadership have been instrumental to the success of the NASPD. It is the highest tribute bestowed upon a member.

This year's recipient, Don Karchmer, has demonstrated leadership and dedication over many years having served on and chaired countless committees. He has acted as treasurer of the NASPD, and was the youngest president in 98-99. Don was also the youngest person ever to serve on the board of Temple B'nai Israel, where he was Sr. Ex-officio for



The steel pipe business is a family affair for the Karchmers. From left to right: Al and Marsha Karchmer, Don and Hilary Karchmer. Don, an NASPD Past President, joins a select few as recipient of the Knowles-Rubenstein Award of Excellence.

the youth groups and has chaired many committees. He is also active with the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce and is involved in many local civic and charity groups. Among his philanthropic contributions was one he took particular pride in when he donated pipe to devastated areas of Ecuador. The material was used to

rebuild bridges so food and medical supplies could be received.

After graduating from the University of Arizona Business School in 1985, he started his career at International Pipe and Supply. The business was founded by Don's father Al Karchmer. Don has great admiration for his mentor/father and feels very fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn and grow over the years together.

Karchmer's greatest source of happiness comes from his beautiful wife Hilary and their two children, Sam, 5, and Haley, 2. His outside interests include boating, skiing and collecting art and antiques.

### Golf tourney winners

The NASPD Annual Golf Tournament was held Saturday, March 9, at the Presidential Country Club in North Miami Beach.

First place team members were Wayne Conrad of Stelpipe LTD, Gary Canonge of Marmon Keystone Corp., Raymond Davila of S & P Steel Products & Services, Inc. and Robert Tanis of Kurt Orban Partners LLC.

The second place team consisted of Dave Whitney of Tenaris, Mike Phelan of American Piping Products, and John Cary of Tubos Reunidos America Inc.

John McClure of Commercial Metals Company had the longest drive. Roland Balkenende of Tenaris was closest to the pin.

### Education Committee

## Training manual underway

by Robert Griggs  
Chairman

The major focus of the Education Committee meeting in Miami was the training manual. While there we received AF Kelly's first draft of the general knowledge section on math fundamentals. It looked great.

This project is moving somewhat more slowly than expected, but we should have a draft for the Association to review by June. There is a lot of information to gather and organize in order to make this training manual something that all NASPD members will be proud of.

Special thanks to Bob Rau for all his work on the technical aspects of the manual, as well as the steel specifications section. I would also like to thank Bill Buckland for coming aboard as co-chair of this committee. His knowledge and hard work will be welcomed. I encourage anyone else who is interested in working on this project to call me or Bill.

# Thank you, Sponsors!

The NASPD wishes to thank the very generous sponsors of our Annual Convention in Miami, March 7-10.

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# NASPD makes waves in Miami



*Gina Phillips, Johanna Cornell, Peter Borgards and Dianne Burger*

**Photos from the Annual  
Convention, March 7 - 10**

*Below:  
Alexsys  
Nabor and  
Rene Parra  
were a per-  
fect dance  
team*



*Derek Meyers learns a new trade*



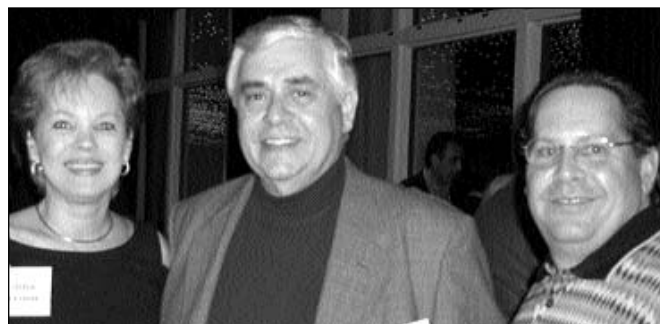
*Adrienne Chew and Roland Balkenende*



*Balor Moore and daughter, Diana*



*George and Cathy Streff, Patsy and Jerry Jones, Connie Jerrome, Gary Canonge, C.J. Franchetti and Robert Sites*



*Above: Connie Jerrome, Fritz Doepkin and Gary Eisenbrandt  
Left: Jorge Santibanez learns to roll Cuban cigars*

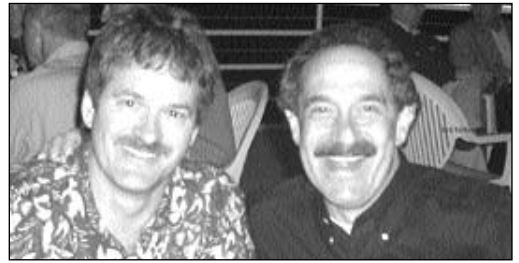


*Alice Rau teaches Fidel Nabor a few new tricks*





**Jorge Woldenberg, Balor and Paula Moore, Buddy Sumpter**



**Phillip Nicholas and Doug Kayem**



**Sandra and Jay Roccaforte, Betty and David Laxton**



**Sandra and Leon Gutierrez don't need any salsa lessons**



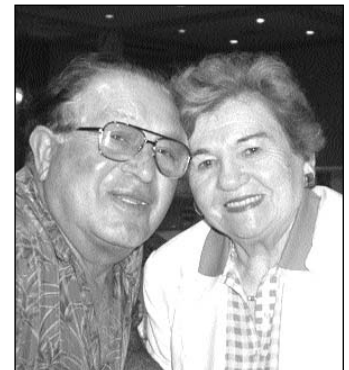
**Jack Bard and Robert Griggs**



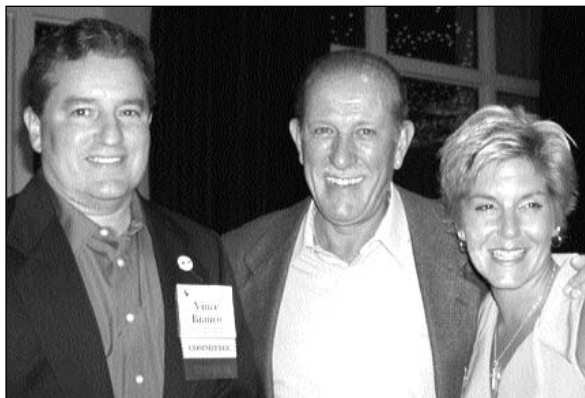
**Dave Whitney and Mike Phelan won second in the golf tournament. (not pictured John Cary)**



**Mort and Andy Keiser and Gene Kalsky**



**Sol and Tola Rosenberg**



**Vince Bianco, Lou and Lisa Lehman**



**Polly Broussard, Robert Wardlaw, Lorraine and Gene Bennett, and Bill Buckland**

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# Recovery, what recovery?

by Scott Franklin

**L**ike crocuses signaling the beginning of Spring, economic news heralding a recovery began to sprout these past few weeks. Long-awaited positive economic indicators from the manufacturing sector appeared, and in testimony before Congress, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan declared that a recovery had indeed begun.

Whether the US economy had experienced a recession at all was brought into question. The preliminary estimate of fourth quarter Gross Domestic Product (GDP) released earlier this year showed an anemic 0.2 percent growth. Experts expected that figure to be revised downward into negative territory. When the updated figure showed a surprising 1.4 percent increase, many economists gleefully declared that the U.S. was never really in a recession since GDP had not been negative for two consecutive quarters.

That assessment was surely greeted with disbelief in the manufacturing sector where industrial output has shrunk 15 percent of the past 16 months, and factories are operating at below 75 percent capacity, the lowest level in 18 years. The more than 1.5 million workers who have lost jobs since March 2001 may also argue with this conclusion.

Consumer spending patterns during the past year can explain this disparity between overall economic health and dismal industrial performance. In 2001, consumer spending increased 3.1 percent, compensation rose 2.5 percent, and

sales of new and existing homes reached record levels with the median price of existing homes jumping over 8 percent from one year earlier. Overall, GDP grew a positive 0.4 percent last year.

Historically low interest rates coupled with a modest rise in household income provided the primary impetus for the housing boom. Zero percent financing and rebates helped drive the sale of automobiles and accounted for much of the rise in consumer spending.

If the economy is to show continued improvement, manufacturing needs to lead the charge. In past recessions, pent-up demand from consumers has driven growth. However in this downturn, consumer spending hardly wavered. Future household spending will be challenged by higher interest rates and growing consumer debt.

There has been some good news on the manufacturing front. The Purchasing Managers Index jumped into positive territory for the first time in 19 months, with the February manufacturing index jumping to 54.7 percent up from 49.9 percent in January. An index of over 50 indicates that a majority of firms report a rise in economic activity.

Capacity utilization rose to 74.8 percent in February, the first increase in nearly two years. Durable goods orders jumped 2.6 percent in January, the third increase in four months. Industrial production jumped 0.4 percent

*Despite the good news of the past two months, there are still threats to an economic recovery.*

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## Section 201 panel

*With President Bush's Section 201 decision coming days before the Annual Convention in Miami, Will Leonard and Gerald Merfish facilitated a timely and insightful discussion. Panel members included (left to right) Leonard, Steve Fowler, Don Bohach, Buddy Sumpter, Jay Roccaforte, Sonny Jain, and Merfish.*



in February and has now risen for two months.

Perhaps the biggest drag on the manufacturing sector is the reluctance of companies to commit to new capital spending. Profits are still dismally low and CEOs want to make sure that an increase in demand is sustainable before they make any major capital investments.

Despite the good news of the past two months, there are still threats to an economic recovery. The dollar remains strong against most international currencies, making U.S. exports more expensive. Foreign economies are expected to rebound, but not until there is meaningful growth in the U.S.

At least in the short-term, prospects are rosy. The continuous dwindling of business inventories will eventually cause production to increase, a factor that is no doubt contributing to gains in the recent industrial output and factory utilization rates. This process should continue through the mid-year. If the recovery is to gain any momentum, businesses will need to build, rather than just maintain their inventory levels.

Regardless of whether the Federal

Reserve decides to tighten or leave short-term rates at their current level, yields have risen on 10 and 30-year bonds, which along with consumer demand establish mortgage rates. Thirty-year mortgage rates are now slightly above 7.0 percent.

As rates begin to climb, households may be discouraged from buying new homes, and recent homebuyers who tapped into adjustable rate mortgages may face a jump in monthly payments. That not only decreases the amount of discretionary income that can be pumped into the economy, it might also heighten the foreclosure rate. Consumers bolstered the economy in the past year with unfettered spending, but they may be the culprits who deflate the recovery in the months to come.

*Scott Franklin is a principal at First Generation Consulting and holds a master's degree from the London School of Economics. He develops seminars, speaks, and writes about economic issues facing the business community. Scott can be reached by e-mail at [firstgen@compuserve.com](mailto:firstgen@compuserve.com) or by phone at 913-642-6951.*

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May 3

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# DISPATCHES

Atlas named top supplier  
for steel network

Atlas Tube Inc, (NASPD Associate member), based in Harrow, ON, was named Supplier of the Year for the 117-member Steel Plus Network at its convention January 19. Atlas was recognized for offering attractive and stable incentive programs for Steel Plus members. Atlas has also been a leading participant in the organization's networking activities.

Bayou Coating, LLC wins safety award

Louisiana Workers' Compensation Corporation (LWCC) recently presented Bayou Coating, LLC (NASPD Associate member) with a Partner in Safety Award in recognition of the company's dedication to providing a safe workplace. This year the award was given to only 22 of LWCC's 25,000 policyholders around the state

to recognize the extraordinary time and resources they invested in executing safety recommendations. LWCC is a private, nonprofit mutual insurance company created in 1992 to revitalize the state's failed workers' comp system.

M/K upgrades vendor program

Using recent advances in computer and Internet technology, Marmon/Keystone Corporation (NASPD Regular member) upgraded its Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) program so that suppliers can get information five times faster than previously. "The source and organization of the information is key," said Jay Powell, director of e-commerce at Marmon/Keystone. "Extracting information from our StelAIM purchasing system has been made easier through reorganization of data."

Steel Bridge Forum

The American Iron and Steel Institute is sponsoring the Steel Bridge Forum, a national exchange of information and ideas to improve the life cycle costs of steel bridges. Meetings will held June 12 at the Pittsburgh Hilton and Towers, July 8 at the Virginia Department of Transportation Auditorium in Richmond, and September 17 at Rutgers University New Brunswick campus in New Jersey. For more information call 703-536-4995 or go to



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