



CFI PRESS RELEASE

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JAPAN – CFI Installers Goodwill Installation Competition

(Anaheim, CA) What excitement! At the World Floor Covering Association's (WFCA) facility in Anaheim, CA, the second Japanese-American installation competition was held. This is a very friendly event with both countries between the most knowledgeable experts in their field. It is very difficult to establish winners when each contestant is one of the finest craftsman in his trade. Everyone prefers to view the friendly competition as an opportunity to share new ideas with each other.

Jon Namba, Director of Technical Services for WFCA and Hiroshi Tsujio, President of Banzai Trading Company spent many months organizing the event. "This type of event would be impossible without the support of our manufacturing community who graciously donated an abundance of prizes, products and tools for the two teams," Namba stated. The sponsors were World Floor Covering Association, International Certified Floorcovering Installers Association (CFI), Japan Interior Finishing Installers Association, Armstrong, FCI Magazine, National Floor Trends Magazine, AAT, Ardex/Henry, Behr Tools, Beno J. Gundlach Inc., Bostik/Findley, Bullet Tools, Capitol, Dap/Durabond, Halex, JW Tools, KoolGlide, Laser Square, Mapei, Mohawk,

Orcon, Pro Knee, Roberts, Seam Master, SeamerDown, Taylor Tools, Shaw and Wagner Industries.

Hiroshi Tsujio and the Japanese group leader, Isamu Iijima of the Interior Decorators Association were responsible for coordinating the trip and visiting locations in the states. This is a massive undertaking. During the first competition in Kansas City, Missouri, it was discovered that “even though we do not all speak the same language,” Jim Walker, CFI President & CEO said, “We speak carpet. We speak vinyl. We speak flooring.” This turned out to be very true. This type of competition is beneficial for everyone to learn new techniques and admire the qualities of craftsmanship that are evident in both countries.

The installation competition involved both resilient and carpet. The Japanese resilient installers were Fujio Takasaki, Toshiaki Tashiro, Yasumasa Kawamura, Tsutomu Yachiguchi and Hideyuki Takahashi. The instructor for the group was Hisatomo Suezaki..

The CFI Installers were Michael Suffia (WA), Curtis Wood (NV), Kelly Huddleston (CO) and Mark Nemeth (CA).

Tim Provence of Armstrong Flooring Products was the judge. In the eyes of all participants, Michael Suffia was judged to be the winner. He has also placed first in the Surfaces “Best of the Best” Competition.

The Japanese Installers always place high in the European competition and their skills reflect this. They were surprised to see the numerous new and effective tools that are used by the Americans. The metal miters were new to the Japanese installers. Perhaps, this is because American installers are almost “addicted” to new tools. They enjoy working with new and innovative ideas. They also have the opportunity of working with the manufacturers to make the new market entries even better.

Armstrong donated the sheet goods, Mohawk and Shaw donated the carpet and the cushion was supplied by Sponge Cushion Inc, a division of Leggett and Platt.

The competition modules were constructed by Jon and Suzy Namba, Jason Namba, Kelly Huddleston, Bobby Schurman, Leon Harrison, Ed Braile, John McHale and Jim Walker. Modules were built for the individual installers to create their presentations which followed the specifications guidelines.

Representing Japan in the carpet division were Kiyokazu Sakai, Koji Yamamoto, Masanari Iwata, Minoru Fukada and Nobuyuki Nagata. The instructor for the group was Seishi Kanda.

The CFI installers were Leon Harrison (AZ), Ed Braile (MO), Jason Namba (UT), Roland Thompson (MD), Bobby Schurman (CO) and Henry Garcia (CA). All CFI installers were responsible for their individual travel expenses.

Walker questioned Hiroshi Tsujio why the Japanese installers cut the carpet with scissors and knives instead of using the cushion-back cutter. A Japanese installer commented, "Sure, you can cut it clean, fast and easy if you use a tool, but I am a professional and I do not rely on tools. Even a small child can do it if you used a new tool, but I have pride in being a professional. I do it the way my boss taught me."

Tim Provence said, "This was a very enjoyable experience for all parties. Because of the language difference, I am certain that all accepted methods of installation for Armstrong products were not thoroughly communicated. In the case of miter cutters, this is not a requirement for installing cove cap. I'm sure that the experience of learning to use the miters as an opportunity to learn another technique which is very useful. For everyone involved, this type of experience is very rewarding and should be done more often."

"From what I observed during the competition the installers certainly meet the qualifications for the skills requirements of the Armstrong Certified Installer Program for residential sheet products. Our Certification Program has been designed and used primarily in the U.S. and Canada. At this time, we do not have the test and information about the program available in Japanese. However, Hiroshi and I are working on this project," Provence stated.

The WFCA's Jon Namba, who is of Japanese heritage, spent the entire day on Tuesday translating for the installers. The Japanese commented on how well he communicated and were very appreciative for his translation abilities. During the awards dinner, a translator was present at each table. The manufacturers provided an array of installation prizes. The installers were requested to bring a \$20 gift to exchange, which was an enjoyable experience.

During the first visit to Kansas City, the resilient instructor, Hisatomo Suezaki, was a member of the Japanese Team. At the conclusion of the event, he presented his tools to Jim Walker. It was a very humbling moment. According to Hiroshi, this is a gift of pride acknowledging the skills of another worker. These tools are on display in Walker's office.

Pride is the component that brings everyone together. It is evident that both groups exhibit an abundance of this. The inability to speak the other's language is overcome by the pride that is demonstrated in the finished product. This speaks for itself. The culture differences involved in

installation exist throughout the world. When traveling in other countries, procedures vary from those taught in the United States.

D. Christopher Davis, CEO and President of the World Floor Covering Association, "The WFCA appreciates the opportunity to host this event. This type of interchange is a great learning experience for all who participated. We look forward to another Goodwill Installation Competition in the future."

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