



Savannah CVB

Waiting 'Round The Bend

Splendid Savannah Beckons All RTA Members

From Staff Reports

It has been 22 years since the Railway Tie Association's (RTA) annual gathering of members has visited the birthplace of famed songwriter and lyricist Johnny Mercer. But, that long absence will be erased when the 90th Annual RTA Technical Conference and Symposium convenes at the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort and Spa Oct. 29-31, 2008.

Much has changed in the world in those 22 years. Railroads have reemerged as the nation's premier freight transportation network and the face of the wood protection industry has changed in response to ever changing demands of consumers of pressure treated wood products.

On the other hand, Savannah has not lost any of its Southern charm. In fact, Savannah now rivals many large cities in restaurant capacity, notable cuisine (can you say Paula Deen?), and activities. Most of all, it remains a wonderful walking city with quaint squares and unique boutiques seemingly around every corner.

Then there is the superb Four-Diamond Westin Harbor Resort and Spa. The spa is a Greenbrier Spa and is the only sister spa of the original Greenbrier Spa of White Sulphur Springs, W.V.

Here, in a setting of understated elegance, you can enjoy an array of hydrotherapy-centered treatments reflecting the original Greenbrier. Swiss Showers and Scotch Sprays completely refresh, as do the pure, organic products incorporated into treatments for the face, skin and body. Visitors come for the Savannah-inspired

Live Oak massage, or spend the day reveling in a complete spa package.

The resort hotel itself faces the city directly across the Savannah River, giving attendees a spectacular view of the waterfront of old Savannah. And, of course, the property features Westin's famous signature seven-layer Heavenly Bed and Starbucks coffee right in your room.

Behind the hotel is the renowned 18-hole championship golf course designed by Robert Cupp and Sam Snead. Operated by Troon Golf, this course is the proud home of the PGA Champions Tour Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf, which boasts more than \$3 million in prize money.

Not tempted to register yet? Take a look at what the business sessions will offer this year.

In addition to a review of RTA-sponsored track and wood preserving research this year's event features nearly a half-day of focus on the hardwood industry. No less than nine experts from hardwood associations, publishers of market trends, and academia will delve into what the industry is doing to improve the market conditions for hardwood products.

Mike Snow of the American Hardwood Export Council will talk about export opportunities for tie and lumber producers. Representatives from HMA and AHMA will present their perspectives on programs designed to improve hardwood lumber marketability. Ed Korczak of NWFA will share information on that industry's recent

landmark study on the life cycle benefits of using hardwood-flooring products. And, sawmiller Wilson Jones of Mackeys' Ferry Sawmill along with professors for Virginia Tech will talk about programs available to sawmills that can improve operating practices and decision-making.

This focus session is not only designed to help treaters and railroads understand the efforts under way to improve the long term outlook for hardwood products, but it is hoped that RTA member sawmills will find it particularly useful in outlining business options and opportunities.

In other sessions presenters will discuss efforts under way to enhance railroads' "green" image. Under the banner of Railroads Energy Alternatives Commission for Tomorrow (REACT), Ray Chambers will lead a panel discussion on this group's activities. RTA is a charter member of REACT and is tasked with surveying the tie disposal community to build a database of recycling options for the industry.

This session will lead into the Class 1 railroad engineering session that will focus on infrastructure initiatives under way or in the planning stages for meeting the national bio-fuel mandates. Each railroad will be given the opportunity to outline new construction projects specifically related to service to ethanol or other biomass fuel generation.

What about the second day? A workshop on compliance issues related to wood preservative re-registration and meeting new standards in the marketplace

is planned. And, following the Class 1 railroad purchasing session, RTA will offer attendees face-to-face time during the first ever Purchasing Session Round Table discussions.

In this final session attendees can choose to visit with one or more Class 1 purchasing staff members to discuss in greater detail that roads plans for the future.

Sprinkled in between throughout the conference another new feature will be offered to conference exhibitors. For an upgraded fee, three-minute vendor-mercials will allow exhibitors to turn a spotlight on new products, new technologies or new ideas. A minimum of six of these vendor-mercials will be available on a first-come, first-served basis to interested exhibitors.

Still not enough? How about the member-sponsored functions and the annual business luncheon and gala banquet?

At the luncheon, attendees will hear from AAR's newest vice president, John Gray. Gray, who has taken over for Craig Rockey following his retirement this year, will offer a perspective on where the railroad industry is headed over the next few years.

This year's banquet will be themed as a tailgate party. Wear your favorite college team colors and join in the fun and food with all your association friends and acquaintances.

The evening will be capped off by a performance from Craig Karges. Craig Karges is truly extraordinary! Known as the "extra-ordinist," Karges is an award-winning entertainer, a nationally recognized speaker and an author. He has made more than 4,000 appearances on four continents and in all 50 states.

Craig Karges' performance is an extraordinary blend of mystery, humor, psychology and intuition. Karges dazzles the mind as he challenges his audiences to question what is real and what is unreal, what is possible and what is impossible. Craig Karges dramatizes the unknown, the unexplained and the unbelievable. You don't just watch this performance; you experience it through total audience participation.

Not convinced to register yet? Don't forget that golf, fishing and pontoon boat excursions, and a stop at Paula Deen's restaurant also await.

All of this in just three days just by registering today for RTA's 90th Annual Technical Conference and Symposium. What a deal! §

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