

# NCMCA Golden Anniversary Celebration Series - December 2024

2024-12-27

We're celebrating the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association Golden 50th Anniversary Year by highlighting some monumental events that have taken place throughout the existence of NCMCA. Each month throughout 2024 we will have articles that will showcase the history and folks that helped NCMCA get to where it is today. Please enjoy this yearlong series with our twelfth article, "The Next Fifty"

By publishing an essay each month of 2024, we've used the occasion of NCMCA's Fiftieth Anniversary to reflect on the history and accomplishments of the Association. But for this last article in the series, we are looking forward rather than backward.

NCMCA's current leadership team and a number of the Association's youngest members were invited to share their thoughts about the present state of the Association and the industry. We asked our youngest generation of members what their expectations are for future. We asked them all where they see the industry and the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association headed in the days and years ahead. Their responses follow in the order they were received.

NCMCA Past President and soon-to-be Mason Contractors Association of America Chairman **Kent Huntley** titled his submittal "Marching Down the Field Together" and writes, "In our business, I often draw parallels between football and our strategic planning with field personnel. Just as a football team aims to advance methodically down the field, we too must focus on steady progress rather than seeking immediate touchdowns. After a kickoff, it would be thrilling to score an 80-yard touchdown on the first play. However, in both football and business, a more effective strategy is to gain another first down, ensuring that we keep the momentum going.

"Throughout its history, the NCMCA has consistently started from the 25-yard line and methodically progressed down the field. There have been challenges along the way—occasional 'three and outs'—but our ability to score has been driven by our members' commitment to the game plan.

“My experiences on the NCMCA leadership board, along with my time on the MCAA's leadership board, have been invaluable learning opportunities. As we look to the future, I urge the current leadership and the next generation of leaders to remember this analogy. While it's exhilarating to score quickly, our true strength lies in our ability to plan and advance one first down at a time.

“Today, NCMCA is in a strong position to continue its journey. Support is robust, budgets are manageable, and we all desire to keep the drive alive. Let's focus on securing those first downs, as that is how we will ultimately win.

“As Zig Ziglar famously said, ‘You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great.’ Let's embrace this mindset and keep marching down the field together.”

Thirty-year-old **Kale Hallman** is “Workforce Developer” for McGee Brothers Company and is the grandson of Masonry Hall of Fame member Sam McGee. He titled his submittal “More Than a Career: A Way of Life in Masonry” and writes, “To those who've spent more than a year in the masonry industry, it's clear that being a brick mason is far more than just a job. While masonry offers a great way to make a living, the quality of life it brings, especially in North Carolina, transcends the work itself.

“It's Saturdays spent laying foundations for friends' homes or lending your craft to a missionary project. It's young boys and girls proudly strapping on tool belts, imitating their parents. It's the smell of coffee mingled with ‘work’ in a trusty Ford truck that might haul tools and blueprints one day, golf clubs or a trophy buck the next, and even shine up for dinner with a special lady on the weekend. It's the thrill of masonry competitions, where the passion rivals a state football championship, and the hilarious stories that only job sites can produce.

“Where I'm from, being a brick mason is something to take pride in. A career path that parents celebrate for their sons and feel grateful for when their daughters marry into the trade. The future of masonry, and the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association will be shaped by many factors— material costs, codes, regulations, and more. But at the heart of it all is people. High-quality individuals, brought into every career path within masonry, are our greatest strength.

“Statistics show that mothers are 87% of the deciding influence on their children’s educational and career paths. In North Carolina, masonry has achieved a respected image that makes parents, especially mothers, confident in their children pursuing this career. The incredible leaders in our industry have shown parents that success in masonry is not just possible—it’s expected!

“The NCMCA has recognized this and continues to lead the nation in promoting masonry careers. One way we can strengthen our industry is by encouraging experienced veterans, with great character, to actively mentor younger employees at events and within their companies. By fostering these connections, we can cultivate a family atmosphere that inspires purpose and pride in the next generation of masons. For young professionals like myself, the guidance and wisdom of seasoned mentors can provide a sense of direction and fulfillment that is far more rewarding than any form of entertainment. It seems important to keep finding meaningful ways to involve and engage young employees at NCMCA events, especially those who have faithfully worked in the industry for a year or more!

“Growing up, I had the privilege of witnessing the leadership and character of the men at McGee Brothers. These weren’t just skilled craftsmen. They were role models who exemplified hard work, integrity, and a genuine care for others. Leaders like Calvin Brodie, Lynn Nash, and Don Caldwell also inspired me with their dedication to the industry and their commitment to helping others succeed. It’s awesome being a part of the NCMCA, working alongside people with this type of character, and I want to play a part in continuing this legacy for years to come!”

Kale concludes by saying, “Masonry isn’t just a career—it’s a way of life.”

Thirty-one year-old **Kelly Black** is certified in the NCMCA Masonry Contractor Certification Program and a project manager at Carolina Masonry Unlimited. Her father is past NCMCA President Bo Black. She titled her submittal “Thoughts on the Future of the NCMCA:”

“It has been almost ten years since I attended my first chapter meeting in Raleigh, and almost six years since I received my CME certification with the NCMCA. The NCMCA I became familiar with as a young twenty-something is vastly different from the

NCMCA I know now as a young thirty-something. The same familiar faces that I've now known for almost a decade are still there, with quite a few new faces joining each year it seems.

“A few years back when it seemed of no interest to me, the topic of conversation for quite some time amongst the ‘elder’ members and associate members, especially during the pandemic, was about ‘bridging the gap’ between the older and the younger generation. At that time, it was not something that I could personally envision for myself, as it didn’t seem that our position as junior members made much of an impact on how things are conducted in this association. I was simply there just to learn. I now see the longstanding result of the work it takes to ‘bridge the gap,’ and I do believe that we can credit most of that to Ryan Shaver’s efforts in Workforce Development.

“The atmosphere Ryan has helped create is one of excitement and positivity about the future of masonry. That change in atmosphere was something I think our association desperately needed. It once felt like I was always the youngest person in the room. That feeling stands no more. The leadership has opened their ears and eyes to what the younger generation is getting at, and what our experience is going to be like long after many of them have retired or are no longer with us. It’s hard to see the future when you are living as a young adult sometimes, and I do believe wholeheartedly that the senior members of the NCMCA are leading us junior members in the right direction with their vision of the future, with our input of course. The realization that reaching kids at the high school level to engage them in masonry is vital for this association to continue thriving, and I believe as a group, we have a unanimous priority to do just that. *The future of the NCMCA lies in the hands of those under forty.*

“Learning from the older members has helped me find and understand the bigger picture for the purpose of my career in the masonry industry. We are not just ‘doing a job,’ we are helping to build something greater for future generations to come. Some of the most important things I’ve learned are how to have longevity in this industry, how to work more flexibly with other people, how to listen intently, and most importantly, how to have camaraderie with your competitors. The latter, I feel is something very sacred to our association, and it has helped me in my career very much. Having competitors who become more than just associates. They are lifelong

friends, a few of whom I value greatly and remain some of the only people that I can share our unique life experience as masonry contractors with.

“For the growth of our association to continue, it is ‘bridging the gap’ between the office and the field that needs to happen now. More inclusion of our field superintendents and foreman in chapter meetings, conventions, contests, etc. They too deserve to be a part of the conversation about the future. Spanish language integration is also vital, as 75% of the construction workforce are native Spanish speakers who deserve to be included in our association to grow as members.

“The unison and shared vision amongst members are what is driving the NCMCA to continue being a prominent and well-respected association, and I am very proud and thankful to be part of it.”

#### NCMCA President-Elect **Tim**

**Manning** begins his comments with a quote from John C. Maxwell: "Change is inevitable. Growth is optional." Tim writes, “As I pondered Lynn's topic, that quote continued to resonate at the forefront of my mind. I would venture to say that the masonry industry has changed more in the past five years than perhaps the previous twenty. And if I were a betting man, I would guess that that change will continue to shape and mold our industry in the next few years. So, as part of the NCMCA leadership, where does that leave me? Where does it leave us? Not only do we need to think of ways to adapt to change as companies but I've also spent a great deal of time pondering how our association will be impacted. We will change but will we grow?

“I think that the answer to that question is an emphatic YES! As evidenced by some of the actions of our NCMCA leadership, we have made some changes to our association in an effort to match the continual changes in our industry. I think the key for us to experience growth in every sense of word is to continue to look in the mirror. Is the NCMCA representative of the industry from Manteo to Murphy? Our challenge as NCMCA leadership is not only to grow in the most literal sense but also provide means for our current membership to experience growth. Are we the best ambassadors we can be for masonry? Are we using our knowledge to build relationships with the design community? Are we bridging gaps with the general contracting community? While there have been tremendous strides made in these

endeavors, we can't be satisfied. As the NCMCA, we can't rest on our laurels.

“Anyone who has attended an MCAA event knows the reputation NCMCA has. We are the leaders of the pack. We are the lead-dog and the view from behind has looked the same for quite a while. However, we can't continue to look through the rear view mirror in lieu of the windshield. A wise coach once told me the windshield is bigger than the rear view mirror for a reason. We must continually look at the masonry horizon through the windshield. That should be our challenge as NCMCA leadership. How will we continue to push the envelope? How will we continue to raise the bar? How do we remain firmly planted in that #1 spot? Let's all challenge ourselves as we say goodbye to 2024 and usher in 2025. Let's challenge ourselves to come up with new and innovative ways to continue to be the shining star of our industry. Change is inevitable. May we be led to choose growth.”

**Matt Cable** is the President of the Raleigh Chapter. Matt writes, “I have been active in the Raleigh Chapter/NCMCA since 2007. If we're talking about supporting our industry, look at our associate members. We would not be where we are without them. Their support at local chapter meetings and fundraising events is top notch. They continually pour their best into promoting our industry to the next generation. Masonry contractor members – What other industry has the camaraderie that we do? I'd say none. If I have a question or need advice about a challenge or issue, I do not hesitate to call a friend, who is potentially my competition, within the association.

“I've watched leaders of our association implement masonry certification, a workforce development coordinator, and the CMU check-off program since I have been involved. All have had success. Certification is in year twelve, our workforce development coordinator, who was initially supplemented on contractor/associate pledges, is sustained by the association now, and we are in the process of receiving funds locally from the CMU check-off program.

“What about the future? Our Executive Vice President and our current state leadership are doing a phenomenal job at promoting our industry to the next generation and beyond. Moving forward I would like to see a bigger push for wall-share. How do we do that? Quality. That's what sets us apart. If we're not installing masonry wall systems that function properly, how do we expect repeat business from

owners, general contractors, and designers? I'd like to see more hands-on training with proper installation of masonry (structural, architectural, FLASHING, etc.) Promoting masonry on the front end: Our associate members do a good job of getting in front of the next generation of designers at trade schools and colleges. What about current/ established firms? Do we need someone knocking on their doors more often? I know our suppliers/producers spend a lot of time on this and it is much appreciated but is there more room for the association to support this?

“Our association is recognized nationally and is in good hands. I'm looking forward to what we can all do together to promote our industry and grow our association.”

Thirty-one year-old **Jake Burton** is a project manager at Pinnacle Masonry and is the son of NCMCA Past President Danks Burton. Jake is certified in the NCMCA Masonry Contractor Certification Program and writes, “I grew up familiar with the association attending several conventions and other events. Some of the faces have changed over the years but a lot remains the same. I look forward to seeing this trend continue to the future. A group of people dedicated to not only their career but to making the masonry industry better in any way possible.

“Personally, NCMCA has been a great place to receive honest answers from people that genuinely want to share their experience and knowledge. This applies, of course, to masonry but also to anything else you encounter in this profession.”

NCMCA Executive Vice President **Ryan Shaver** joined NCMCA in the spring of 2018. He writes, “As we come to the end of 2024, we are also closing out the year-long 50th Year Anniversary series. The NCMCA has a legacy and tradition in masonry that is envied across the nation. Our rich history has been the key component that has grown the association for fifty years.

“I had the pleasure to work with NCMCA former Executive Vice President Lynn Nash for almost five years before he retired. He shared many stories with me, especially the early-day stories of Eleanor Upton and how her leadership was instrumental in getting the Association running smoothly. Lynn taught me so much in a short period of time and I'm sure some days he wondered if I was listening. I want to thank him for all he has done, and is still doing, for the NCMCA

“Lynn has done a great job this year highlighting all the things that the NCMCA has done and is currently doing to keep our Association at the forefront of masonry associations nationwide. Without the solid leaders of the past that built the NCMCA we would not be where we are today! Their leadership set the NCMCA on a path of unwavering strength that has built the masonry industry strong, not only here in North Carolina, but nationwide.

“Our future is bright because of the dedication of the Executive Vice President and the leaders before us! I look forward to growing all the current things we have in place as well as adding new initiatives that will grow the NCMCA in the future. The next generation of leaders have big shoes to fill, but like I answered the question of, ‘How are you going to fill Lynn's shoes?’ I will answer the growth of the NCMCA the same way: ‘We're not filling anyone's shoes, we're making the shoes bigger, because everything we do to grow is an extension of those shoes!’

“The future for the NCMCA is bright! We have a great staff! We hired Brandy full-time the first of September, we are currently searching for a full-time Masonry Promotion and Outreach Coordinator. We've got an Executive Vice President that has had half of his brain removed and has paperwork to prove it! We have the Concrete Masonry Check-off up and running nationwide, the addition to the Sigmon Memorial Scholarship with East Carolina University this year, the new residential pathway in the Certification Program, the expansive marketing campaign launched in 2024, and many other highlights that make NCMCA so great!

“I applaud the past and eagerly look forward to the future of NCMCA. The pressure is on us to live up to the challenge that our predecessors began! May God continue to bless us here in North Carolina and the industry we are all apart of!”

**Cliff McGee** is the current president of the Association. Cliff writes, “First and foremost, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the original group of masons who recognized the need for a unified team in the masonry industry and had the foresight to establish the masonry association. Their hard work and dedication laid the foundation for what has been an incredible fifty years of progress in our industry.

“As we look ahead to the next fifty years, it’s clear that showcasing masonry’s strength will require focus on promotion. While we can see that the quality and superiority of

our product are undeniable, we often assume it will sell itself. To regain market share and expand our reach, we should take proactive steps to educate architects, engineers, and designers on the many advantages that masonry has to offer.

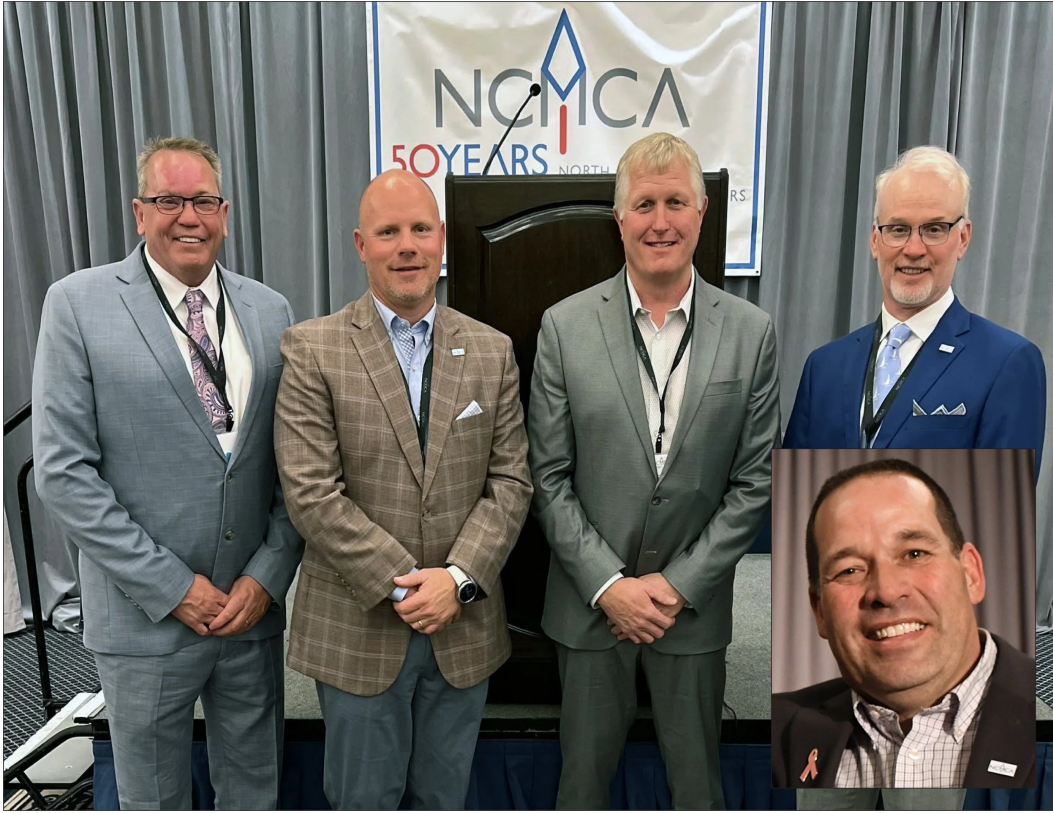
“Equally important is our commitment to workforce development. We've made great strides in this area over the years, and hope to continue this momentum. We need to show people, young and old, that the masonry industry can be rewarding and sustainable. Speaking from personal experience, it is a great place to build a career and support a family.

“It's up to us to keep what was started fifty years ago alive, and to be open to trying new ideas and ways of doing things. I'm confident that with the current leadership we have today, and the next generation coming up, we can make a lasting impact on the industry for years to come.”

The North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association: For fifty-plus years, *Dedicated to serving the masonry contractors of the Carolinas and to promoting masonry as the building material of choice and as a great career opportunity.* Then, now, and in the future.

Article by Lynn Nash

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Leading into the future: left to right, Secretary-Treasurer Mike Rogers, President-Elect Tim Manning, President Cliff McGee, Chairman of the Board and Immediate Past President James “Bo” Black, and Executive Vice President Ryan Shaver (inset.) *Photograph by Taylor Grimes*

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***A note to the reader:*** For each of the twelve months of 2024, NCMCA has distributed an article about the history and activities of NCMCA in celebration of the Association's Fiftieth Anniversary. To write the essays, I have relied on my personal recollections and the recollections of longtime members, and I have delved through the Association archives for pictures and stories.

For this anniversary year, we have featured lots of pictures from the photo archives for the convention slide show and for these monthly articles but we only scratched the surface of the pictures in the NCMCA collection. NCMCA has thousands of pictures stored in albums and on discs. In addition to pictures, the archive has binders of newsletters and meeting minutes, along with other important documents from both the Association and the industry's past. There are even a few audio recordings of

interviews with the industry's early leaders and recordings of convention speakers including the banquet speeches of incoming and outgoing NCMCA presidents.

The archives are rich with not only important Association history but are also full of entertaining accounts of the diverse cast of interesting characters who have been such a prominent part of NCMCA's story. I know I took twice or three times as long completing the articles because I spent so much time enjoying revisiting the pictures and documents. (Many that I had forgotten about.) As the years pass, I hope future generations of NCMCA staff and members will preserve, maintain, and add to these valuable archives. I'm sure the author of the NCMCA's 100th Anniversary Celebration articles will appreciate the diligence. – *Lynn Nash*

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