



*Thanks for 25 great years!*

## Expo Celebrates 25 Years

The year was 1979. Margaret Thatcher was British Prime Minister. Mother Theresa won the Nobel Peace Prize and a first class stamp cost just fifteen cents. Superman flew into theaters, and Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock made their big screen debut. In sports, Pittsburgh defeated Dallas for the Super Bowl Championship.

Here in South Charleston, a small meeting took place at the Ramada Inn, the first of what was to be twenty-five years of displays, seminars, formal and informal meetings, and a truly special event.

In fact, our first event was simply called a "General Meeting", lasting just one day, and sponsored solely by The West Virginia Utility Contractors Association (WVUCA). There were twenty-eight exhibitors, and 350 people attended. (A far cry from last year, when we had over 350 exhibitors and honor exhibitors, nineteen co-sponsoring organizations, and thousands of attendees from across the country).

We would like to offer a salute to five of these first exhibitors, who have participated in every show for 25 years –

- C.I. Thornburg
- Precision Pump
- Rish Equipment
- Walker Machinery
- West Virginia Water & Waste Supply

*Thanks!*

Spunky Thaxton, then President of WVUCA one of the founders of Expo, remembers that first show well...

*"We were out in the parking lot of the Ramada Inn and had a backhoe out there. When they put the outrigger down, it tore up the blacktop. They threatened to run us off right then!"*

The next year, we moved to the Civic Center, not because of the blacktop incident, but simply to have more room. Still hosted by WVUCA, the "Industrial Trade Show" that year took place in a portion of the Main Arena.

## Years of Growth, Years of Change

*The eighties proved to be quite a period challenge and of growth for us.*

By the mid-eighties, EXPO, now The WV Equipment and Technology Exposition, involved the sponsorship of the West Virginia Utility Contractors Association, the West Virginia Society of Professional Engineers, the Contractors Association of West Virginia and the West Virginia Society of Architects. The show had also evolved to include seminars, as well as exhibits. The broadening of the show sponsorship base and development of a strong seminar program would prove to be good investments in the future of EXPO.

In 1987, we incorporated the word 'design' into the name of the show, to better represent the true scope of our event. By the late 80's, EXPO took up the entire Civic Center Arena – the coliseum, the lobby, and the Grand Hall. The 165 booths available were sold out one week prior to the show, and our attendance figures doubled from the previous year.

1979	1980	1983	1985	1986	1987
"General Meeting" held at the Ramada Inn, South Charleston. 28 exhibitors, 350 attendees.	Moved to Charleston Civic Center Main Arena.	Invited West Virginia Society of Professional Engineers to help sponsor show.	Invited Contractors Association of West Virginia to be a sponsor; 75 exhibitors, 120 booths, doubled attendance to 1,500.	Invited West Virginia Society of Architects to be a sponsor. CAWV assumes role of show management, 95 exhibitors with 160 booths, created "Honor Exhibitors".	Incorporated 'Design', into show's name to reflect broad scope of show, 100 exhibitors, 175 booths, 7 co-sponsors.

A 1985 seminar on "personal computers in construction" attracted a lot of interest.



The 1986 show included a rest area and exhibits took up most of the coliseum, now known as Exhibit Hall A.

Throughout the nineties, we also worked hard to get and use feedback from our exhibitors, so that we could continue to meet their needs. From breakfast meetings to informal surveys, we collected their thoughts and suggestions on how to improve things. All those suggestions were taken to heart, and were incorporated in future EXPOs, as much as possible.

We also focused on improving the quality of our educational agenda, which has become very popular with designers and other professions that need continuing education credits.

## We Grow EXPOnentially

Throughout the nineties, EXPO continued to grow – not just in the number of exhibitors and attendees, but in the number and quality of seminars and meetings.

We began the decade with 185 exhibitors and 108 honor exhibitors, 16 seminars and 4 meetings, and over 3,000 attendees. By 1999, those numbers changed – over 200 exhibitors, and a comprehensive offering of 42 different seminars covering everything from water and sewer work, air quality, construction safety, and much more. Attendance doubled, with over 6,000 people attending.

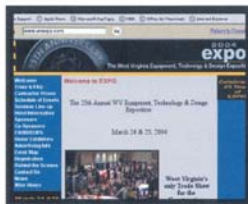
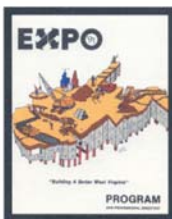
Other changes took place as well. In 1991, we introduced our program and professional directory, a 54-page booklet of comprehensive information about the show.

The American Society of Landscape Architects, WV Chapter, worked to create a rest area, so that exhibitors and attendees could take a moment away from the noise and excitement to have some quiet time – and often, enjoy an informal meeting or two.

And in 1998, we introduced our website, [www.wvexpo.com](http://www.wvexpo.com), so that interested people could get more information about the show – from scheduling, to reserving space, to a listing of seminars.

*"I think we attract very qualified attendees, thanks obviously to the support of the sponsors, but also to the great support and participation of our co-sponsors,"*

said Pat Parsons, EXPO show manager and executive director of the Asphalt Pavement Association of West Virginia. "Our broad based support has been key to our growth and success."



**1988**

Made the decision to rent entire Civic Center for Expo. Sold 14,600 sq. ft. of "bulk space" and 175 booths, 140 exhibitors, 9 seminars offered.

**1990**

Hosted "Business After Hours". The EXPO Afterhours is now an annual event.

**1991**

Introduced program/professional directory. 172 exhibitors utilized 310 booths, 108 honor exhibitors, 22 seminars and meetings, with over 3,000 people attending. Started Exhibitors Breakfast.

**1993**

Record breaking 5,000 people attended this year's Expo. 183 exhibitors with 324 booths, 13 co-sponsors. Booth space was expanded in the lobby of the Civic Center.

**1994**

Eliminated popular "rest areas" to accommodate show growth and additional booths. Enhanced computer registration added.



## EXPO CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

### Y2K -And we're still growing!

While the millennium didn't bring any of the disastrous events that were predicted, it did bring another period of growth for EXPO.

As for the reasons EXPO has become the largest trade show in the state, Spunky Thaxton explains a few of them: "No single show offers a place where people can meet more of their customers than they can meet in this two-day show. Since the show isn't open to the public, the people who go – every one – are potential buyers. And, they are the people who can make the decisions. It's a great opportunity."

Debbie Britt, Office Manager of the West Virginia Rural Water Association, also offers several positive aspects of EXPO...

"The exposure is great – there are so many types of businesses. It's a good place to provide information to many people in one place. We get to see a lot of people that we talk to throughout the year, but don't see face to face. It's a wonderful opportunity to interact. We've even gotten some new members from EXPO!"

(Talk about EXPO-sure!)

EXPO is truly an industry-wide show including utility, highway, building and industrial construction, and the engineering and architectural industries. Now sponsored by all the state's major construction and design trade organizations and professional societies, it has become a regional event, with a significant registration from outside West Virginia.



### 25 years . . . and counting!

While some prefer the heavy equipment, others spend hours with the computer and technology exhibits, others get prices on materials, and several hundred attend at least one seminar, all agree that EXPO serves their industries in a positive and unique way. As the only West Virginia Trade Show for the construction, engineering and architectural industries, we're proud of our history – and we look forward to presenting EXPO for many years to come.



Please tell us about your EXPO experiences – send your comments to [expo@wvexpo.com](mailto:expo@wvexpo.com).

#### 1995

First "outdoor exhibits" featured. 214 exhibitors, 401 indoor booths, 43 seminars. Last year for "bulkspace" exhibits.

#### 1997

Another record breaker – 230 companies participating, 430 indoor and 24 outdoor exhibits, 98 honor exhibitors, 40 meetings and seminars, and over 5,000 attendees from 26 states and Canada.

#### 1998

Introduction of our website: [www.wvexpo.com](http://www.wvexpo.com) and an option for on-line registration.

#### 1999

We celebrate **20 years** of Expo!

#### 2000

"Expo 2K", with 58 seminars, over 250 exhibitors, 434 indoor booths and 17 outdoor, with just over 6,000 attendees.

#### 2002

Continuing to grow – over 6,000 people from 30 states visited 265 exhibitors with 450 booths. We had 96 honor exhibitors.