

# Chairman OF THE Boards

Lumber executive **Stephen Boyd** has used his considerable people skills to guide the MGA through a time of transition.

BY RAY TENNENBAUM

**F**or Stephen Boyd, the watchword for leadership is “consensus.” The president and CEO of Manufacturers Reserve Supply, the Irvington, N.J.-based lumber wholesaling business his grandfather founded in 1931, says, “It’s not a one-person decision – our management team makes all decisions and I get one vote – and the five or six other people I’m sitting here with get one vote.”

That kind of thoughtful selflessness and generosity requires self-assurance and confidence; all four attributes are reflected in what fellow Baltusrol member Rick Jenkins calls Boyd’s unique people skills: “He interacts with people very well, he’s very easy to talk to, and has a great sense of humor.”

“Such a nice guy, and I like and respect him a lot,” says Jim McGinniss, chair of the North American Wholesale Lumber Association (NAWLA), a position Boyd once held. “My dad was also a former chairman, going back about 40 years ago, and he passed away back in January. [Steve] and one other friend of mine honored my dad... he did a terrific job and I’ll always appreciate Steve for doing that, his comments were just so generous and kind and, really, beautiful.”

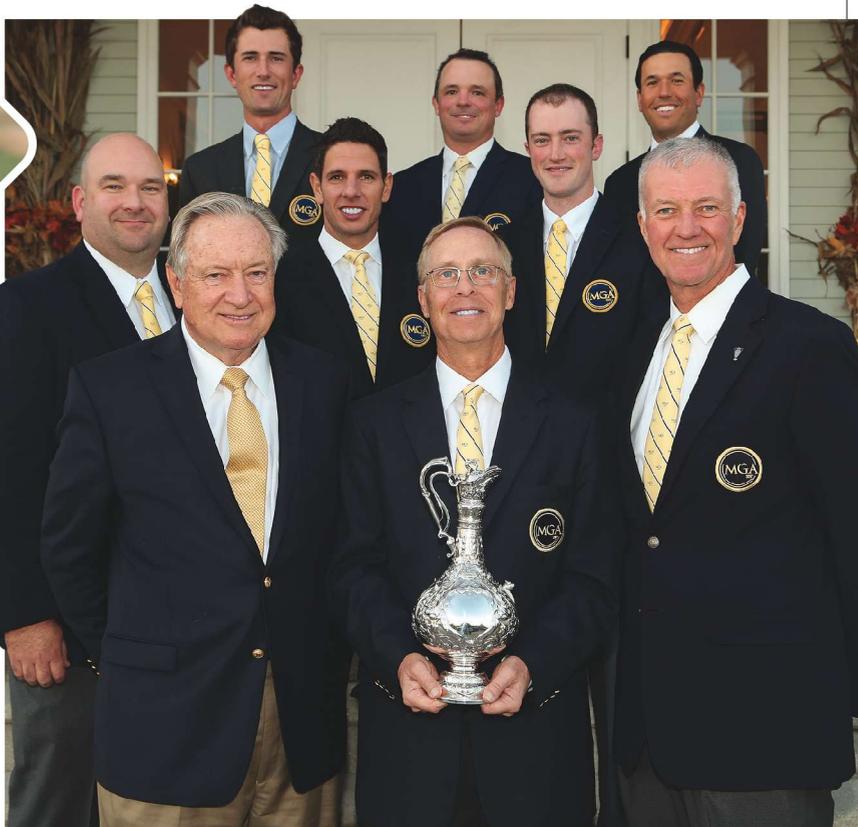
“I wouldn’t say he’s my best friend,” says Jim Livermore, a Toronto-based lumberman and old golf buddy, “but I would say, you couldn’t have a better friend.”

As Boyd reaches the end of his two years as MGA President, it’s his personal touch that stands

out to those fortunate enough to work with him at the organization.

Allan Small, who brought Boyd onto the MGA’s Executive Committee, says, “You’re always trying to identify people that give back, because it takes a special person to want to do something just because they want to do something good. If you love and honor the game and want to share the game, that’s the common bond pretty much all us volunteers have.” With several key staff members slated to step aside during Boyd’s tenure, he oversaw a necessary streamlining of the MGA’s chain of command that had been planned for several years – a task he has handled with aplomb. “We’ve been very lucky with Steve Boyd,” says Jay Mottola, “he’s been very supportive of the staff at every level. We’ve been in sync, not only with the relationship between staff and volunteers, but in personnel issues, where he’s been very helpful – he’s relayed his considerable business acumen.”

This period of transition is not something Boyd sought, but he has nonetheless brought all his skills to bear on it. Similarly, he didn’t set out



(Clockwise from top left) Boyd with Cameron Young after presenting Young with the Ike trophy at Essex County in 2016; as captain of the MGA Carey Cup team at Metedeconk in 2015; and shaking hands with Peter Kim, winner of the MGA/MetLife Boys Championship in 2008.

to take over his family's business, it just worked out that way. In 1979 Boyd was in his fourth year with a large Baltimore-based packaging firm he'd joined after graduating from Wittenburg University when he got a call from his father. "He said, 'My general manager is retiring, would you ever like to come into the business?'"

"I said, 'Not really' – I'd just built a brand-new house in Baltimore, had just met my future wife who's now still my wife, was coaching some baseball and basketball, I was just loving life." It was a tough decision, but ultimately he said to his employer, "You never know whether family businesses are going to work or not, but I'd like to give it a shot." The Maryland-based company accepted Boyd's offer to hire and train his replacement, and six months later he joined the family business.

At the time, Manufacturers Reserve Supply operated out of two warehouses with nine employees; today the company occupies six buildings and employs 37 people, including several who have been with MRS more than 30 years. Boyd is characteristically modest about his role in the company's success: "The hurdles have been very minimal, and the reason why is, my grandfather, my father, and myself – and my son now – all believe this business has been very good to our families for three generations, so if we make fifty cents, we put 48 cents back in the business."

A small business in an industry that includes a significant number of conglomerates, MRS has the ability to maneuver with an instinctual nim-

bleness. In the aftermath of the 2007-8 financial crisis, for example, MRS's sales plummeted by 40%. "Off the cliff, like everyone else," Boyd says. "I think anybody, no matter who you were, a plumber or an electrician, you wondered about your business and if you would be alive." Even in the face of his own panic ("I was literally going around the office turning out the lights because I thought the world was going to end and all that we had worked so hard for would disappear"), Boyd kept his head: sensing that cutting expenses wouldn't be enough, he decided to build up the company's inventory to counter the big conglomerates, which were reducing their own. "I said, 'Let's double our inventory,' because I wanted to make sure that our fill rates went to 100%. The money was more important in inventory than it was in the bank where you could get nothing for it – it was better for us to have it sitting right here." It worked out fantastically, Boyd notes: "We never lost an order to anybody – it turned out to be a survival-mode instinct that worked out well."

Steve Boyd's first golf memories are of traveling as a five-year-old from his parents' house in Chatham to Irvington where his dad would pick him up and bring him to Suburban Golf Club. His father, Robert, Jr., was a single-digit handicapper who, as much as he loved to compete, never lost sight of what was most important. "No matter what we shot on a hole – we could get a 10 together – it was all about being together, enjoying the day, enjoying who we were playing with." He remem-



Boyd and his son Brian in the trophy room at the main office of Manufacturers Reserve Supply; the two won the MGA Father & Son Championship in 2004. (Inset) Twenty years earlier, Boyd teamed with his father, Bob (center), to win the “Met Net” Championship.

bers his dad as a good pressure player, ready to step up for the difficult shots; years later, playing with his son Brian, Steve took the same role.

Steve and his father Bob Boyd won the Met Net (now the MGA/MetLife Men’s Four-Ball Championship) in 1984, and with his son Brian he captured both the MGA Father & Son (2004) and the New Jersey Father & Son (2002). He followed his dad to Baltusrol, where he won two club championships and served on the Board of Governors,

guys I tapped early because I knew I wouldn’t have to worry.

“He’s great at generating ideas, which is one of the reasons I wanted him on the PGA [Championship] executive committee – he’s a great out-of-the-box thinker, always trying to figure out a better way or a better solution. That’s one of his qualities that I really admire, he’s a good thinker and doesn’t hesitate to speak up and generate new ideas for discussion.”

But it’s Steve Boyd’s people skills that earn him the highest praise. “One thing I’ve noticed with Steve at Baltusrol is he connects with caddies, locker room guys, doesn’t matter who they are, he finds common ground,” observes Jay Mottola.

“Steve and his wife Barbara always go out of their way to be inclusive of the people in the group they’re involved with at the moment,” says Jim Livermore.

Boyd has developed a loyal following among his friends for his golf-trip organizing skills, often in service of his professed goal to play all the 100 Best Courses from a 1995 golf magazine; his well-stocked trophy room, just off his MRS office, boasts a pegboard mounted on the wall listing them all – 85 down, 15 to go, including Shinnecock Hills and Augusta National. Last spring he led a contingent of Baltusrol PGA committee heads on

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—Allan Small

and also joined Spring Brook, winning six club championships and two senior championships and served on the board there as well. As the general chairman of Baltusrol’s 2016 PGA Championship Committee, Rick Jenkins sought him out to be one of the division chairs leading up to the event. “He had some of the bigger committee responsibilities – marshalling, the entire merchandise operations, and the media center – and he handled them very well. I mean, he’s an incredibly responsible individual – when he says he’s going to do something he’s all-in, and he’s one of those

(Right) Boyd at the podium as MGA president; friends in the lumber business praise his dry wit as emcee at industry functions. (Below) Lending a hand at a MetLife Youth Clinic.



a working vacation to the Masters, which Rick Jenkins calls “the best: He had every last detail thought through and handled – restaurants, lodging – at

Reynolds Plantation we played two courses there, and he got us onto East Lake.” You’ll also find memorabilia from club championships and golf trips, including photos of friends and family – one shows Sam Snead, with whom he struck up a “casual acquaintanceship” at The Homestead. Another depicts Boyd in the middle of what he himself describes as a typically “almost violent” golf swing – he seems to be uncoiling with the vehemence of a man intent on settling a score with a depraved earthworm.

His understated but pointed sense of humor – “He’ll tweak you, he’ll send you a barb or two with a smile on his face,” says Al Small – has won him a reputation as an entertaining speaker and a versatile emcee who keeps the proceedings moving at a brisk pace. McGinniss, who has known Steve through the lumber business for close to thirty years, says the trade association looks forward to hearing Boyd’s speeches: “He’s got a really sharp wit, and a really dry way of delivering it, and so he always has something humorous to say, and the group always enjoys his presentations because they’re informal and clever, and always kind of tongue in cheek.”

Among friends, he’s also known as something of a practical joker: Livermore remembers a round

of golf at a resort where one of their foursome angrily raked his ball off the green and broke a small sign; afterward, Boyd cajoled one of the resort’s office employees into typing a note on letterhead, purportedly from the resort manager, indicating that they were aware he’d damaged some property, and could he please come into the office for a discussion?

Small says, “Another area where Steve is really strong is making sure that everybody knows that they’re valued and appreciated – that’s really a key thing for a president to do.” Boyd considers it a gift from his dad. “I learned from [him] that everyone’s your equal. It doesn’t matter [whom] I’m talking to – I have no filter, I treat everybody the same no matter who they are, what they are, or what they do, and that’s a great trait that my father passed on to me.”

For Steve, it’s never really just about Steve. “I love to learn new things. I often use the analogy that talking with Jay [Mottola] every day and being with him once or twice a week was like being in high school, going to my favorite teacher at my favorite class, where you couldn’t wait to get in. I love to learn from other people. It doesn’t matter whether it’s the staff at the MGA or on the board at Baltusrol, or dealing with the employees or the management team there, or at Spring Brook, or the staff here at the business, or with the lumber association – to me I’m learning from all of my friends.”

Clearly, his friends and associates and the MGA have learned quite a lot from Steve Boyd, too. ■