



**WORLD FLOOR COVERING
ASSOCIATION**

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The World Floor Covering Association Names Three New Inductees into 2021 Hall of Fame

Burnett, Gheesling and Jennings to be Inducted

April 13, 2021 - Dalton, GA – Since 1992, the World Floor Covering Association (WFCA) has welcomed a number of revered industry members to its Hall of Fame.

It is the highest honor given to floorcovering professionals who, over the course of an entire career, have etched out an indelible impression within their profession. Their dedication and accomplishments have had a significant impact on molding the industry into the thriving, vibrant business it is today.

Three industry leaders will receive the prestigious honor this year. The inductees are the late Reginald (Reg) Burnett, president of RBI International Carpet Consultants; the late David Gheesling, founder, president and CEO of FEI Group; and Tom Jennings, professional trainer, speaker and retail consultant, and former vice president of development of the WFCA.

With the induction of these honorees, the WFCAs Hall of Fame will have inducted 53 of the industry's pioneers and leaders. Burnett and Jennings' formal induction into the Hall of Fame will take place at the Spring WFCAs Board of Directors Meeting in San Diego, California. Gheesling will be honored in September during his Celebration of Life in Georgia.

"The WFCAs Hall of Fame was brought to life for one reason: to give credit and recognition to the instrumental individuals that have helped shape this industry into what it is today," said Scott Humphrey, president and CEO of WFCAs. "Each of this year's inductees led with passion, integrity, and most of all, a dedication to the betterment of the floorcovering industry during their illustrious careers. They dreamed big, advocated tirelessly and have left indelible marks on this industry's landscape. We are proud to welcome them into the WFCAs Hall of Fame."

Reg Burnett, who passed away in 2013, was a visionary leader, internationally known carpet expert and a consummate professional. Born and educated in England, Burnett moved to the United States in 1957. During the next 15 years he studied synthetic fibers and worked in the American carpet and man-made fiber industry. He founded the RBI Carpet Consulting business in Dalton in 1967 and as its reputation grew internationally, changed to RBI International in 1969. Under Burnett's leadership, the company grew to a staff of 22 permanent specialists working with more than 250 companies around the world. He remained managing president until his retirement in 2002.

With a career spanning over 50 years, Burnett earned the respect and friendship of other industry leaders, not only in Dalton, but throughout the world. He had an uncanny ability to predict major shifts in the industry. Decades before it happened, he predicted the industry's consolidation from over 400 manufacturers to fewer than 50, that three or four mega mills would dominate, and vertical integration of many of the medium and large mills.

At heart, Burnett was a teacher who enjoyed helping others achieve personal and professional success. He believed it to be a privilege and honor to nurture and contribute to guiding the careers of his clients, staff, and his community. Burnett

authored over 100 technical articles that were published in numerous industry trade magazines and was in constant demand for speaking engagements all over the world.

Burnett was a true leader, highly respected for his honesty, integrity, and humility. In spite of his very proper British upbringing and accent, Burnett believed in having fun and the value of relationships in business and in life. The RBI company motto was to “delight our clients” and every fiber of the organization was based on that quality.

In addition to his professional achievements, Burnett donated much of his time to a multitude of industry and community endeavors. He was a member of the Carpet & Rug Institute (CRI) and Carpet Manufacturing Marketing Association (CMMA), was active in the Dalton Rotary Club, was a Paul Harris Fellow, a Rotary Education Fellow, and a member of the First United Methodist Church.

The industry lost a true visionary when Gheesling passed away suddenly in November 2020. His sharp mind, keen eye, passionate drive, and kind spirit catapulted him to be an industry legend. Gheesling touched the hearts of many and left a lasting impression on everyone he met.

Gheesling began his career selling industrial equipment before becoming involved in the flooring industry. He worked at both Mohawk Industries and Abbey Carpet and Floor before co-founding FloorExpo Inc., today known as FEI Group – the nation’s largest network of flooring contractors, cabinetry and countertop dealers, decorative hardware and plumbing showrooms, and roofing business owners. He remained president and CEO until his death.

In 1988 along with colleagues Tim Joyce, Andy Hogan, and Randy McNatt, they founded FloorExpo, Inc. to serve the residential contract market, a market that was untapped by the rising tide of buying groups in the 1990’s. What started as a focus just on flooring had quickly expanded and currently has five divisions, Home Solutions by FloorExpo, MultiFamily Solutions by FloorExpo, KBx, K&B Alliance and Exterior Contractor Alliance and services all 50 states across its five divisions.

A key component of the FEI success is the group's emphasis on culture, led by Gheesling. He has been responsible for cultivating lasting relationships between contactors, builders, and suppliers and by nurturing and growing membership with an exclusive group of business owners. He instilled the company's core values throughout the organization and guided with an attitude of gratitude and positivity. These values have propelled FEI Group to be the fast-growing, multifaceted company they are today.

In addition to his corporate duties, Gheesling also served on the board of the Floor Covering Industry Foundation (FCIF). He was philanthropic in many causes he strongly believed in. He had an abiding passion for meteorites which led him to giving countless hours to educate children in the classroom about space. He was a member of the International Meteorite Collectors Association (IMCA), a Board Member/Director at Tellus Museum, a founding member of Meteorite Association of Georgia and Founder/Board Member of the Scott G. Mishkin Foundation.

Gheesling was a visionary—full of great optimism, creative strategy, business acumen, a gifted speaker and had an authentic connectedness that attributed to a natural leadership few people possess, yet he was known by all to be approachable, personable, and down-to-earth. He took great pride in his roles as brother, uncle, CEO, and friend, but perhaps more important than anything, he cherished his role as father.

Tom Jennings is a recognized retail expert, customer service guru, sales coach, mentor, columnist, and speaker. He has spent more than a decade travelling the country, teaching store owners, managers and staff the nuts-and-bolt skills they need to run successful retail businesses. He knows what it takes because he spent 35 years in the volatile trenches of retail.

Jennings is a lifelong member of the flooring industry. He was literally born into his family's retail business, Bud Jennings Carpet One, Inc. which he sold in 2006. He served as president for 20 years following his father's retirement. During that time of operation, the business won many local, regional, and national awards. Upon its sale, the business – which operated its own installation training program - had trained well

over 100 installers and service personnel - many of which are still active in the industry today.

With his goal of raising the professionalism of retailers and installers, Jennings made this his hallmark and branched out on his own as a professional trainer, speaker, and consultant. As his reputation grew for his retail mastery, Jennings joined the WFCA in 2013 as Vice President of Professional Development where he remained until 2019. Jennings currently works as a consultant to the industry and is well known through speaking engagements, published articles, and his weekly video series, "Tom's Tips", hosted by the WFCA. His signature anecdotes are personal, powerful, and entertaining.

A champion of the floorcovering industry, Jennings has made a lasting, positive imprint, most notably with his mantra, "They say that champions don't do one thing a 100% better than their competitors, rather they do a hundred things 1% better." His customer-centric strategy is infused throughout every department of the business and focuses on getting the fundamentals right - from merchandising to store design, from sales practices and customer service to marketing and installation.

Jennings is a notoriously strong advocate for installation training for sales professionals, as well as installers, focusing on the value that professional installation brings to the customer. He co-founded the first local association of American Flooring Association (AFA) in Kansas City (HAFA) in 1980. Jennings was supportive and involved throughout the formative years of the International Certified Flooring Installers Association (CFI) in Kansas City, which the WFCA now has brought under its umbrella. He is the recipient of CFI's Chris Davis Award in 2014 for his dedication to promoting quality flooring installation.

In addition to his professional achievements, Jennings has lent his knowledge, talents, and labors to many in the flooring industry throughout the decades. He has served on many industry boards and councils such as the Retail Floorcovering Institute (RFI) - which later became the American Floorcovering Association (AFA) - a predecessor of the current World Floor Covering Association (WFCA), WFCA president, WFCA

Services Inc. Chairman, Industry Chairman for ANSI SLOO Standards Committee, Floor Covering Consumer Credit Association, and multiple advisory boards.

Consistent with another mantra of his, "Make your life where you make your living", Jennings has consistently balanced his professional life with committed service to his community. He has dedicated substantial time and treasure to many non-profit and civic causes, including: Lawrence/Douglas County Planning board, Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, Lawrence Homebuilder's Association, Lawrence Public Schools Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, Kansas University Williams Fund, just to name a few.

About WFCA

The World Floor Covering Association (WFCA), the official sponsor of The International Surface Event (TISE), is the floor covering industry's largest advocacy organization, representing floor covering retailers, contractors and allied service providers throughout North America.

The WFCA is a recognized leader in marketing research and industry programs for flooring professionals. In addition, it publishes the only retailer-oriented trade periodical, *Premier Flooring Retailer*. As part of its mission to enhance the business environment for the independent flooring retailer the WFCA acquired the Certified Floorcovering Installers Association (CFI) to resolve the industry's largest issue - the shortage of qualified installers. The WFCA runs fcB2B, a program committed to helping businesses in the industry transition to an e-commerce platform for all business transactions. The WFCA also influences public policy affecting the floor covering industry and consumers. For more information about the WFCA, visit WFCA.org.

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