



Reconnecting Around the World

On a quick 12 day trip around the world this month, I had a chance to meet with molders and suppliers in Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia. The news is surprisingly consistent with what I am hearing in the US in that things are steady to moderately optimistic for many - despite the backdrop of economic gloom in the media. The UK market is slow but helped by demand from mainland

Europe; companies in the northern countries of Europe are reporting steady demand and at least one material supplier has just finished a record year in sales and profitability while others have been expanding internationally. Overall demand in Europe has been affected by the southern countries but there is still continued growth to the East and German markets have been relatively strong. The Middle East appears to have stopped sliding (although you never really know) and

there is cautious talk of things growing for molders again (depending in which country you are in); they are hampered, however, by their lack of an industrial base for molders to feed into and their heavy dependence on construction which means that they are constantly seeking new products and ideas to import. Australia has slipped back to below where it was before the water tank boom but molding hasn't stopped and the association is pressing hard to stimulate and promote the industry with training courses. India continues to grow with their infrastructure push and other South East Asian

markets remain relatively small but steady. China is the big play in the region but molding tends to be concentrated in the east and northeast with fewer molders scattered in other regions; reports are generally good, especially in the automotive sector, and their interest in technical products is growing but while the promise is strong, language remains a barrier. The US



Time to catch up - Erich Boersch resting at his home in Bavaria.

market has certainly slowed in some areas but mold-makers and many molders are reporting relatively good sales and even installing new machines. There is a common note, however, that customers are being cautious with smaller order quantities and fewer long-term commitments which, in the context of the broader economy, makes sense - people are not yet confident about the longer term picture. The upcoming Rotoplas show in Chicago promises to be well attended with strong sales of booth space and a well balanced conference program that should attract healthy attendance from both overseas and

North America; given the quiet confidence in the industry, it should be an interesting meeting.

Friends, Germans, Fellow Molders

Rotomolding Hall of Famer Tom Schidel once spoke at an ARM conference about the fact that the most important thing for him was the collection of friends around the world that he had accumulated over a long period of time in the industry. I'm following in his footsteps and am happy to list many people

One such face is Erich Boersch who has long been a friend and mentor - helping with advice at various times in my career when needed. We keep in touch regularly and despite some recent challenges with his health, I found him in good spirits during a recent visit to his home in Bavaria where he lives with his wife Ingrid (an excellent cook, by the way!). Erich was always a strong advocate for global connections and was one of the first European molders to be involved with ARM in US. He also led the European drive for associations to improve networking

"Erich Boersch was always a strong advocate for global connections and was one the first European molders to be involved with ARM in the US."

around the world as good friends beyond the normal work that we share. I find it amazing to be able to say that within rotomolding we can normally name a friend in almost any country around the world and even where one does not come to mind immediately, with a few calls we can usually find a friendly face even in the most remote corner of the planet: there are not too many industries like this.

and exchange of ideas and technology around the world and his message of diversifying to avoid being caught when markets change still resonates strongly today; watch for new products and reach out to fellow molders in distant markets for opportunities. He is still active and keeps in contact with local molders and the association. Orla and I hope to see him up and about for a return visit at Christmas.

OVER 30 YEARS EXPERIENCE OVER 30 YEARS EXPERIENCE OVER 30 YEARS EXPERIENCE

Rotationally Molded Plastics



 **Niland Company**
Your Source for Any Plastic
Hollow Product Shape Up to
(95" diameter) and No Matter
How Intricate.

1-800-648-9013
Toll Free Fax 1-888-779-3065
320 N. Clark, Dept. JT, El Paso, Texas 79905
International Calls: Tel 915-779-1405 Fax: 915-779-3618
www.nilandco.com tom@nilandco.com