



THE WEAKEST JOINT

My good friend Bob Adorjan called me a few weeks ago. For those of you who don't know Bob, he is the retired head of sales and marketing for Fernco. I always credited Bob with making Fernco a household name in plumbing. Rather than walk into a supply house and ask for an adapter fitting, most plumbers ask for a "Fernco." This isn't a unique marketing approach. It's been done with Kleenex, Xerox, etc. You get the idea.

Bob asked the question, "What's the weakest joint in the plumbing system?" I laughed out loud. Bob and I have had this conversation off and on for the past 20 years. I answered in typical fashion, "The wax ring on the water closet." Bob started laughing, too. I still knew the answer. We talked, as we often have, about the "immortal" wax ring. While Bob was employed by Fernco for cons, he never forgot he was a plumber first. He always thought like a plumber when a new product was needed. I think that is why he was so successful. As a plumber, he never forgot his apprenticeship instructor who commented about the stupidity of using wax to make one of the most precious joints in a drainage system.

The thought of using wax to joint a water closet to a drainage system was always in the back of Bob's mind. Just think about it, we go through the trouble of regulating every pipe, joint and connection to the nth degree in plumbing codes and standards. Then when it comes time to attach the water closet to the drainage system, we say, "Oh, by the way, just put a ring of bee's wax around the opening and tighten two bolts to make a super joint." Yeah, right!

For The Bees: Just imagine if every water closet was joined by a high-grade

A retired sales and marketing plumbing executive has a better idea on how to spend his retirement.



joint, say a welded connection, or a soldered fitting, or even an elastomeric adapter. Then this brilliant person came along and said, "I've got a better idea. Why don't we connect the water closet to the drainage system using bee's wax? It will be a lot cheaper, less than a dollar." Everyone would laugh at this buffoon. "What are you, nuts?"

The technicians in charge of codes and standards would say, "You want to use bee's wax — here are the requirements: it must not deform when making the connection, it must withstand the pressure of 10 feet of water head, it must not allow the water closet to rock and the connection must be as solid as all of the current connections." Of course, the bee's wax buffoon would lower his head and walk away dejected. Here

he thought he had such a wonderful, cheap way of making a connection. Maybe he really is stupid, like everyone says.

Of course, the bee's wax buffoon was here first. He got the government to write a standard for his bee's wax, then he got every plumbing code in the country to accept the standard. With the code in hand, he set out to sell the industry on making this precious connection in bee's wax. Sounds kind of dumb doesn't it?

If you ever read the federal specification for the wax, you will find that there are two qualities of wax permitted. One quality is required to be loaded with asbestos fibers. Now there's a four-letter word. And that's the federal government's requirement. Of course, in this day and age, the other quality of wax, without the asbestos, is used in wax rings.

A Better Way: Since Bob retired, he had time to tinker with ways of getting rid of wax rings. He knew there had to be a better way of making a connection. After many iterations, Bob developed the plastic connection with an elastomeric ring that replaces the wax ring. The joint is dynamite. You talk about blowing away the competition, Bob surely succeeded. The joint will not leak. Fool around with the connection and the joint just gets tighter.

The connection is a plastic collar with two elastomeric (rubber) components. A flexible elastomeric gasket makes the connection to the water closet. An O-ring around the outside of the plastic collar makes the connection to the closet bend (drain). There are two sizes, 3-inch and 4-inch. The collar is designed to adjust to the material of the closet bend. If you screw up, you can reuse the connector, unlike bee's wax.

PLUMBING PRIMER

The joint and seals are really quite clever.

So, in his retirement, Bob is off to make his millions, right? Well, not so right. You see, the problem is, that bee's wax can still be had for about a buck. Bob's mighty connection is about five times the price, give or take a few pennies. Now faced with the

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decision of a high quality connection that we have long waited for to join a water closet to the drainage system for five bucks vs. a cheap ring made of bee's wax for a buck, what do you think most contractors select? Bee's wax for a buck! This is business, you know.

Supply houses won't stock Bob's new joint. They figure they couldn't sell the joint when they also stock a fine wax ring for a buck. So Bob has decided to sell the joint directly to the plumber.

That's not the easiest way to become a millionaire. You may have received one of Bob's fliers advertising the connection or seen his ads in the magazine. He calls the thing the Ultra Seal.

If you ever get the urge to consider this neat joint for joining water closets, give Bob a call. His number is 800/32-6188. Even if you are not interested, Bob is a great guy to talk to about the plumbing industry — and a wealth of knowledge.

Before you get too excited about the new joint, there is one drawback. The connection will not work when connecting to a lead bend. I guess we have to hold on to some bee's wax for lead bends. **PA**



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