

Client

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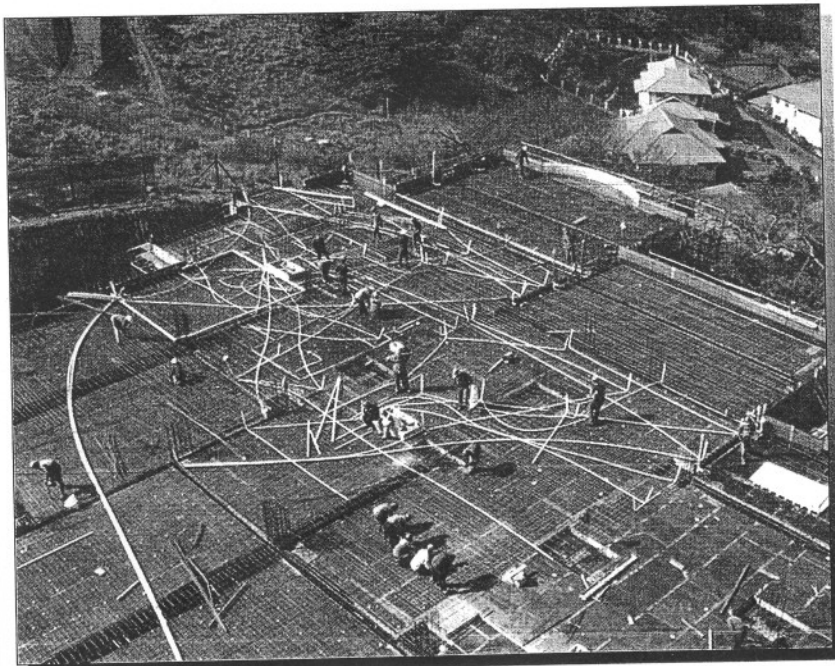
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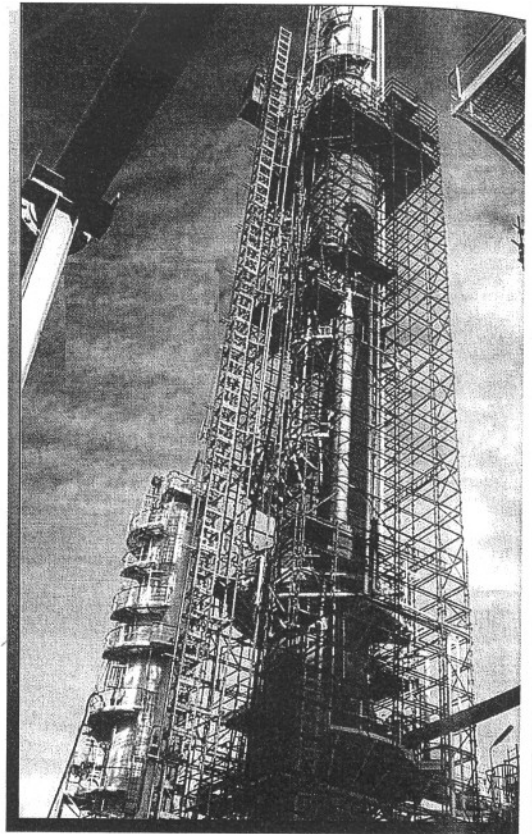
Aiming for efficiency and innovation

With South Africa's building industry booming for the first time in many years, the increased demand for related products and services is proving good for business at the moment. The market for formwork, shoring and scaffolding is certainly no exception. Waco Africa Limited, incorporating Form-Scaff and SGB-Cape, is keeping abreast of demand at its facility in Elandsfontein, Germiston and its branches countrywide.

By Claire Cole



Kwikstage formwork is shown here at a building in Illala Ridge, KwaZulu-Natal



SGB scaffolding in use at a Mossgas refinery

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Factory gearing up to meet demand

The company has invested heavily in manufacturing plant. The emphasis has shifted from small batch production to high volume streamlined flow times. The steel supply shortage that hampered progress in the recent past is over and production is steaming ahead.

Form-Scaff's managing director, Rod Herman, tells *SA Builder* that Waco has imported automatic saws and a number of other machines to help increase the factory's production. "We have a very specific focus in terms of efficiency now," he says, adding that while the original set-up in the factory allowed a great deal of versatility, the new machines are purpose designed and capable of much higher outputs.

The Elandsfontein facility has increased its output by more than three times in the last two years and now produces less than 2% scrap from its operations. Waco chief executive, Dave Best, explains that mechanised production lines are being built for some components, and that once these are up and running, they will operate similarly to car manufacturing production lines. To provide space for the increased production the equipment refurbishment department is at present moving into a new facility in Boksburg where all steel, aluminium, timber and fibreglass products will be repaired and distributed to branches for re-use. Best also points out that it has been necessary to extend the Elandsfontein office facility to house the growing operation there.

The majority of products manufactured at their Elandsfontein facility are standard scaffolding and formwork systems such as Kwikstage, Tifa, Tifa-lite and Tim-Deck manufactured in the "Standards" factory. Custom-designed formwork is manufactured in a "Specials" factory. These products are powder coated, painted or galvanised to customer requirements. Components such as casting are now sourced from a variety of suppliers, both local and international, to improve quality and to stay competitive.

Business shifts back to SA

In addition to Waco's manufacturing operations, Form-Scaff and SGB-Cape supply formwork and scaffolding systems to the construction market, both within South Africa and over the borders. The company's products have been used on large projects in countries such as Nigeria,

Tanzania, Dubai, Malawi, Swaziland and Botswana. The increase in local demand this year, however, has meant that far more business has come from within South Africa and sales orders sourced from other countries have only made up 25% to 30% of this year's business, whereas this figure was about 60% last year.

SGB's scaffolding is currently being used on a number of local projects – Michelangelo Towers in Sandton, shopping centres in Lenasia and Fourways, and the Sasol Turbo Project at Secunda for Sasol, where some 5 000 t of scaffolding has been supplied.

SGB-Cape was formed recently when SGB acquired Cape Contracts – a move that Best says has allowed the company to expand into new territory, such as working on power stations. "SGB's business has traditionally included access scaffolding, but will now also include activities which are allied to scaffolding such as industrial insulation, asbestos removal, plastering and painting," he notes. "SGB consciously moved into the industrial market – less than 20% of its business comes from building now," Best continues. The benefit of this is that when activity in the building market is slow, business can be sourced in the industrial market. The company is quoting work in West Africa and the Middle East.

Broadening product range

While Form-Scaff continues to experience demand for its existing and well-known products such as Kwikstage and Economyform, which have undergone some revision in order to make them more user-friendly and versatile, it has also introduced some new products.

Its existing Tifa range for wall formwork is now complemented by the introduction of Tifa-lite. "The Tifa panels are large and robust and must be craned onto site, whereas the Tifa-lite gives the same finish, and can be erected by a crew," explains Herman. The Tifa and Tifa-lite parts are interchangeable, and both work on a module of 600 mm.

