

UNLOCK THE TRADE SECRETS

An In-Depth Interview with a True
Spenglermeister

Gain Insider Knowledge on
Architectural Metal Roofing from a
World-Class Expert



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Can you share the pivotal moment that led you to choose a career in fine sheet metal architectural applications over pursuing a successful swimming career?

In my early years, I was groomed for an Olympic swimming career, but I realized that swimming wasn't my true passion. To be candid, I despised it. I could talk about that for a long time, but during the rare moments I was allowed out of school and training, I developed a strong interest in locksmithing. This was my father's trade and I always admired his intelligence and skills. Though he really wanted me to advance in my swimming career, he acquiesced and finally allowed me to make a choice between pursuing swimming or another trade. He chose metal roofing as he believed it to have more lucrative opportunities than locksmithing. That's how I ended up here.



Could you describe your experience studying architectural sheet metal applications in Germany and how it shaped your approach to the craft? What were your most valuable lessons there?



The Germans have a word, “**Fleiss**” which means... hmm, “diligence”, “assiduity”, “industriousness”... terms like that, just a stronger feeling.

To seek my fortune and advance my trade skills among the best schools and environment in the world to do so, I left Hungary for Germany with the equivalent of just maybe 8 dollars in my pocket, virtually no contacts and no German language proficiency. I only spoke Hungarian at the time.

With no language skills, it was difficult to convince Germans to give me a job. I finally found one and ended up working for probably the biggest bigot in the whole town. He told me up front he didn't like me (“hated” was probably the more specific term) because I wasn't a pure bred German. All the other workers at that time earned 20 Marks. I got

10. But I was 19 years old with a dream and so dealt with it and worked. I worked hard. Within only the span of a week, he bumped my

wage to 40 Marks and gave me a truck. It had been just a week and of course I still spoke no better German. He was 65 years old and couldn't express how to reward anyone for their hard work other than money and a truck. He made a big showing of me in front of the entire team.

You can believe I showed up giving everything my absolute best at all times after that.

Nothing shaped my work ethic more than my experience with this guy. My brother worked with him, too. Before I left for the U.S., he communicated through some friends he wanted me to meet him in Plettenberg. I returned as he requested and met up in person. He told me he wanted to give me his company for free. I had already made arrangements to move here, but it was an enormous temptation and a great honor.

I am who I am in large part despite and because of this man and “**Fleiss**” is an inextricable component of my values and identity.

The Master School education and test you underwent is truly remarkable. Can you elaborate on the challenges you faced during this process and the rewards it brought to your career?

I didn't really face any challenges per se. Having the background I did helped immensely. Between my apprenticeship in Hungary and Master School, I took on the toughest jobs I could find. I collaborated with every high quality material and systems manufacturer and supplier and got myself certified with every company product I could. I had my Journeyman's certification as well (a prerequisite for Master School application) so I came in with a strong trade-specific base.

I got the most appreciable benefit out of the other aspects they teach you; advanced math and engineering, legal, bookkeeping etc. They get you ready to comprehensively run your business.

The south of Germany has a better Spengler trades reputation. Anything north of Frankfurt not so much. I went to Master School in Augsburg primarily for the prestige, but took the Bookkeeping section up in Dortmund. North for those kinds of things has a better stature than the south.

The trade portion has two parts: the actual advanced trade skills and how to teach. I am

a pilot, but I can't teach you. A pilot teaching certification requires a skill set and knowledge far and above a general Private Pilot's certification. Same kind of situation with the Spengler trade.

Of all the skills I learned at Master School, how to teach, "Unterweisung" really has been the most valuable. It is also the most important to me. Teaching this trade is truly my passion. And I'm great at it. People have learned from me in two minutes what takes others weeks to explain.



How did you manage to finance your Master School education by working as a truck driver? What kept you motivated during those challenging times?

Like most students everywhere, I found myself faced with the challenge of financing school on top of just attending it. My options for night work (my days were obviously full) were limited, so I took on a position as a truck driver. To make ends meet, I obtained the necessary certifications, such as Germany's equivalent of CDL and Hazmat. This enabled me to work while also attending school full-time.

There were many nights where I had to sacrifice sleep to manage both responsibilities effectively. However, my motivation to attain my Meisterbrief certification served as the driving force behind my efforts. I envisioned the future I wanted for myself and did what was necessary. In the end, my work and perseverance paid off, as I graduated without any debt.



During your tenure on the Southern German Restoration Office headquartered in Munich, what were the most common mistakes or oversights you encountered in the roofing industry?

The most significant factor in avoiding mistakes was ensuring that the right companies and professionals were selected for the projects. A major part of my responsibilities involved thoroughly reviewing portfolios and qualifications to ensure that only skilled and competent companies were entrusted with any projects under my scrutiny.

The industry professionals generally demonstrated a high level of competence, so I almost never had to intervene. I did encounter occasional minor oversights or details that needed attention, however, these issues were generally manageable and didn't pose significant problems.

I can't help but be proud of being such a young

craftsperson working alongside experienced professionals many decades my senior, even if it initially seemed unbelievable to some. More often than not, people would ask to speak to MY master even though I WAS the master.

In Germany, strict adherence to proper credentials is enforced with severe consequences for those misrepresenting their qualifications. For example, you can't wear the Masters uniform without the certificate. This could lead to severe consequences. But the system ensures that only qualified individuals are entrusted with important projects, providing peace of mind for industry professionals and general citizens alike, and MUCH easier streamlining for the entire design-build process.



You've written technical books for metal roofing specialists. What inspired you to share your expertise through writing, and what key insights do these books offer to professionals in the field?



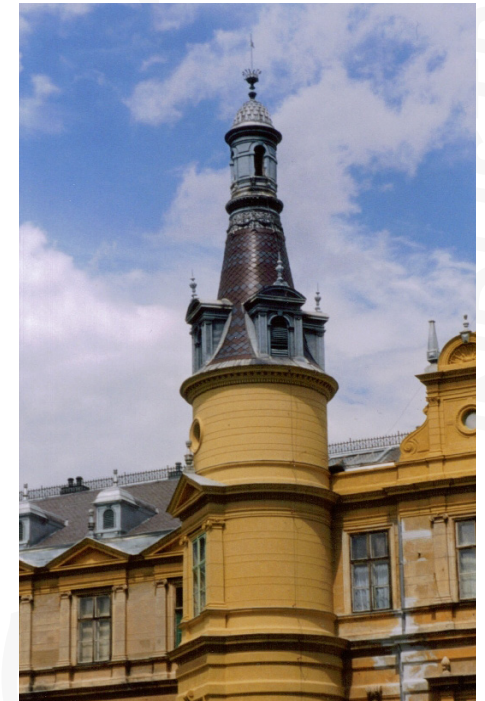
The inspiration behind this stems from a personal journey that began when I was just 15 years old. Even at that young age, I realized there was a lack of comprehensive resources available to aid individuals interested in pursuing a career in metal roofing. I sure wished something like that existed for me. To fill this void, I started writing guides for aspiring professionals. As chapters compiled, I ended up with full on publications.

My primary goal was to provide a comprehensive resource that would not only help others comprehend the subject matter but also offer practical insights that I wish I had access to during my early days.

These books were tailored to be more than just ordinary reading materials; they were designed to serve as comprehensive textbooks for apprentices and experienced professionals alike. While the content may be technical and dense,

it is structured in a way that makes it easily understandable for those already immersed in the field.

Through these books, I aimed to bridge the knowledge gap by presenting complex concepts in a clear and accessible manner. The contents delve into the intricacies of metal roofing, covering various techniques, materials, and industry best practices. Additionally, the books include real-world examples and case studies, offering practical applications of the theories discussed.



How do you stay up-to-date with the latest advancements and trends in fine metal roofing applications?

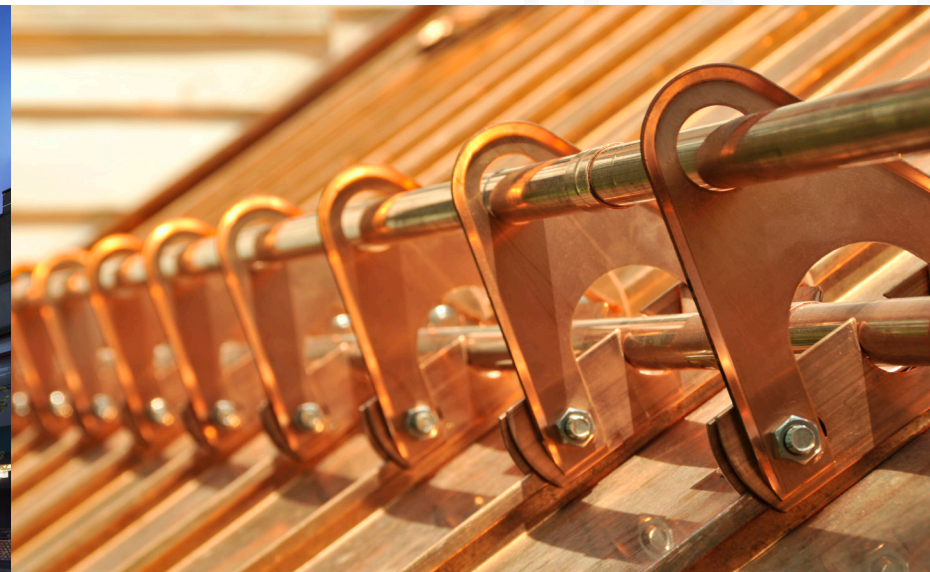
In the U.S. we have continuing education credits. Similar in Europe. We go to expos. We do many of the same types of things.

There are always advancements and exciting things on the industry horizon. That said, just like for athletes, you always have to start with the basics. I'd say there is an epidemic of lack of even baseline knowledge most places. Therefore, going back to the basics for most is about as edgy and innovative as it gets. It's ironic that in order to be the most progressive (at least in this case) you have to take things back in time a few hundred years.

We rely on tried and true methods: Air is the best insulator. We implement snow abatement systems capable of holding back tons of snow. Snow is comprised of 97% air. We engineer rainscreen systems on walls for hyper effective temperature regulation and building health. Things like that.

Not saying I would like to do any type of installation or fabrication work without the amazing machines and lifts that make our jobs so much easier in contemporary society (who wants to hammer out copper sheets all day by hand?) but as far as trade skills and methods are concerned, going back in time will provide the most longevity for the future. Does that make sense?

My advice is go and learn. As you start learning you will recognize how little you know. Self awareness and coachability is a good thing! My ultimate goal is to give education to everyone so our hundreds of years old trade stays alive, roofers have real skills they can use, and the customers get the highest value as the roofs last as they are intended.



Spengler Industries aims to address the specific needs of New World metal roofing clients. What are some of the key considerations you've identified in this regard, and how does your company cater to them?

Obviously everyone (from designers to installers) hasn't had the educational opportunities people like me have been able to be exposed to. Culture is different as people in the New World are much more transient, we don't have anywhere near the quantity of historic structures of those in Europe, and consequently don't have the same emotional attachments to those buildings. We tend to prefer "larger" and "more" at less of a cost rather than curated and looking toward the future: legacy, financially wise investments over time, sustainability, responsibility, beauty, etc.

Though I want to steer New World clients to value permanence at a higher level, cultural predilections are what they are, and the design-build team will never have industry masters on whom they can rely on a large scale.

To combat this, I have built in as much engineering and intuition in all our designs as I possibly could. And on top of everything else I and my team are here for any technical questions that arise. We instruct on large scales over longer periods of time, or can figure things out on a short phone call depending on what is required.

All the accessories we do not make here ourselves are still the highest caliber version the world has to offer. It is my defining desire to ensure my customers can feel confident proceeding with their projects knowing they have all the tools they need to build like the masters in Europe and rely on the same beautiful, permanent outcome.



As an instructor for companies like VM zinc, you travel the world offering consulting services and seminars. What are some of the most common challenges or misconceptions you encounter among roofing professionals in different parts of the world?

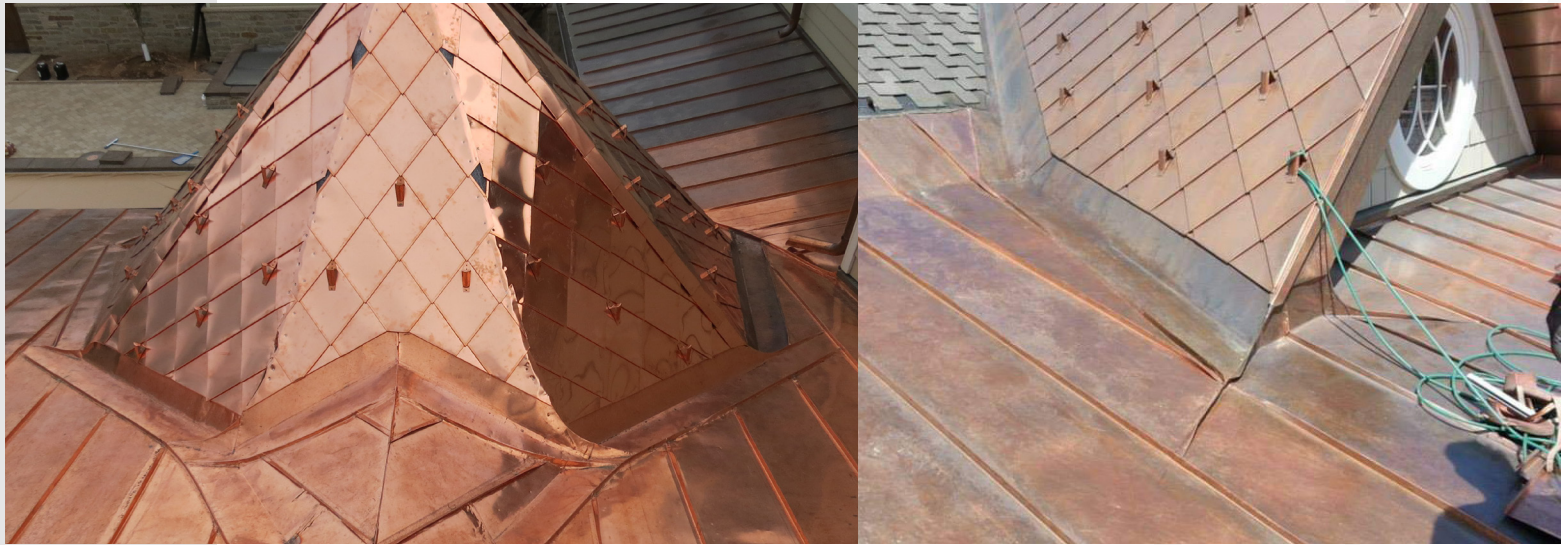
Professionals who've been 20 years in the trade tend to think they know everything. I can appreciate their perspective, but they don't know what they don't know. I'll inevitably get a group of trade veterans who stand in the back, cross-armed, thinking their time with me will be wasted, but invariably, their curiosity gets the better of them as we move into the seminar. Then their curiosity turns to fascination. Then their fascination turns to an

exasperated, but thrilled, "why did know one tell me this before?" Always.



In your extensive experience, what distinguishes a truly exceptional fine metal roofing project from a standard one, and how do you ensure excellence in your work?

Details. Details only. Details make all the difference. The little details are more important than anything. Details will make or break your expensive roof and efforts. Focus on the details and your work will last forever leak and maintenance-free. And it will be beautiful. And you'll be proud of it!



Roofing is a physically demanding profession. What do you have to say to fellow roofers in this regard?

One of the bonuses of this trade is, you don't much have to go to the gym! And the strength of body and character you develop will serve you throughout your life. Honestly, I can't think of a more comprehensively difficult job. You have to be physically strong, capable of solving for tricky math and engineering issues, an artist, a businessperson, a stickler for details, no fear of heights... I mean, is there any other career out there more demanding?

I've thought long and hard about it, and can't come up with one. We have to be Leonardo da Vinci, but capable of lifting and affixing a thousand pound ornament to a roof and, probably at least initially, managing HR issues and budgets and teams.

If you're in this trade, you are an elite level human. I love working with high performers.

11



Innovation is essential in any industry. What are some of the latest technological advancements in fine metal roofing, and how do you incorporate them into your projects?

CNC machines take out the measuring part of the fabrication. But every CNC machine requires a computer design, so that is something that must be learned. I've had to adapt to learning 3D design and programming. There is always something new to learn to make things better for both my company and all those on the design-build team who interface with our systems.

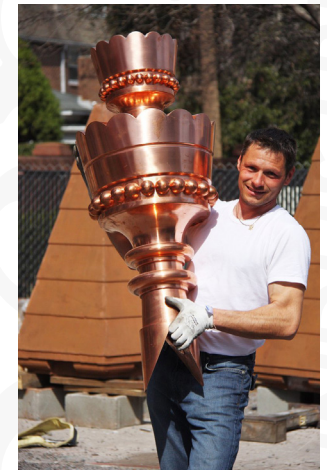


Could you share a specific instance where creative problem-solving played a crucial role in overcoming a challenging roofing project?

Early on in my career here in the U.S., I was tasked with assisting a team with a steeple construction in an area prone to earthquakes, hurricanes and quicksand. The building was pre Civil War construction and initially incapable of supporting the tall, ornate steeple proposed by the design team.

They looked for 5 years to find the right partner to help them create their vision and

selected us to help as soon as they found us. We worked with the team to figure out ways to reduce weight and properly design for structural engineering. We utilized the same materials as used in yacht hull construction for a lightweight substrate among a long list of other creative innovations. The result was hyper functional and nothing short of spectacular!



What advice would you give to young aspiring roofers looking to excel in the field of fine sheet metal architectural applications?



Learn the trade and do it! I know it's harder to find places to learn other than "on the job" here in the U.S. If you are so inclined, come train with me or inquire about working among other certified companies trained in our methods. Go to Europe and check out the scene for yourself.

If you already have a team, I teach educational seminars. We'll discuss your current abilities and your vision of where you'd like to go in your company. From that point, we'll distill what you need and determine specifics tailor made to your objectives. You will be surprised what you can learn even in just a few days. In that short investment of time, you'll find yourself so far ahead of your competition, it'll never be a fair match again. And most importantly, you will know that you have the

skills to ensure your work lasts forever and you'll never have to return to fix or maintain anything again.

Once you have developed these skills, you can take on much more difficult projects. We will be here to help you with techniques as you advance. You'll be able to move confidently in the direction of your intentions.

Did you know we offer free initial training for those with teams who sell our products? That's another way in to the secret Spengler method.

There are several ways in for those who have the desire. I'd suggest contacting us and letting us know your pain points and wishes. We'll help guide you.

Finally, what excites you most about the future of the roofing industry, and how do you envision Fine Metal Roof Tech contributing to its growth and development?

Above and beyond providing our customary superlative metal roof systems and technical assistance, I've been developing a few surprises I think my roofer clients will be really excited about. It will help them grow their business and set them ahead of the curve in myriad ways. I can't share that just yet, but when I do, it will be for our insiders first, so make sure you are on our email list.

More than anything else, I'm really anxious to focus my attention on education. We can't elevate the roofing and building industry without colleagues as passionate as we are. I really hope those with whom we work evangelize our methods and make the roofing scene a more environmentally responsible, ethical, and beautiful place to do business and in which to live.

