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Justin Ritter
AGC of Alaska was created 60 years ago following a meeting of six general contractors. Representatives of contractors Stock & Grove, M. F. Munter Company, Morrison-Knudsen Co., S. Birch and Sons Construction Co., C. F. Lytle Company and Green Construction Company met in Seattle on Sept. 27, 1948.

The contractors were all Associated General Contractors of America members, they had construction contracts in Alaska and realized the value of being part of a construction trade association through which the construction industry could have a single voice and direct contact with the government.

And they recognized a need to organize and negotiate uniform labor agreements with the Building and Construction Trades Union for working conditions and wages in the Territory. According to minutes from the group’s first meeting, they decided the best way to organize to negotiate and manage labor agreements in Alaska was to apply to the national AGC to charter an Alaska chapter, which was granted in December 1948.

By early 1950, AGC of Alaska had signed a master agreement with unions for seven crafts, and we still bargain on behalf of management today.

In the six decades since, AGC of Alaska has grown to include 650 member businesses representing more than 100 general contractors, 200 specialty contractors and 350 associate members. In 1981, 1994 and again in 2006, the AGC of Alaska was honored as the top chapter in the nation.

Through this special edition of the Alaska Contractor Magazine we pick up where our 50th anniversary book left off. These pages chronicle the stories of some of the pioneering people who built the infrastructure of Alaska—one road, bridge, dock, hospital, airport, school and commercial building at a time. We honor and begin to preserve the legacies of some of our pioneer Alaska contractors by sharing their unique stories.

This history must continue to be recorded and preserved before the facts and details become lost to time. It is important, not only for future generations, but today’s generation to learn about the spirit, ingenuity and perseverance of many of Alaska’s contractors.

As we tip our hard hats to these pioneering members and their contributions to our state, we issue a challenge to the next generation of builders to pick-up the mantle of their forefathers and continue to build Alaska’s future. Tomorrow’s challenges, though different in nature, will be as great as those of yesterday.
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Bruce Campbell has never been a contractor. To be sure, he helped build some roads and bridges in 1950s Alaska when the Alaska Road Commission, his employer in those days, provided most of the expertise and manpower for roads and bridges in the Territory of Alaska. But with statehood, he became, over the years, the man who, figuratively, let out the bids employing AGC members on almost every state-sponsored, road-related contract throughout most of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

“When I was first here in Anchorage in 1953, it was kind of a fun place to be,” Campbell said. “Fourth Avenue was just one big long bar.

“Since I was a graduate engineer, I was a rarity here with the Alaska Road Commission. They transferred me to Juneau to be in bridge design because I could do structural design.

“So I was down there, and Juneau was just a fun town. That was the government seat. There were about 2,500 to 2,700 people there, and there were 19 bars. You do the math; it was well equipped.

“They had a lot of single secretaries and a lot of single guys working there so there was a lot of social activity. It was just a fun place to be.

“The phone system there was still operator plug board. I remember you picked up your phone, and the phone in our apartment was Red 926. They had four parties on a line, Red, Green, Black and Blue. You picked up the phone and the operator came on the line and you said you’d like to talk to Black 207. She’d plug you into Black 207, or she’d say there’s no sense in plugging you in because I just saw them walking down the street. Quite a very personal town.

“I worked there on bridge design, and then the next year they put me out on bridge construction in Cantwell. And Cantwell, of course, was another interesting place to be.”

Cantwell

“Just east of Cantwell was the Indian village,” Campbell said. “It] was kind of interesting in itself because of how it all got there.

“The Valdez Creek mine, which was located about halfway between the Richardson Highway and the Anchorage-Fairbanks Highway on the Susitna River, was a rich gold-mining camp. It was placer, so they needed a lot of labor. So the people that ran that gold mine in the ’teens and ’20s hired Indians out of the Copper River area, the Ahtnas, to come up and work.”

“At the time, freight was brought overland from the Richardson Highway to the mine. In 1919, however, the Alaska Railroad reached Cantwell and suddenly it was easier to move freight from the railroad than from the road. ‘So the Indians just stayed there [Cantwell].

“Then they closed the mines down in the Second World War — President Roosevelt shut all the gold mines down,” Campbell continued. “All those Indians moved into Cantwell and they worked on the railroad.

“I worked there on four bridges.”

Denali Highway

“The Denali Highway itself was kind of an interesting thing. In those years [before statehood] the Alaska Road Commission originally started out in the Department of War and it was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1932. When it got under the Department of the Interior, you had the Alaska Railroad, you had the National Park Service, and you had the Alaska Road Commission, which kind of had joint interests there.

“Originally, of course, the Alaska Railroad owned the McKinley Park Hotel. They brought tourists in … very few of them. They had two buses to go out in the park and that was it.

“But the road through the park wasn’t built to serve the park. It was built to serve Kantishna, the mining area.

“The Road Commission wanted to connect that road up [to Anchorage and Fairbanks], both for the park service to improve tourism and for the miners. The Alaska Railroad said, ‘No how, no way they were going to parallel our line. You cannot build a road from Fairbanks down or from Anchorage up because that will cut into our revenue.’

“They were king of the hill, the Alaska Railroad, so the decision was made to come across on the Denali Highway from Paxon over to Cantwell and on up to the hotel. The road got started and I worked on that. It was eventually opened in 1957. That’s how that road happened to be where it’s at.”

Federal funds

“In 1956, the Interstate Highway Act passed,” Campbell said. “The Interstate Act excluded Alaska from the Interstate but did include it in the ABC pro-
gram, which was the basic federal aid highway program.

“The ABC funds were distributed by percentages of land area and percentage of population. Well, Alaska had such huge land area that Congress couldn’t go for that so they cut our land area to a third and those are the monies we got. But we did get substantial monies.

“That was the time when we really started getting into the contracting business. Because then we had money to spend to improve highways, to build highways.

“From that point in time that’s when construction of highways in Alaska really started taking off. There was a little lag time because we didn’t have designs ready to go at that point so we let out some consulting engineering contracts to get roads going and we did a lot more in-house work, hired more people, and worked ourselves to get more plans out so we could get more construction out.

“That’s when the AGC kind of came into the major picture. At this time all the Alaska Road Commission work by their own forces pretty much ceased. There was very, very little after that. It was pretty near all by contract.

“I would say that probably 90 percent of it was by AGC members. They were the predominant force.

“We did things then … like we rebuilt a lot of portions of the Anchorage road system, the Richardson Highway was all rebuilt and paved. The Glenn Highway was rebuilt and paved. All by AGC members.”

Transfer to Commerce

“The other thing that happened was when the Interstate Act passed, the Alaska Road Commission was transferred out of the Department of the Interior into the Bureau of Public Roads. They put it all into one group, the BPR and the Alaska Road Commission, and then it came under the Department of Commerce so the Alaska Railroad no longer had the stroke to stop the road from going up from Anchorage to Fairbanks. That was one of the first projects that we started.

Statehood

“Statehood came along in 1959, and things changed quite a bit,” according to Campbell.

“The BPR transferred all issues over to the new state highway department. When the state took over in 1959 and formed the Department of Public Works, Dick Downing was the Commissioner of Public Works. They hired people from Wyoming and New Mexico to help the new state highway department get going. That didn’t work out too well. Those people pretty much were not familiar with Alaska conditions, the Alaska people, the size of the state and those things.

“Just nothing really seemed to happen. So Gov. [William] Egan, who was our boss at that time, fired the whole bunch of them and created the Department of Highways by executive order.

“In that period after he fired all those people, he didn’t know quite what to do for good leadership. Roy Cheney, who was one of the executives at AGC, suggested Don McKinnon who was the ex-highway commissioner down in Montana.

“So he [Egan] hired Don McKinnon. Don was in his seventies at the time and not in really good health. Nevertheless, he came up and reorganized the department.

“And that’s when things took off.”
Point to a major road or paving project in Alaska since the 1950s, and Pete Casper’s name is probably connected to it in some way. He paved the Seward Highway from Anchorage to Girdwood. He led crews in building five of the seven sections of the Dalton Highway, then called the Pipeline Haul Road. He was there on the Parks Highway. He laid down eight miles of the road out of Cordova leading to the Million-dollar Bridge. He paved the Juneau Airport Expansion.

All this came from a man who, freshly out of college with an engineering degree, almost accepted a job offer from Lockheed Aircraft in the early 1950s.

After applying for and being offered a job by Lockheed, Casper visited the head of the engineering department at the university in Ames, Iowa. “He said, ‘I’ve got lots of jobs,’” Casper recalled.

“Most of them were county engineering jobs, or assistant county engineering jobs, so I wasn’t much interested in them. Then he had one from an outfit called Green Construction. One of the guys that had graduated about four or five years ahead of me had called him and said they needed two recruits to go to Alaska.

“Well, that sounded kind of interesting, and when I got home I called and he says to come on down and talk to us.” Green’s home office was in Des Moines, Iowa.

“I went to work there for about a week in the home office, and they sent me right to Alaska. I came up here to go to work here in Anchorage. That was about the first or second week of 1952, and the job was putting base course and pavement down on the highway from 4th and Gambell to Girdwood plus Fireweed Lane from Gambell over to Spenard Road.” All of this was part of a single contract, according to Casper.

“The equipment was all here,” he continued. “They’d just finished building the international airport—they’d been working on it for three years and finished it the fall before. All that stuff was parked on Sand Lake Road on a homestead down there.

**Early Alaskan jobs**

“They’d just completed the grading on it [Seward Highway to Girdwood]. They’d been working on it about three years. What they did was move the railroad out and build the road on the old railroad grade.

“We finished that job about two-thirds of the way through August and right after Labor Day they sent me to Cordova. We got a contract to build the first segment of the Copper River Highway that was going to connect Cordova with the world. It was about an eight- to 10-mile job from the Cordova Airport out to the Copper River.”

In the 1950s, Casper was working in Alaska only during the warmer months. He would spend his winters working for Green Construction in the Seattle office or in California. He would not winter over in Alaska until the early 1960s.

After bouncing back and forth for several years, Casper was sent to Juneau. “I
went up there and I was the engineer on this airport paving job in Juneau, paving the extension to the runway.

“I stayed in Juneau. We got more work and more work there; I stayed there about five years.” During those five years, Casper finally wintered over in Alaska.

**Alaska manager**

“The reason I left [Juneau] is I was promoted,” Casper said.

As Alaska Manager he was sent to Seattle, “because that was the most convenient place to be to get to all our work. We had work at Nome and we had work at St. Mary’s I believe at that time, and Kodiak and a lot of work in Ketchikan, and still working at Juneau. We had a job at Yakutat.

“The way the airlines were in those days you could get from Seattle to any one of those places by mid-morning Alaska time.” (Ed. Note: In those days Fairbanks was two hours earlier than Seattle and Nome was three hours earlier than Seattle.) “But if you were in Fairbanks where the center of our activity was, to get from Fairbanks to Ketchikan was about a two-day trip. The quickest way would be to fly to Seattle and come back.

“I worked out of the Seattle area for five years.”

**Pipeline**

“When things started opening up on the Slope,” Casper said, “the thing that really got to us was that Chevron Oil let a contract to Lloyd Burgess to build the Deadhorse Airport. We weren’t even notified about the job—didn’t even know about it until the contract was awarded. [We] read it in the newspaper.

“It was pretty obvious at that point that things were going on up there that we didn’t know anything about because we didn’t have representation in Anchorage. All the oil companies were headquartered here.

“The decision was made to ship me and the little group we had in the Seattle office up to Anchorage. We moved up here about April of 1970. The discovery of oil was 1968, as I recall, so things were going on here pretty hot and heavy in 1970, and they actually took bids to build a road that fall.”

As part of the decision-making process, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System
known as TAPS, the forerunner of Alyeska Pipeline Service Co., flew Casper and other engineers up to look at two possible routes, one crossing Atigun Pass and the other over Anaktuvuk Pass somewhat farther west.

“We flew over both passes about a hundred feet in the air to figure out which was the best from a constructability standpoint,” Casper said. “There was no question in our minds which was best—Atigun would be better. Atigun was higher altitude than Anaktuvuk but that didn’t faze them too much. It was also shorter.

“We were awarded three sections of the seven sections of the road, sections 2, 3 and 4. That ran from just south of Prospect up to the summit [of Atigun Pass].

“We had three camps—we moved in that spring [1971] before breakup. Everything was hauled in over the ice. We built camps at Prospect, Coldfoot and Dietrich. The jobs were envisioned to be three separate jobs working from those camps in both directions.

“Then, of course, there was an injunction against the pipeline because they didn’t get an environmental impact statement. If they had started the whole thing six months sooner they would have beat the law that went into effect and made that possible.

“So we actually did not start working on that road job until 1974. We had three or four people in each camp just being watchmen that whole time.

“When they lifted the injunction, things had changed a little bit. All us contractors had gone in with our own equipment and everything was cost plus a percentage fee. There was a standby rate for the equipment and the standby rate was pretty cheap and nobody was getting any money.”

Alyeska then worked out an arrangement to buy out the contractors. All except Casper’s company agreed. They ended up getting even more work when the job was allowed to begin in 1974, getting to build an additional two sections of the road.

“We still had a pure cost-plus contract,” which now applied to five of the seven sections of the road.

“Things didn’t always go as things were planned, “Casper
continued. “We had to jump in and do a lot of other things like running a ferry system across the Yukon River for two summers with those flexi-float barges. They could get us to go in and do that with no negotiations because we had a contract that would cover anything that came along.

“The road was open in a year, except for the Yukon River Bridge.

“Because Mr. Green [Casper’s boss] kept that contract, we ended up with one hell of a lot of work there. Our estimate for the work we were going to do was about $40 million, as I recall, and we were paid $82 or $83 million for that summer of 1974.

“The money paid to us for the work on the road turned out to be $44 million. We were about 10 percent over our estimate. All the rest of the money was for all these other things that were going on.”

AGC

Casper has to chuckle some when he recalls his association with AGC.

“The most memorable part was going to the national conventions in those days,” he said. We always had the hottest spot in the hotel for a hospitality room.”

Casper goes on to tell how the room would be rented, a used refrigerator purchased and installed, and then as Alaska AGC members arrived they would be given money and sent to the nearest liquor store to covertly bring back sacks filled with liquor to “avoid hotel corkage fees.

“Everybody came to our hospitality room. We got to know the national people on a personal level. Now, we don’t even have a hospitality room anymore.”

Aerial view of trans-Alaska oil pipeline construction camp and equipment yard at Coldfoot.
Unusual for many of his era, Glen Chambers actually flew to Alaska, “I came up in May of 1946,” he said.

“I was hired out of state. I was paid to come up here. I came on what they called Alaskan Airlines. It was a DC-3 outfit. They flew out of Seattle for about 50 bucks less than Alaska Airlines. We refueled on Annette Island and landed at Merrill Field. It was then a gravel field.

“I was to go to work for—at that time the name of the company was Lomen Equipment,” Chambers continued. “The Lomen family’s an old family that goes way, way, way back, probably out of Nome. I was hired in a three-person office, and I was a combination parts manager and service manager. The property was on Sixth and G, and there were two lots.”

Six decades ago

Living in Anchorage was at once both predictable and exciting in those days. For instance, power outages at about 6 p.m. every evening were routine as people came home from work and turned on their electric stoves at the same time to cook supper.

For the three equipment companies operating here, though, business was complicated by a lack of equipment to sell and an “awful lot of surplus coming out of the various military bases,” according to Chambers.

“There were three major dealers based on the tractors. Yukon Equipment [Lomen Equipment when Chambers started there] had the Chalmers, Northern Commercial had the Caterpillar dealership, and a company called the Carrington Co. out of Seattle had the International Harvester.

“The company [Lomen/Yukon Equipment] had offices in Fairbanks and Anchorage, but the main office was in Seattle,” Chambers said. “Just about everybody that was up here had a Seattle office because you had to have somebody to do your financing and you also consolidated your shipments.

“Everything came up by Alaska Steam from Seattle to Seward. [Ships] stopped in Juneau and Cordova along the way, then finished in Seward, put it on the Alaska Railroad, and brought it to Anchorage.
“But the headquarters was in Seattle, and that applied to everybody.”

The major projects in the late 1940s requiring tools and equipment from companies like Lomen/Yukon Equipment were through the Corps of Engineers and involved construction on local military bases. On Fort Richardson, originally just a storage area for Elmendorf, an Army Air Corps base, work began on a “power house and a 200-man barracks,” he said. “On Elmendorf there were concrete and permanent-type structures. That was the main construction going on.”

Name change

As Chambers recollects, the company name changed from Lomen Equipment to Yukon Equipment about 1949. “The Chalmers manager bought out the Lomens after the war and held it for about eight or nine years, then he sold out. We were encouraged from the beginning to buy stock in the company. That’s how I got in.

“Early on,” he said, “we couldn’t make a living just selling tractors—there was so much stuff [surplus] coming in from Elmendorf. So we were distributors for Iron Fireman furnaces, which was nothing but a coal furnace.

“We were distributors for just all kinds of things—stuff related to construction machinery. We had hand tools—just anything we could sell. And there was a little bit of gold mining up out of Fairbanks, so we had mechanic’s tools and things like that.”

Changing brands

“Alice Chalmers had both construction machinery and farm machinery,” Chambers said. “The construction machinery was bought by Fiat out of Italy and became Fiat-Alice Chalmers.

“We introduced the HD-41, which was the largest tractor in the world at the time.” Several of those machines found their way to the Usibelli Mine near Healy, the largest coal...
mining operation in Alaska.

“Fiat-Alice Chalmers … they decided to close things out and we just elected to mutually go our separate ways. It was right after the pipeline was done. They decided we should part company and we were most happy to. We came out real good on that.

“By then we were taking on the Case line of equipment, which is smaller dozers. Some of the stuff we called the homesteader’s special because they’d use it to clean out and get into their homesteads, building the little roads.”

Turning a bit nostalgic, Chambers softly continues, “John Deere and Caterpillar are about the only old two tractors still made in the U.S., and even Caterpillar engines are built in Japan. So much of this stuff comes from Japan now.”

Equipment changes

“Everything was cable when we first started,” Chambers said. By cable he means that things like drag lines were operated by a series of cables reeling and unreeling as the bucket is filled, raised, emptied and returned for another scoop.

“Alice Chalmers was one of the first to come in with hydraulics and that just changes the picture completely. There was no more cable.

“At one time we had a line of cable we sold … everybody did … and we finally just went out of the cable business entirely. The manufacturer came up and wanted to know why we weren’t taking cable—this was just right after the earthquake.

“We were sitting up in the Petroleum Club on top of the Hilton,” Chambers continued.

(Ed. Note: The Petroleum Club in those days looked out over the Ship Creek area which always had all sorts of heavy equipment in motion relating to the harbor and the Alaska Railroad.)

“The only piece of equipment out there with cable was the crane. I said that’s why we gave it up; nobody’s using it anymore.

“That [hydraulics] was probably the biggest change, and now they’re getting electronically controlled. I’ve been out [retired] 15 years, so some of that’s getting away from me.”

Alaska’s big projects

While Yukon Equipment has been involved in virtually every large project in Alaska over the years, it’s not always in ways you might first think. For example, when the Parks Highway was constructed between Fairbanks and Anchorage in the late 1960s and early 1970s, about all Chambers can recall providing are some scrapers and tractors to the joint venture between GHEMM Co. and Rivers Construction, which worked on major parts of the road.

For the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, Yukon Equipment was pretty much left out in the cold as far as tractors were concerned—Caterpillar had more or less an exclusive contract to provide the heavy equipment.

But, about that time, “we had taken on the DuPont line of explosives,” Chambers said. “We did the compressors at the tank farm in Valdez and cut a nice deal on dynamite for the pipeline. Thousands of pounds of powder on that. That was our big thing … lots and lots and lots of dynamite and some of this air stuff.

“We did a better job of taking care of the customers non-pipeline related. It was a good venture.”

Partly as a result of the pipeline, Anchorage itself grew at a rapid rate, particularly east of Gamble Street and south of 15th.
“As the town expanded, they needed sewer, they needed water,” Chambers recalled. “We sold small water pumps you could put in your own well. There were a lot of sewer and water lines laid.”

First the sewer and water lines were individual, followed by public utility districts. Then there was a borough and finally a municipality. Yukon Equipment served them all as Anchorage grew.

“That was good business,” Chambers said, “lots of backhoes and trenching equipment.”

**AGC involvement**

Perhaps the simplest reasoning for Yukon Equipment and Chambers involvement with AGC was that it was good for business.

“The AGC was the major [organization] and it was just a natural with us for getting acquainted with the people who used our equipment.

“On Saturday mornings [at AGC’s annual meeting], we invited the principals of all the contractors to a breakfast. We’d give them a little pocketknife or token and just try to stay in touch with them.”

Then at the banquet on Saturday nights of the AGC meetings, Chambers table mates probably heard him tell about Boeing and their new helicopter.

“They wanted to give a demonstration and they wanted an 18,000-pound load they could carry.” The idea was to demonstrate that you didn’t have to fly in equipment in pieces to remote areas any longer.

“They came to us and said they wanted to pick up a new tractor and carry it around town. I said, ‘I don’t think so.’

“We talked some more and finally I got hold of our service manager. He said, ‘Yeah, I can put some hooks on it that won’t pull off.’ So we did.

“After it was over, Boeing sent us pictures. They flew it around where they weren’t flying over people. We sent that picture back to Case and said that’s how we deliver tractors here in Alaska.”

**Final thoughts**

Thinking about those he has worked with over the years, Chambers paused for a long moment and said, “It was really a pleasure to do what you could, and I met some nice people.”
As a young lawyer, Dan Cuddy’s only banking experience was knowing that his father owned one. Then one day in 1951, his father died unexpectedly. The next day Cuddy became president of First National Bank Alaska, which then boasted about $25 million in assets. It was the first and only banking job he has ever held. He jokes today about never having been promoted.

He learned fast and well. Today, Cuddy is still at the helm and the bank is worth more than $2.3 billion. And, of the 21 banks and savings and loans institutions that were operating in Anchorage in the mid-1980s, First National is the only one still in existence.

**The contractors’ banker**

In many respects Cuddy is known as the banker who helped contractors build Alaska. And while he appreciates the thought, he notes it’s really a symbiotic relationship.

“It’s a two-way street,” Cuddy said. “The contractors built our bank. You can say that we’re the contractors’ banker … we’re proud to be their banker. But it was the contractors’ support that made our bank what it is and made our growth, especially in the ’40s and ’50s. I’m proud to be a part of their [contractors] growth—pleased and honored to be part of it.”

**Keys to success**

Looking ahead to carrying the bank forward, Cuddy says, “It’s relatively simple. You have an idea of what your goals are. We have several:

Safety of the depositors’ money; Service to the community to full extent of our deposits and capital account; and take care of our employees.

“If we do these three things, the stockholders will be taken care of very amply. That’s the philosophy I installed nearly 60 years ago. It’s good today; it’ll be good 60 years from now.”

As part of that philosophy, Cuddy is not nearly as impressed by a master’s degree from Harvard as he is by a loan officer who has previously worked in the industry he services. “We tell our officers that it’s their job to get out and work with the industry,” he said.

Cuddy uses his own experiences as an example.

“My first job in construction was when we started building Elmendorf,” he said. “We dug the foundations by hand with a No. 2 shovel. Then I graduated from digging trenches to being a concrete mixer. “We didn’t have Anchorage Sand and Gravel and the big cement trucks. We had little individual cement mixers and we poured the cement and gravel and water in at one time and mixed it all on site.”

He also notes, with a certain amount of pride, that he was in high school at the time.

“You’ve got to remember that in those years we didn’t have minimum wages and we didn’t have all those laws which prevent young people from being [near] moving equipment,” he said.

“One of the best examples of that were the three salmon canneries in Anchorage, and all the high school and grade school kids went to work in the salmon canneries in the summer. You’d be paid 15, 20 cents an hour. But it kept all of them busy; they all had a job and they didn’t get in trouble.

“Now you couldn’t possibly do that because you have to be 18 to work, plus you’d have to be 21 to work on machinery. And that’s too bad.”

**The 1964 earthquake**

Without a doubt, the construction industry’s greatest single local feat in the past half century has been rebuilding southcentral Alaska after the Good Friday shaker that destroyed Valdez and Seward, and wrecked much of Anchorage. Cuddy was there, and with his bank made a major contribution to getting Alaska back on its feet.

“After the earthquake there was really great sadness in the community with people worrying about where they would go and the loss of jobs.”

At the time the foundation and first floor were in place for what would eventually become First National’s new building. Cuddy continues, “It struck me that this would be a fine time to tell the people of Anchorage that at least our bank was confident in the community.” Cuddy did that by announcing he was forging ahead with the construction of the new multi-story building. He also helped Walter Hickel with part of the financing for the Hotel Captain Cook, another project created by another man of vision when Anchorage was in the depths of despair after the earthquake.
Remembering those times, Cuddy becomes slightly nostalgic as he recalls the way things were and will never be again.

“Bank consolidations have deprived us of banks with local interest,” he said. “As a matter of fact, in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming and Alaska, we are the largest national bank that’s locally owned. And that’s sad that we’ve lost all local ownership.

“It’s reflected in the local communities. As you look around here [a view of the city of Anchorage is visible through his office window] you don’t see many small local stores anymore.

“The big boxes have come in and they don’t take part in the community,” he said. “On the other hand, they have lowered the cost of living. I must say that for them.”

**Predicting the future**

Cuddy’s at his best when telling stories from the past, and he uses one about himself to describe why he hesitates to make any guesses about what the future holds for Alaska and the construction industry.

“When I went to school,” he said, “I would take the train to Seward and get on an Alaska steamship. Depending on
how many stops it made to pick up canned salmon, it would take a week to 10 days to get to Seattle.

“From Seattle my train to San Francisco was three days. “I could not come home for Thanksgiving. I could not come home for Christmas. I couldn’t come home for spring vacation. There was no telephone. I couldn’t telephone home.

“So when I left the last part of August, I would not be back until sometime in June.

“Now you look at these computers. We had six bookkeeping machines when this was a $25 million bank. We would need this whole building today for just that function. Without computers, it couldn’t be done.”

Cuddy then goes on to list a string of modern gadgets and asks quite simply who could have imagined things like these when he was young.

“What it’s going to be 50 years from now, I have no idea,” he said.

Challenges ahead

While he won’t predict the future, Cuddy confidently assesses some of the challenges that lie ahead, both at the state level and nationally. His first worry for the construction industry is, “what the law will do to you.”

His biggest worry, however, is more a national problem than a strictly local concern. “The big challenge we have right now,” he says, “is the devaluation of the dollar. At the rate we’re going, we’re going to be equivalent to Germany at the end of World War I when it took a bushel basket of marks to buy a loaf of bread.”

In his view, the central problem lies with the Federal Reserve, which he says has two things to look at: the economy and inflation.

“The Federal Reserve has chosen to look out for the economy,” he said. “I personally think that’s a mistake.”

As he puts the problem together, his ultimate concern is that the Fed will have to suddenly and sharply raise interest rates to tame inflation. “If you raise them hard,” Cuddy said, “it causes a recession. That worries me more than anything else.”

Getting it right

First National was founded in 1922 by people involved in building the Alaska Railroad. Initially there were but two employees and a single office in Anchorage, the port city for much of the material brought in for building the railroad. Today there are more than 675 employees in 30 branch offices around the state.

Cuddy’s father bought up controlling interest in the bank in the late 1930s and the 1940s. Cuddy, as already noted, took over in 1951, when his father died suddenly. In the intervening years Dan Cuddy has steered his bank to the prominent position that it enjoys today. It wasn’t always easy, but Cuddy’s goals have served him well and will continue to serve him well in the future.

Of all the banks that have come and gone in Alaska over the past half century, “we’re the only one left,” Cuddy said. “So we must be doing something right.”
Nothing inspires courage and builds confidence in Alaska like experience.

Sixty years of experience inspires a remarkable amount of confidence. Congratulations, AGC, on your six decades of helping build Alaskans’ dreams.

Where Alaska’s dreams grow.
Harvey Dougherty

‘Everything starts with the cement—the concrete’

By Ron Dalby

Harvey Dougherty spent his working life selling and delivering cement. By so doing, he put a key construction material in the hands of contractors from one end of Alaska to the other over the years. Along the way, he also became one of the best recruiters the AGC ever had, bringing five new members to a single meeting in the early 1980s.

He got here by car. His first memories of Alaska were, “small and muddy.” The Alaska Highway was, “very bad; we got stuck a few times.

“I came up with two friends in 1950 from Minnesota,” Dougherty said, “and I worked here for awhile in Anchorage.”

The Korean War intervened and he was called back into the Army. He came back to Alaska as soon as he was released from the service and, “started working for Kaiser Cement, in Kodiak, actually. I worked in Kodiak for two or three years and then I went to Fairbanks for a couple years. I came to Anchorage in ’59.

“Beluga” structure used by concrete contractors at Yukon River during the construction of the bridge and trans-Alaska oil pipeline in Interior Alaska.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANCHORAGE MUSEUM AT RASMUSSEN CENTRAL/BY STEVE MCCUTCHEON

PHOTO: LARRY MOORE & ASSOCIATES
“One of the big projects that I remember was MB Contracting had the contract to service concrete on Elmendorf. They were doing runways out there.

“In those days the cement was bid by the companies and then they would furnish the cement to the ready mix companies. There weren’t very many ready mix companies around, but Kaiser had a contract to furnish bulk cement and then we would furnish it to MB or whoever.”

Thinking back about the ready mix companies in Anchorage, Dougherty said, “Hinchey Alaska Aggregate was the largest one and then Anchorage Sand and Gravel was owned by the Waldron family—they were number two. That was about it.

“I think APEX started in about ’57 or ’58, but Hinchey was the big operator in the early days.”

Getting product to Alaska

“For a long time we used barges, some LST barges. We would unload them with a pump. Now it all comes from foreign places on 25,000-ton ships. It’s still pumped off.”

(Ed. Note: LST is the navy’s acronym for Landing Ship Tank. Hundreds of these shallow-draft vessels were built for World War II and were sold cheaply as surplus in the late 1940s and early 1950s.)

Kaiser never lost a barge hauling cement to Alaska, though they were often delayed by weather. But, “we lost one on a return trip,” Dougherty said. “They ran into Rabbit Island down south of Seward. I think maybe they were asleep but nobody could prove it.”

The cement hauled by the LSTs was essentially a dry powder which was pumped out of the ship when it arrived in Anchorage. According to Dougherty, “We [Kaiser] had a couple of pumps. It looked like a tractor only the front … instead of wheels you had two disks turning towards each other and they would feed the cement in this screw and air would come from the shore and pull it [cement] back to the silos.”

The pipeline

When asked about his favorite job over the years, Dougherty thinks in terms of the amount of concrete sold. “I suppose it would have to be the
building of the pipe weights for the pipeline,” he said. “We sold Bechtel a lot of cement. That was the best job because it was the biggest.”

Pipeline weights are huge chunks of concrete molded in the shape of an upside-down U. When the pipeline ran through a river, the weights were placed over the pipe so that the pipe ran through the gap in the U. This was to keep the pipe from floating by firmly holding it down on the bottom of a stream.

Another good pipeline job was when “we furnished the cement for the Yukon River Bridge. GHEMM and Manson-Augsburg were the contractors; they joint ventured.”

Changes
“’The volumes of concrete have increased substantially,” Dougherty said. “We used to sell 30,000 tons of cement or 40,000 tons. Now I think they’ve had years when they’ve sold more than 100,000 tons.

“I used to go to bid openings all of the time to see who was getting a job. Now most of the work is negotiated. I don’t know if that’s good or bad because like the engineering firms … if they bid with one certain person, then they have no other chance of getting that job. It makes a lot of work for some of the contractors, but the rest of them have to really scramble around.”

Occasionally, as well, it helped to have the only game in town.

“The Corps [of Engineers] would put out a contract for 40,000 tons of cement, say, or whatever, and we had the only silos so we were the favorite bidder. That’s the way they did things then. They wanted to make sure they had the supply on hand.

“They [Kaiser] put in a silo down at the dock in 1950. MK Construction built it. They were there until ABI took over the silos in ’86.”

Putting up silos to hold bulk cement was important because, “in the old days they broke sacks of cement and that was a lot of work.

“At Swanson River in ’65, I think, they broke a lot of sacks. We didn’t have bulkers then, down in the oilfields anyway, and it was very common for them to order two or three thousand sacks three to four times a week. Those guys were breaking all of them.”

Another striking change Dougherty described relates to the seasonal nature of construction work in the early days as compared to the year-round work that goes on now.

“We completely shut down in Fairbanks in October—the first part of October. That’s when I’d leave and then come back in May.

“They go all year now, especially in Anchorage. I think it’s mostly because they can enclose the building with plastic.

“I think the weather has moderated to a certain extent, too—seems like we’re getting cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.”

Construction jobs
“I used to think—or people thought—that construction work was for the dummies,” Dougherty said, “people who didn’t know how to do something else.

“Nowadays, a good carpenter can make a heck of a good
living, especially if he’s got the initiative to maybe build some stuff on his own. There’s a lot of opportunity in the construction business now, I think.

“I think AGC has helped quite a bit, too, with the carpenters’ school and that type of thing. We need more of that and I think we’re getting more. I believe that the trade school at the university does quite a bit of good now.

“In the old days you just kind of picked it up. If you wanted to be a carpenter you’d be an apprentice for awhile on the job; then you get to be a regular carpenter. Now days you have quite a bit of training with AGC the last several years, and that’s helped a lot.”

Memories

One reason Dougherty was successful, he believes, is that he took the time to get to know his customers. He talks of many long lunches—often filled with jokes and laughter—in the Travelers and other restaurants around Alaska, but it goes even farther than that.

“I knew everybody’s kids and their wives—the whole works,” he said. “That always helped me.”

Then a small grin splits his face, his eyes twinkle for a moment, and he says, “Everything starts with the cement—the concrete.”

Aerial view of Yukon River bridge construction during trans-Alaska oil pipeline construction in Interior Alaska circa 1975. Cranes are on barges on river in center and buildings are in foreground, including large white “beluga” building at right.
Like so many of her generation, Alice Ebenal came to Alaska with the military in the 1950s, as the former spouse of an airman assigned to Eielson Air Force Base outside of Fairbanks. Still in her teens, she first went to work for Noel and Sig Wien at Wien Airlines in Fairbanks. That was well before the days of tight Federal Aviation Administration control of the airport and of aircraft landing and taking off from Fairbanks.

The job was a little rocky at first; she wasn’t all that good at writing letters and other things they wanted her to do initially, but they moved her around a bit until she found her niche. Within a few years, she was the “chief radio operator for Wien for several years. I loved dispatching airplanes and equipment,” Ebenal said.

She was still working for Wien when the 1967 flood submerged and turned the city of Fairbanks into a disaster area. Her house was one of those severely damaged. “I couldn’t get any contractors to bid on our house,” she said. “That’s when I decided to become a contractor.” She grew slowly into contracting, keeping her job with Wien until 1969 when she struck out on her own as a full-time contractor.

Working with the Small Business Administration, she ultimately got several jobs rebuilding and repairing buildings after the flood. In 1982, she was SBA’s Small Businessperson of the Year.

Connecting with AGC

“Steve Stephens recruited me to join AGC,” Ebenal said.

“It was a lot of fun,” she continued. “Every time I got into trouble I had someone I could talk to that was really nice. They were good mentors for me, all of them.”

As far as Ebenal is concerned, the people she met over the years were the heart and soul of AGC and provided many of her best memories.

“All the board members on AGC have always helped me,” she said. “I’ve been able to go to them whenever I had problems. They’ve straightened me out, and that’s good.

“I’ve got a couple of others I’d like to remark on. One was Jack Bucher, Bucher Glass. We built his building there and it was a design-build. In those days, the early ‘80s, there weren’t many women contractors around. I thought it was neat that he had picked me to be his contractor.

“Dan Ramos from Tesco—we built the upper story and the front of the Tesco lighting center. I was the second bidder on that and he decided to award it to me. I thought that was really good.

“I’ve had a lot of good friends. I got involved in a joint venture at Eielson that we did for years out there that was the first Sabre job. Roy Jorgensen and Associates was my partner. It’s an engineering firm; very fine men.”

Her best memory, though, was, “being elected president of AGC.”

Favorite story

There were probably a few raised eyebrows and at least one endearing moment for Ebenal en route to the AGC presidency.

As she tells it, “It was in the early ‘80s and we were in California at an AGC meeting down there. All of us was in the chairs heading toward the presidency of AGC.

“We were in this hospitality room and I was standing about 10 feet away from Con [Frank] and Steve [Stephens] and I watched this man look at them and say, ‘What are you going to do with that woman now that she’s in the chairs?’

“Steve looks at me. Con looks at me. And one of them said, ‘She’s not a woman; she’s a contractor.’

“And I hope that’s the way they’ve always looked at me.”

Competitors as friends

One of the jobs Ebenal remembers most fondly was building the school in Kotlik near the mouth of the Yu-
Kon River. It demonstrated just how important the relationships established through AGC could be.

When she bid the job, Ebenal didn’t have any figures at hand for putting in pilings; none of the piling contractors had responded to her requests. She took a guess, submitted her bid and won. Then, all of the sudden, she hears from a piling contractor who wanted $150,000 more than her estimate for the piling work.

“Con [Frank] bailed me out at Kotlik,” she said. ‘Don’t worry, Alice,’ he said. ‘We’ve got a rig around the corner at Emmonak and we’ll come over and do it.’”

Frank actually went further than that and actually found her a piling contractor to perform the work for the bid amount.

**Favorite projects**

Besides the Kotlik School, Ebenal quickly starts listing jobs when you ask her about a favorite project. “I’ve got several,” she said. “Two Rivers School, Kotlik School, Iceberg Road [on the north side of Fairbanks], the Central Airport rebuild and runway lighting … there’s so many.

“The Fort Knox [mine] lay down and maintenance of roads” was another. Her crew off-loaded materials as they arrived into a lay down yard and dispatched them to the mine as required.

**Construction’s future in Alaska**

“I’m optimistic,” Ebenal said. “I think that we’re going to have the gas line in five years starting. I think we’re going to have infrastructure starting on the highway heading north. Con’s bridge [the Yukon River crossing on Dalton Highway] is going to get reinforced, I think.

“I really think there’s going to be a lot happening and it’s going to be within a five-year timetable.”

Though she has sold her business, ACE General Contractors, Ebenal still answers the old phone number at her Fairbanks home. “I sold the shop,” she said, “and I’m not bidding jobs anymore. But I do consult a little bit.”

Some of the old excitement of a half century of adventure spent helping build Alaska is still evident in her voice as talks about her adopted home.

“I never wanted to leave here, never did think about moving anywhere else. I think it’s the place for young people to be. They should stay and look to the future.”
Like so many from his era, Con Frank came to Alaska, “by boat—boat and train in 1946.” He got off the boat in Seward and rode the Alaska Railroad to the end of the line in Fairbanks.

“I’d just gotten out of the Army,” he said, “and I wanted to take advantage of the GI Bill and had heard lots of good things about UAF [University of Alaska, Fairbanks]. So I came up to go to school.”

Actually, Frank had briefly visited Alaska a few times before World War II when he got a job washing dishes on a steamship that stopped in Prince Rupert, British Columbia; Ketchikan; Juneau; Sitka and Skagway. But getting drafted and serving with the Army in Italy as a reconnaissance scout stopped both his college education and any thoughts he might then have had about moving to Alaska right away. His opportunity to move north came only after the war.

“I was in civil engineering [at UAF],” Frank said. “I had already had some university so it took me—going to school mostly winters only—until 1949 to get a degree.”

Explaining his summers between classroom sessions, Frank continued, “First of all I was working for an engineering outfit at Ladd Field [today Fort Wainwright] in the summer of 1946. In the summer of 1947, my brother-in-law and I partnered in building little houses. In 1948 I worked for the city of Fairbanks, first as a surveyor and then as a building inspector.

“After that I worked for the city for a couple of years and then got into contracting.”

Reminiscing
Looking back, Frank tells his favorite story from the past from while he was working as a building inspector.

“When I first became the first building inspector for the city,” he said, “there was a little news about it in the paper and neighbors started calling in on neighbors and telling us about projects going on. So I was given quite a list.

“One of the first on the list was a couple over near the old cemetery on the east side of town. I went over there and found this little cabin and this older couple was adding to it.”

Frank then introduced himself and explained how they would need a building permit, which would require a drawing, which he said he could do for them after they paid the $2 for a building permit. “They were very cordial,” he said. “They promised to come in. I always remember that she always called him Daddy.

“About three weeks went by and finally I thought, ‘Well, I’d better go over there and remind them.’ So I pulled up and I had a little red panel truck that was easily identifiable. I got out and started walking toward their yard, and I could hear her sing out from the backyard, ‘Daddy, that son-of-a-bitch from the city is here again.’

“But, they turned out to be friendly. They came in and I did their drawing for them. They finally paid their $2 and got their permit.”

Construction
Frank’s Alaskan construction career began in earnest when he left the city and went to work for GHEMM Co. GHEMM was named for the last-name initials of its five founders, Clyde Geraghty, Carl Heflinger, Carl Erickson, Bob Mitchell and Harvey Martin, all names well known a half century ago in Alaska’s construction industry. According to Frank, he filled the spot that opened up when Heflinger left to go gold mining.

By 1961 he was vice president of construction and soon after promoted to general manager. By 1970, four of the initial five partners had left and the new, younger group at the helm named Frank chairman of the board. Under his leadership, GHEMM’s reputation climbed high in the Alaska Construction industry.

Frank was instrumental in GHEMM’s successful bid to build the Yukon River bridge as part of the Pipeline Haul Road. “When we got this contract, we weren’t as experienced as we should have been,” he said, ruefully.

But they were creative. The plans called for riprap to be placed in the then frozen Yukon River. Digging out the ice and replacing it with rock would be too expensive, so GHEMM’s solution was to drill holes in the ice, fill them with dynamite, and then dump the rock on top of the ice. After the blast, the ice, essentially reduced to ice cubes, floated away and the riprap sank to the bottom just where it was needed.

As one of Alaska’s premier prime contractors under Frank’s leadership, GHEMM would later go on to major projects throughout the state including Bassett Army Hospital on Fort Wainwright, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, the Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. office building, Doyon Corp. headquarters, Mt. McKinley Bank and many others. In the last 50 years, if there has been a large project in the
state, odds are that GHEMM bid for it, and many of those bids were accepted.

**Joining AGC**

“Well, I can’t remember for sure,” Frank said, “but I think it was about 1970, and we’re a partnership of five people so it always took a long time to hash things over. Took us quite a while to decide, but somebody tipped off—I think it was Ed Smith who was manager of AGC—to come up and visit with us. He did, and we just decided to go and never regretted it. It was always worthwhile.”

Frank said GHEMM relies on AGC for things like guidance, training and help with union negotiations. “We always felt we got a lot of benefit from that,” he said. Frank is a past president of AGC, a member for life of its board of directors, and has won AGC’s coveted Hard Hat Award.

Other people connected to AGC meant much to Frank over the years, as well. “I always respected Lloyd Burgess,” he said. “He sort of represented the best in this town. In the early days, Burgess Construction was considered the very best.

“I’m sure there were others. There were so many old-timers in the AGC … Al Swalling and Erv Miller, Jack Stand. Wonderful people.”

Others he names include Pete Casper, Bill Jones, George Williams, Lloyd Martin, Jack Miller and S.C. Stephens. He gives considerable credit to all of these men for showing him the ropes as a young man entering the construction business.

**Looking ahead**

Frank expresses one major fear when looking to the future of the construction industry in Alaska. “I hope—and I guess this is because I started out in the Laborers’ Union myself—that the unions will recognize that they have a responsibility, a real responsibility, to train the younger people,” he said.

“I think I can see us running out of skilled people in the industry if they don’t. I think they need to concentrate more on that. If they do that, and I’m sure AGC will work with them on it, the industry can grow and become more accessible and responsible.

“All I could say is try to be positive and look forward and try to develop a better industry and better profession.”
1948
The Alaska Highway opens to civilian traffic. AGC started with six founding member businesses.

1949
Lomen Equipment’s name changes to Yukon Equipment.

1950
Alaska’s population tops 129,000. Large-scale timber harvesting processing begins in Southeast Alaska.

1951
Highway between Anchorage and Seward is complete. Dan Cuddy becomes president of First National Bank Alaska. Steve Stephens drives up the Alcan.

1952
Pete Casper comes to Anchorage to work for Green Construction.

1953
DEW-Line construction begins in the Arctic at Barter Island. Bruce Campbell comes to Anchorage.

1955
Constitutional Convention opens at University of Alaska.
1956
Territorial voters adopt the Alaska Constitution.

1957
Atlantic Richfield discovers oil at Swanson River on the Kenai Peninsula, beginning Alaska’s modern oil era.

1958
President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs statehood bill, which conveyed ownership of 104 million acres to the new state.

1959
Alaska is admitted to the Union as the 49th state, and William A. Egan becomes Alaska’s first governor. British Petroleum begins to explore for oil on Alaska’s North Slope.

1960
Amoco finds offshore oil in Cook Inlet.

1960
Population reaches 226,000 people

1963
Henry Springer hired by the Alaska Department of Transportation.
1964
North America’s strongest recorded earthquake rocked Alaska March 24 at 5:36 p.m. Property damage was estimated at $500 million.

1965
Alaska Federation of Natives organized.

1966
Secretary of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall, imposes a land freeze until Alaska Native land claims can be settled. Walter J. Hickel is sworn in as Alaska’s second governor.

1968
Oil pumped from a well at Prudhoe Bay on North Slope. State budget exceeds $100 million for the first time.

1969
North Slope Oil lease sale brings $900 million. Gov. Hickel serves in President Richard Nixon’s cabinet as Interior Secretary. Keith Miller sworn in as governor. Alice Ebenal starts her contracting business.

“...The construction industry in Alaska was visionary. These people had guts and a pioneering spirit. They literally built our wonderful state, and the AGC has always played a key role.”
– Walter Hickel

The Chena River floods Fairbanks.
1970
Alaska’s population totals 295,000. Gov. William A. Egan was sworn in for a second term. Con Frank named chairman of the board for GHEMM Co.

1971
Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act passed. Parks Highway complete.

1973
Congress passes the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act after Vice President Spiro T. Agnew cast the deciding vote to break a 50-50 tie in the Senate on July 17. War in the Middle East in October causes oil prices to rise from $3 to $16 per barrel.

1973-77
Construction boom population up by 25 percent.

1974

1975
Alaska Legislature appropriates funds for 100 satellite earth stations to establish a statewide satellite communications network.

1976
Voters approve constitutional amendment establishing Alaska Permanent Fund to receive “at least 25 percent” of all state oil revenues and related income.
The Alaska Contractor
60th Anniversary Issue 1948–2008

1977
The trans-Alaska oil pipeline is completed from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez. A barrel of crude oil takes 5.04 days to flow from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez through the trans-Alaska oil pipeline at 6.62 mph.

1978
Klondike Highway between Skagway and Whitehorse opens.

1979

1980

1980
Alaska’s population totals 402,000.

1981
AGC of Alaska named Chapter of the Year.

1982
The first of four hydroelectric projects, later to be known as the “Four Dam Pool,” comes online in Valdez. First Permanent Fund Dividend check is distributed: $1,000. State revenues peak at $4,108,400,000 after the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC, fixes oil price at $34 a barrel. Gov. William J. Sheffield is sworn in.

1984
The remaining three hydroelectric projects making up the Four Dam Pool come online. U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul meet at the Fairbanks airport May 2.

1985
State purchases Alaska Railroad from the federal government for $22.3 million.

The construction industry is a vital part of Alaska’s economy, providing good jobs for Alaskan families and critical infrastructure for our residents. Congratulations to AGC on the occasion of your 60th anniversary as you continue in your dedication to improving the professional standards of the construction industry.

– Gov. William Sheffield

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANCHORAGE MUSEUM AT RAMUSON CENTER
1986
Price of oil drops below $10 a barrel. Gov. Steve Cowper is sworn in.

1987
Low oil prices continue to affect the state, causing many to lose their jobs and leave the state, banks to foreclose on property, and businesses to go bankrupt. Between 1985 and 1987, nearly one in 10 jobs disappear from the Alaska economy. Construction begins on Red Dog Mine.

1988
The state’s economic woes continue and Anchorage loses 30,000 in population. Trans-Alaska oil pipeline throughput of oil peaks at 2 million barrels per day.

1989
The Exxon Valdez ran aground on Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound and spilled 11 million gallons of its 53 million gallons of North Slope crude. The Permanent Fund passes the $10 billion mark. Production begins at Greens Creek Mine.

1989
Alaska population reaches 550,000 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Alaska Native population is estimated at 95,000. Gov. Walter J. Hickel is sworn in.

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1991
The 8 billionth barrel of oil arrives in Valdez Jan. 1.

1992
Spurr Volcano erupts three times, one blast dumping ash on Anchorage.
1994
Fort Knox begins operation. Gov. Tony Knowles sworn in.

1995
AGC of Alaska is named Chapter of the Year.

1996
Miller’s Reach fire in the Big Lake area destroys homes and property.

1998
Record $217 billion federal highway bill passed and signed into law.

1999

2000
Federal Trade Commission approves BP Amoco’s purchase of the ARCO. Alaska’s population totals 627,000.

2001
Preliminary work begins on Unocal and Marathon’s Kenai-Kachemak Pipeline.

2002
State study shows glaciers melting at higher rate. Highways and rural homes were damaged by the 7.9 Denali Fault earthquake. Gov. Frank Murkowski is sworn in.

2005
AGC of Alaska is named Chapter of the Year. Gov. Sarah Palin is sworn in.

2006
AGC of Alaska celebrates 60th anniversary with more than 650 members. Rock Creek Gold Mine near Nome begins operations.

2008
TransCanada selected to build Alaska natural gas pipeline. AGC of Alaska produces 259,820 ounces of gold in its first year of operation.

“A special congratulations to the member contractors of AGC on its 60th anniversary. Thanks for building a strong and better Alaska for all these years.”
– Gov. Tony Knowles

“We look to the AGC and the state’s construction industry to be a leading partner in fulfilling the economic potential of Alaska.”
– Gov. Sarah Palin
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Get the best of both worlds.
By Ron Dalby

Every country, every state and every region of the world offers some sort of rags-to-riches story, but only Alaska can claim the indomitable Walter Hickel.

He stepped off the boat in Alaska in 1940 with 37 cents in his pocket and is now one of the most influential and wealthiest people in the state, detouring along the way to serve as both the second and eighth governors of Alaska and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

How he got here is a tale of youthful naiveté mixed with a lot of luck, grit, integrity and the history of construction in southcentral Alaska.

After winning the Golden Gloves boxing tournament in his home state of Kansas, he fought his way west, eventually beating the California champion. Afterward, he decided he wanted to go to Australia and went to see a travel agent. When asked for his passport, Hickel said, “Where do I buy one?” After it was explained that he had to apply for one and it would take some time, he asked where he could go without one. Among nearly a dozen options were the Panama Canal Zone, Hawaii and Alaska. He chose Alaska.

“I didn’t have any money,” Hickel said. So he ended up sleeping in a hammock in the engine room of a steamer bound for Alaska. Seven days out of Seattle he looked outside and saw Prince William Sound. He then looked up at the great Wrangell Mountains and said, “You take care of me, and I’ll take care of you.”

Ashore, “one guy gave me a sleeping bag,” explaining that it was cold at night. Another, who didn’t speak English, handed him $10. That was enough to buy breakfast and rail passage to Anchorage. Seven days out of Seattle he looked outside and saw Wrangell Mountain. He then looked up at the great Wrangell Mountains and said, “You take care of me, and I’ll take care of you.”

Hickel did not simply leap into the construction business in Alaska. It was winter in Alaska, he was broke, and the first job he could find was washing dishes at Richmond’s Café for $4 a day. Later a newfound friend found him a position as the helper to the head boilermaker at the Alaska Railroad. In those days he slept on the floor of an empty cabin on 5th Avenue in what is now downtown Anchorage.

Construction

His first construction project was building a house for himself and his wife, Ermalee, on 15th and E in Anchorage. That went well enough that he built five more houses behind what is now Chilkoot Charlie’s, launching his career in construction.

Hickel believes you “win with ideas,” and he had to be pretty creative in finding the means to build the five houses. The land owner wanted $500 each for the lots, and Hickel agreed to the price, but only if the land owner would allow the houses to be built before being paid. “After I had the houses built, I could get a mortgage,” he said, and that’s how he put together the deal that launched his career.

He would later go on to build 250 or more houses in the Turnagain subdivision using the same means of financing the land purchases.

According to Hickel, “You’ve got to have a vision beyond tomorrow. Vision is more powerful than money.”

“I’ve always believed that,” Hickel continued. “That’s why I built the Hotel Captain Cook after the earthquake.”

The decision to build the Captain Cook and its subsequent construction remain Hickel’s most cherished memory. As he tells it, after the earthquake there was total confusion bordering on panic in Anchorage, and people were running around hastily making plans to move the entire city. A couple of days after the earthquake, Hickel called a press conference in downtown Anchorage where the hotel now stands and stepped up to the microphone.

“I came down here without a plan and announced that I was going to build tower number one of the Captain Cook Hotel, and it will open in June of next year,” Hickel said. “And I built it, and that’s all there is to that story.”

Actually there’s a whole lot more to the story. His vision and willingness to risk his reputation on Anchorage’s first high-rise hotel in the days immediately following the earthquake settled things down a lot. The city stayed in place and rebuilt itself bigger and better than before.
Beyond that, Hickel also notes that people everywhere were willing to help him after he got going on the construction of the first tower. “I got started that summer and the world helped me out,” is how he describes it. “If I needed something, they helped me.”

**Politics**

Within two years, his hat was in the ring for governor of the state on the Republican ticket. He would replace his longtime friend, Democrat Bill Egan, in Juneau in late 1966.

Describing why he ran for governor, Hickel noted that, “Alaska is a unique country.” He outlines how the state’s constitutional convention thought so and provided the governor with more power than any other state in the union. He believes he used that power for the betterment of the state and its people.

“I ran and got elected, and that’s how I got the owner state going,” he said.

All of the oil companies had abandoned the Slope, except Atlantic Richfield, by the time Hickel took office. The new governor flew to Prudhoe Bay with Harry Jamison, Atlantic Richfield’s chief exploration geologist. When Jamison said that his company, too, was going to leave the Slope, Hickel threatened him, “You drill or I will.” This got the attention of Robert O. Anderson, president of the company, and the
drilling proceeded. That well hit the largest oil province in North America.

Halfway through Hickel’s first term term as governor, newly elected President Richard Nixon persuaded Hickel to become Secretary of the Interior by telling him he would never get the oil pipeline otherwise. In just under two years, Hickel launched dozens of programs to improve the national energy picture and address the awakening environmental movement. These programs were detailed in his national bestseller “Who Owns America?” He also laid the groundwork for the pipeline legislation that was ultimately signed into law in 1973. Construction of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline began in earnest the following year.

Commons

These days Hickel tends to direct his thinking at a more global level. He sees the resources of the world as held more in common than by individuals or businesses. He uses the term commons to say that most of the world, 84 percent by his calculations, is not owned by individuals or business entities but by governments, the political extensions of the people.
“Our economy should be developed for the region’s people,” Hickel says. “The whole Arctic is rich, but the reason they [business and industry] don’t want to develop it is that they don’t own it.”

In Hickel’s view, Russia and China “get it” because they view resources for the benefit of the whole, not for the health of a single company.

“If you manage the commons for the benefit of the region’s people,” he says, “you can eliminate poverty from this earth. The reality of who owns the world is in the commons, but the United States doesn’t understand it yet.”

In typical Hickel fashion, which almost always manages to upset some people, he also supports what Russia did a few months back when his friend Arthur Chilingarov planted a flag on the floor of the Arctic Ocean and claimed the land for itself. To his way of thinking, this woke up the world to the riches in the Arctic.

Hickel has never been too concerned that others might find his ideas a little strange, and he has on more than one occasion given his detractors cause to eat their words.

**Not slowing down**

Now 89, Hickel still bubbles over with ideas and energy … and a lot of frustration with the press because they “don’t get it,” and with the United States’ attitude toward business and the economy.

“I like business. I’ve made money in business,” Hickel said, “but you’ve got to understand the limits of business.” Here again he dives back into his belief in the commons and the actual ownership of the earth’s resources. He carries this thinking about the commons even farther and applies it to outer space as well.

He presents this view of the world at meetings of Commonwealth North, the organization he and the late Bill Egan founded decades ago to promote northern resources and ideas around the world. As governor, he also founded the Northern Forum in which membership is extended to people from any country with lands north of the 60th parallel of latitude. Hickel has a polar projection map on his wall highlighting that part of the world and is perhaps most animated when he discusses the potential of the resources in the Arctic.

As for himself and looking ahead to the next 20 years, Hickel says, “When I get to heaven, I’m going to tell St. Peter, ‘if you don’t have a spot for me, send me back. I’m not through yet.’”

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**WHY AGC?**


These and many other benefits of AGC membership can be yours whether you are a general contractor, a specialty contractor or you do related work for the construction industry.

Here is what our members say about the reasons to join one of Alaska’s leading associations.

**Colleen Soberay**

3M

AGC is valuable for networking within the industry for opportunities. But it is equally important to learn and stay up-to-date with industry trends—AGC provides this forum. Moreover, AGC realizes the importance of adjacent businesses/industries, needs and trends within the Alaska market that impact the construction industry.

**Jean McKnight**

First National Bank Alaska

First National Bank Alaska is a business that prides itself on helping Alaskans succeed. We recognize that in order to better understand the needs of our many customers in the construction industry, we need to know what is going on in the field at all times and identify trends for the future. There is no better way to do that than by taking advantage of our membership with AGC.

**Robby Capps**

F & W Construction

AGC Past President

AGC membership to me and my company is about having a voice. For 60 years AGC of Alaska has been the voice of our members and our industry in Alaska on legislative issues, workforce development issues, labor issues and safety issues. Membership is one of the best investments your company will ever make.

**Tori Gunter**

Senco Alaska

Even after being in business in Alaska for forty years, AGC has helped our company to expand our reach even further. The new connections that we have established have strengthened our company’s growth and visibility. I appreciate the positive influence this organization has in our community and the proactive approach it maintains towards assisting the contracting industry. We all benefit from our involvement with AGC.

**Be a part of Alaska’s third largest industry, paying the second highest wages, with more than 21,000 in the workforce.**

**AGC: 650 members strong**

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**Governor Walter J. Hickel, age 89:**

“Not through yet.”
Remembering when he got off the boat in Ketchikan in 1952, Darrell Mc
Birney said, “I worked for whoever would have me.” He would later move to
Fairbanks in 1958.

For Mc Birney, coming to Alaska “just seemed like the
thing to do. The market dried up at the little business I
had [in Las Vegas] like in December [1951], and I went to
work on Frenchman Flats for about four or five months
before I came up here. That’s on that atomic energy
proving ground.”

Always willing to work, McBirney started with a
contractor in Ketchikan who was building an addi-
tion on the White Cliff School. “I lost my hand on
that project and I was laid up for about nine months
or a year. I went back Outside for three or four op-
erations … more like seven or eight operations, and
then came back up the following spring. I’ve been in
Alaska ever since.”

His company, CJM Construction, has “done a little
bit of everything. The only home building I’ve done in
Alaska has been either for the Corps of Engineers or the
Air Force—never building for resale or that nature.

“I’ve been in the commercial and industrial end of it
since then, primarily buildings.”

The list of jobs McBirney’s been involved with over
the years reads like a list of Alaska’s major building
projects, particularly in the Interior. When queried, his
eyes twinkle yet again, and he starts reciting, “Lathrop
High School, the Fine Arts Complex at the University of
Alaska [Fairbanks], the Woodshed at the University of
Alaska, the biosciences building and the airport terminal
expansion [Fairbanks]. How many more do you want?”

he asks, laughing.

When asked about various government projects, he
laughs again and says, “You don’t want to hear them
[stories about working for the government]; too many
four-letter words.”

As far as government regulations go, “Actually I doubt
that it’s any worse here than it is anywhere else. You get
into things which are absolutely haywire.”

Telling stories

Spend a few minutes with McBirney and you quickly
realize that his reminiscences are filled with lively stories
from bygone eras, like a job he once had in Valdez.

“He Witt [Construction] had done the first phase of
it, which was the earthwork,” he said. “The architect had
designed the building to sit on top of that earthwork, but
they didn’t set it on top of the earthwork. They set it off
to the side.

“They didn’t go back to check to make sure of what
they were doing and consequently there on through
the project nothing fit.

“We sat down and made a list of everything that
was haywire and I had a fellow working with me in
Anchorage where the architect was. I asked him to go
in and take the list to the architect of the most press-
ing and on down the line so that we could keep the
work moving.

“I got a letter from the architect telling me they didn’t
want him disrupting them anymore because he was too
disruptive in their office.” In the meantime, McBirney
was still trying to get on with the building. Eventually
it got finished, but not without a lot of on-the-spot
adjustments.

A bit of history

“I really liked the airport project best of any that we’ve
done because of the outcome at the end,” McBirney said.

“Towards the end was the visit of President [Ronald]
Reagan and Pope John Paul meeting at the airport. The
airport wasn’t completed, but we cleaned the airport up
and finished off a room for them to meet.

“Regardless of what your political affiliation is or
your religion, the fact that Pope John Paul and President
Reagan met here in Fairbanks was quite a feat.”

Challenges

“Challenges come in different forms,” McBirney said.

“Some in the construction itself and some in the people
you are working for.

“I can’t think of one right now that was more chal-
lenging than the other. Of course you always had the
challenge … you were trying to get your building en-
closed before the cold weather so that you could work
through the winter, or something of that nature. I can’t think of any one of them that was more challenging than the other except to say that they are all challenging up here.

**AGC Connection**

“I was working for Burgess Construction,” he recalled when asked about AGC, “and [Lloyd] Burgess had me fill in for him on the negotiating committee for one of the labor unions. That was in the mid- to late-’60s. I don’t remember now if it was Con [Frank] or Steve [Stephens] … they were on the same committee I was on.

“Later on after I got into business on my own, as soon as I got started I talked to Con and Steve both and they helped me get into AGC.”

Back then, McBirney said, AGC “negotiated with the labor unions; tried to keep disputes to a minimum.

“They started an education program. They had a program going with the University of Alaska where I know every summer I brought an intern into the office and then in the fall of the year you’d go back to the university and there would be a monetary package for him at the university.”

(Editor’s note: AGC remains today deeply committed to educating a construction workforce with programs beginning in grade school, running through high school, and available at the college level. McBirney’s reflections demonstrate that this is indeed a long-term commitment.)

**It’s the people**

Ask McBirney about his favorite professionals in the construction industry that he has encountered during his career, and he goes way back to the days before he even came to Alaska.

“The first one I can think of,” he said, “was a fellow by the name of Bill Kurt. Bill was an electrical engineer that had an electric neon sign shop in Las Vegas. I went to work for him right after I got out of the service … I’d say May or June of 1946.

“Bill had an attitude that you don’t use the word ‘can’t’ in anything that you’re doing.

“The other person I admired was Lloyd Burgess [Burgess Construction in Fairbanks]. Lloyd gave me the opportunity to move up in the industry.”

**Looking ahead**

“I think there’s bigger things coming, but I doubt whether most of us will be around to see them.

“We got pipelines in the mill and they’ll bring lots of other things along with them. But I think it will be a long time before we see a pipeline built. Our politicians don’t seem to want to open up the grounds for oil drilling.

“There’s going to be a lot of building in the future. One of the things I’ve noticed is we have a tendency to tear buildings down long before their useful lives are over and rebuild. There’s been quite a bit of that in Fairbanks, and I’m sure Anchorage is the same way.”

**Final note**

“Most of my family lived down around Las Vegas,” McBirney said, “and when they were all still alive I used to go down and visit them three or four times a year. I used to get a lot of comments, ‘Well, you’re going down to Vegas to do a little gambling.’

“My response was, ‘I’m in the contracting business in Alaska. I don’t need to go to Vegas.’”
Rich Richmond

‘The people I did business with are really wonderful people’

By Ron Dalby

Rich Richmond, essentially working for the same company with a series of different owners over the years, made a career out of matching bonding companies with contractors in Alaska. “I was the middleman,” he said.

At first he worked from Seattle. But in 1974 he was getting tired of always being on an airplane and spending his days flying back and forth to Alaska. He went home and told his wife and three daughters they were moving to Alaska.

His wife, Sandy, was less than thrilled with the idea. Born and raised in Washington, she was quite happy in Seattle, thank you. Rich prevailed, though, when he made her understand that this is how he expected to earn their livelihood.

It didn’t take long for the reality of living in Alaska in those days to confuse the issue even more, like the day his wife went to the grocery store for some mozzarella cheese and came home fuming because the store was out and would be until the next ship arrived in a week to 10 days.

Then there were the constant power outages. “The ships coming into the harbor, said Richmond, “would drag their anchors and cut the cable running under the Inlet from the power plant.” Later a power line built around the Inlet would solve that problem, but in the meantime Richmond bought an emergency generator for his home.

“I finally placated her by buying a condominium in Maui,” Richmond said. “I wish I hadn’t done that, but nonetheless we still have it. I haven’t seen it in 17 years, but she spends a nice piece of every winter over there, even since we’ve moved back to Washington.”

Bidding jobs

The communications problems three decades ago made for extra excitement in the life of contractors, according to Richmond. All the bids were opened in Juneau, and to make certain all materials arrived, contractors would hand-carry bids to the state capital … assuming the weather would condescend to let their planes land. Bad weather cost a lot of contractors jobs over the years.

“That’s all past history, now,” Richmond said. “The AGC fought tooth and nail and finally got bid openings in Anchorage. That worked out a lot better.”

Younger contractors these days who had no experience in Alaska back then sometimes don’t quite understand the problems involved. “Earlier [the day of his interview] we had been talking about using a telex,” Richmond said, “when a certain party mentioned, ‘Well, why didn’t they just send a fax?’ There weren’t any faxes and there were no computers and the ticker-tape telex we had sitting in our office was our communications link when it wasn’t down.”

Time zone differences were another problem. In 1974, Anchorage was two hours earlier than Seattle, five hours earlier than the East Coast where many of the bonding companies were, and Juneau operated on Seattle time. “A lot of mornings I was up at four or five in the morning trying to clear bonds for contractors who decided they needed one that day.”

People make the difference

“First of all,” Richmond said, “the people I did business with are really wonderful people. They’re a great bunch. There were very few accountants up here at the time and there were a couple of very good bankers.

“There was Bill Murray who worked for Dan Cuddy [First National Bank Alaska]. These people—and Elmer Rasmussen [National Bank of Alaska] of course—were the two primary bankers along with Al Swalling. Swalling was both chairman of the board of Matanuska Bank and a contractor.

“These people worked on trust. They didn’t bank financial statements as such, they banked people. If you could get through an interview with Dan Cuddy or Elmer Rasmussen, you had a loan. If you couldn’t get through it, forget it.
“And if you ever stiffed one of them, they had a ritual they went through. They bought you a one-way plane ticket and marched you out to the plane. That was the last they saw of you.”

According to Richmond, the contractors competed fiercely, but were still friends for the most part. “The most famous meeting every week was the Friday Lunch Bunch. And that varied at times from five people to as many as 50, depending on who felt like showing up.

“They were all old hands in Alaska, and they’d exchange information with each other, but they wouldn’t give away any of their secrets. I never, ever heard of a bid being rigged in Alaska, and there was a lot of that going on in the Lower 48.

“You either worked with these guys or you didn’t work—period.”

In a state where everybody knew everybody else, it wasn’t worth your career to try and put something over on someone, Richmond remembers.

“I had a guy try to pass off a false audited financial statement on me one time. I found a mathematical error in it. The accountant was a good friend of mine and I called him and was going to give him a bad time about the statement. He said, ‘What statement?’

“I said it was on your paper. He said, ‘Could you bring that over to me?’

"I took it over and he about went through the roof. The guy had photostatted and inserted things and made a false audited statement and put the CPA's name on it. He did that in order to joint venture with another one of my clients.

"The joint venture, unfortunately, was already underway. That client also happened to be a client of the CPA I went to and he said, 'Do you mind if I notify him?' I said, 'By all means; if you don't, I will.

"There was no prosecution to my knowledge in that case, but there should have been. That was out and out fraud.

"It was another case of how everybody worked together. We got rid of that guy." Then, after a moment's pause, Richmond adds, "He's not buried in the woods somewhere; we put him on a plane."

**Reminiscing**

"It was really great up here," Richmond said, thinking back of his years in Alaska. "People were more respectful of each other. You'd walk past somebody on the street, you said hello, how are you. You weren't a stranger anywhere.

"That changed pretty much with the start and completion of the pipeline.

"Then again, we had a slight cleansing of the bowl in the mid-'80s with the crash of 1986 when the price of oil dropped and there was no money around anywhere.

"The banks went broke because they were wont to do as bankers do in flush times and that was make a lot of bad loans, except for Rasmuson and Cuddy. They were about the only two that didn't. They ended up owning most of the other banks, purchased from the FDIC.

"It was a real difficult time for contractors because if you hadn't banked with either one of those guys you were out looking for a new bank to finance your work … and that was hard to come by.

"Even the state was on the verge of going broke because of the low oil prices.

"But everything worked out. Now you're in flush times in Alaska with the god-awful-high oil prices. All AGC members should do real well."

**Surety and bonding**

"I actually was not a contractor," Richmond said. "I started to work with contractors as a surety broker. It's [surety] an extension of unsecured credit to a contractor to allow him to bid and obtain work."

In Alaska, as elsewhere, surety and bonding are required by a collection of federal, state and local statutes.

"The bond guarantees the project will be completed according to the terms and conditions of the contract and for the price stated," Richmond said. "If the contractor is unable or unwilling to do that, the bonding company that backed him has to step in and provide some sort of cure. The cure can either be financing the contractor to complete the job, hiring another contractor to complete the job, or paying off the penalty of the bond.

"The bonding companies were very nervous about doing business in Alaska. Quite frankly, most of them had no idea what they were getting into when they came up here and started bonding contractors.

"That's where guys like me came in … as the middlemen. We introduced them [bonding companies] to the contractors as well as the local CPAs, the bankers and the attorneys we felt were capable of handling construction claims.

"That's where I came into the industry, and I was welcomed into the AGC.

Finally Richmond smiles slightly and says, "I thoroughly enjoyed all my years working with the contractors, but now I'm enjoying retirement."
Northrim Bank Salutes
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From the construction of the Alcan Highway and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline to the Hurricane Gulch Bridge and the Port of Anchorage, AGC has been building Alaska for 60 years. And since 1990, Northrim Bank has proudly assisted AGC contractors with their many building projects.

Congratulations AGC.
We are proud to build Alaska with you.
By Henry Springer’s standards, when Walter Hickel arrived in Alaska with 37 cents in his pocket, he was wealthy. “I came in the United States split ass
naked because the recruiter [Army] told me where to send my civilian clothes. I told him I didn’t have anybody so he just threw them away. So I started in the United States with absolutely nothing—just
the way God created man.”

Springer entered the Army within hours of arriving by boat from Germa-
ny. After training, the Army sent him to Ladd Air Force Base near Fairbanks in 1960, which was renamed Fort Wain-
wright while he was there.

“One of the good deals about it is that I learned English,” Springer said.
“Army English is not of the highest standard, but nevertheless in construction it’s not really a bad type of English to know.”

Springer, a college-educated engineer, was hired by the Alaska Department of Transportation as soon as he got out of the Army in 1963. Those who know him will tell you that this was the beginning of a wild romp through the Alaska construction industry that has yet to end. Springer is not afraid to speak his mind, often still using “Army English,” and he creates an aura of fun and hard, satisfying work with every-
thing he touches.

“My first job,” Springer said, “was down on the Delta Bridge, the bridge across the Tanana.

“Actually, the next 12 years I spent in bridge construction. That became my specialty. I was in on the eight bridges on Chena Hot Springs Road. Then I got on the Parks Highway.”

He lists a variety of Parks Highway projects and finishes up “on the Hur-
ricane bridge. I spent two-and-a-half years down there.

“After that I got in the pipeline business. I was the maintenance director for that region at that time and in charge of pipe hauling.”

After the pipeline was completed, “there was an opening in Nome. That regional job came open and I transferred to Nome in 1975. Stayed there until my re-
tirement in 1986.”

**Henry the politician**

“I retired on the 30th of May, 1986. I filed for the representative seat [District 22] that was open the next day, got elected, spent a term as a representative in the state Legislature.

“After I was done with that I realized that being a legislator and an engineer was not a real good mix. That body down there is devoid of any logic and engineers at least have to have a certain amount of logic, so I knew I was a mis-

**“We changed from a social club to a functional organization.”**

– Henry Springer
fit and did not run for re-election.”

The farewell speech Springer gave on the floor of the House in Juneau in the spring of 1988 is considered by many as a classic, if somewhat blunt chastisement of Alaska’s Legislature and its annual performances in Juneau. Let it suffice to say that the speech remains unequaled.

**A decade with AGC**

As executive director of AGC, Springer helped guide the organization through many changes. “We changed from a social club to a functional organization,” he said. “In the beginning we had over 60 directors and that basically meant that anybody who paid sizeable dues became a director. We’ve completely reorganized and we put together a structural committee approach with an executive committee consisting of seven directors who have the authority from the full board.

“The functions changed,” he continued. “The legislative committee now is a very important committee that’s where, through a feedback process, the whole industry has input into what the priorities should be. We get involved in elections.”

AGC also became very aggressive in teaming up with Alaska’s educational system beginning in the Springer era. Now instead of competing with each other for blocks of money, all go in together with a plan that involves the players at all levels to put together a program for training the people the construction industry will need in the years ahead.

**Industry changes**

When he compares construction today to the way it used to be, Springer does not particularly like what he sees, and, as usual, he’s not afraid to say so.

“It’s been really a lot of fun,” he said, “but I really miss the old days. When I look back at what are the big differences between then and now and why it was more gratifying … I felt I was doing something and I don’t feel that way anymore.

There are a lot of real discernable and easy to identify changes. I think probably the biggest changes that affected the construction industry and development first were all the vast changes in the assumption of power in the federal government. In the duration of 10 years there were 56 acts passed—large-scale regulations implemented that had incredibly pronounced effects.

“I’m not saying that all of them were bad. I’m just saying that all had a couple of things in common. They effected pronounced changes and cost. Nearly all of them were associated with great costs.”

Red-E-Steel crew prepares to place the last piece of arch, suspended from the highline, at the Hurricane Gulch Bridge on the Parks Highway in 1971.
“I kept track in those days when I was a project engineer. When I hired on in 1963 we spent 8 percent of a total cost on a project on preconstruction. That included right-of-way acquisition, design and everything. In 10 years that changed to 38 percent and that is directly attributable to the changes effected by those laws. Now it’s more than 50 percent.

“Maybe some things improved, but I clearly state that the cost-benefit ratio is not there. We spend a disproportionate amount of money that doesn’t produce anything tangible … doesn’t improve anything.”

Springer cites the Knik Arm Bridge project as an example; he just left that board a few months ago. According to him, they’ve spent three years and $44 million so far and have yet to reach a conclusion on an environmental impact statement.

“The second thing was that in those days you knew who was in charge. You had a district engineer; you had a commissioner. That person, if something went wrong, got kicked in the ass and if he did something right he got the iron cross. (Ed. Note: Springer was born in Hitler’s Germany.) Now we have multi-layered functions that are not even controlled by individuals. They’re controlled by groups. As a consequence, accountability is very elusive these days.

“You can see it in the grossest of failures. Nobody gets fired, nobody gets called. And the reason is not that you don’t know who it is, but the system doesn’t allow you to get to it because they’re so bloated. Like Gopher City, there are more holes to dive into and switch than there ever were.

“It’s like the old family doctor … he’s not there any more. You’ve got now groups of specialists. Everything is being approach by specialists in a group-type setting.

“What’s lacking is having anybody who has enough moxie and experience and knowledge on top to be in an adjudicating position to say, ‘That’s more important.’ Now it’s a democratic process that’s on one big plane and it doesn’t come to a pyramid anymore.

“There is no decisive control; there is no executive authority the way it
used to be. That’s why we have cost overruns, slippage of schedules, nothing happening on time. It’s the system more than a change in people.”

Springer goes on to detail how he believes the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 and the Alaska National Interest Claims Act of 1980 were the two most significant events in the development of Alaska. He is particularly harsh about the latter, describing how it complicated land-use patterns and makes it almost impossible to develop right-of-way authorizations for major projects.

**How we got here**

Springer believes the current state of affairs came about in “very skillfully executed stages by a group of people who had their own philosophies and were very apt to put them forward on a global basis.

“We are seeing slowly now where everything is tied up in knots, where it is either too complicated or cost prohibitive to pursue development in a timely manner.

“One thing has already reared its head that is going to have utmost consequences is that contrived business that is global warming. My prediction is that within two years we are going to be in an incredible crisis that’s going to transcend international levels because the use of the Endangered Species Act in conjunction with the global warming issue is going to blanket everything in Alaska.

“The battle over [listing] the polar bear and all that are nothing but tools by the global environmental movement to shut Alaska down. It’s not limited to Alaska. They’re doing the same thing to Canada, Siberia, the tropics … in each case with a different tool.”

**Final thoughts**

“It’s been exciting times in Alaska and there are exciting times ahead,” Springer said. “The things in the ground and the renewable resources we have, we, together with Siberia and Canada, are in a globally enviable position.

“I think our greatest challenge is going to be to seal the deal with adverse outside interests and the federal government to maintain our basic rights.”
By Ron Dalby

“I drove up the highway [Alaska Highway, then known as the Alcan] in 1951–late 1951,” Steve Stephens said. “I got here [Fairbanks] in March of ’52, and it was colder than hell and I wished I wasn’t here.

“But I got over it pretty quick when I met that woman—when I met my wife. I met my wife here.”

The first thing Stephens remembers from back then was the cold “I came from Mississippi,” he says, by way of explanation.

“I came up with a cousin,” he continued, “who had already been here for a year. They were just going back, so they talked me into going with them.”

Before coming to Alaska, Stephens had worked in engineering as opposed to construction, specifically surveying. He landed his first job in Fairbanks with Michael Baker Jr., an engineering firm. “They had contracts with the Corps of Engineers—preliminary survey work for projects that the Corps was going to do later,” he said.

Stephens would later go on to be one of the key people working for Peter Kiewit Construction. He fondly remembers the company’s founder. “Peter Kiewit was the one I really admire … Peter Kiewit Sr.,” Stephens said. “He was quite a gentleman. He was way ahead of his time.”

AGC connection

As you read about key players in Alaska’s construction industry in the last half century or watch the video interviews with them commissioned by AGC, Stephens name seems to surface as a good friend in almost all the commentary from Fairbanks-based contractors. Though he personally seems quiet and unassuming, albeit with a marvelous sense of fun, he was always ready to lend a hand and was ultimately instrumental in getting a lot of his contemporaries involved with AGC. Yet this seemingly most successful of all AGC recruiters has trouble recalling just what brought him to the organization in the first place.

“I don’t really remember how I got involved first … it was so long ago,” Stephens said. “I just don’t remember how, but I did and I took part and I got on their board somehow.

“I was always interested in the AGC and what they could accomplish, the things that they did negotiating with the unions was a good thing … trying to keep wages down.

“Keeping the union wages in line was the biggest help, I think,” when asked how the organization most benefited him directly,” Stephens said.

Favorite construction story

Watching Stephens you get the feeling that there’s nothing he likes better than swapping tales from days gone by. And because of his long experience in the construction industry, his stories come from a contractor’s point of view. Here’s one that goes way back.

“One of the things I remember vividly,” he said, “was back when we were
building the Chena Hot Springs Road. That was quite a project and it rained a lot that summer.”

Chena Hot Springs Road takes off from the Steese Highway on the north side of Fairbanks and runs east northeast for 57 miles or so to what is now a lodge and hot springs pool at the end of the road. For decades, the lodge, the road and the river have been favorite weekend and vacation destinations for Interior residents at any time of the year.

“When school started,” he said, “school buses—every vehicle—was having a heck of a time getting through that mire out there. We’d have to hook on to them with the ‘dozers and pull them through.

“One day after school started the school bus driver stopped where that big mud problem was and he saw the superintendent there. ‘Well, Clancey,’ he said, ‘I think the rain’s over. I don’t think it’s going to rain any more.’

“And Clancey said, ‘That’s probably right, but for damn sure it will rain just as much.’”

Family affair

While there was no construction experience in Stephens past, two of his sons carry on in the business today. They’re in “heavy construction,” according to Stephens.

“One’s a carpenter and he works for all kinds of different contractors. The other one is a superintendent on a job out at Eielson [Air Force Base] for a firm out of Anchorage—MWH I think is what they go by.”

Looking ahead

“It’s not ever going to get any easier, I don’t think,” Stephens said when asked whether AGC and the construction industry are ready for Alaska’s future.

“But I think we’re ready,” he said. “We’ve got a lot of good contractors around—if the powers that be would get off their dimes and approve some of this stuff to get it going. I think that would be a good thing.

“You have to be an optimist to be in the construction business in the first place, I think,” Stephens said. “There’s lots of them; there’s plenty of people to take care of the business if we get it to take care of.”
A lot has changed in the construction industry since six contractors founded AGC of Alaska 60 years ago, and the tools of the trades are one yardstick by which to gauge those changes.

From wooden pipes used for early Anchorage water lines to hand-drawn plans for buildings like the Fourth Avenue Theater, which also celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, all of the trades accomplish their work differently these days.

Teri Gunter, vice president of Senco Alaska, cited the example of an ironworker tying rebar. A spool of wire, a pair of pliers and two strong hands are the traditional way to get the job done, but the new Max Rebar Tiers can triple tie rebar at the rate of one a second, she said.

“That machine can go eight hours a day without a break,” Gunter said. And the machine will never get carpal tunnel injuries, she said.

David Lantz, owner of Dimond Electric, said he’s seen a lot of labor saving tools come into use in the 22 years his company has been installing lighting and traffic signals for Alaska roads and airport runways.

Just the addition of 18-volt cordless tools was a huge step forward in terms of productivity, Lantz said.

“You no longer have to pack around generators and extension cords,” he said.
Dimond Electric also does service work and diagnostic testing, Lantz said.

Diagnostics is an area in which technology has made especially long strides, he said. Today electricians use infrared and ultrasonic testing equipment to detect problems, Lantz said. “It will even detect the sound of a loose connection or something arcing,” he said. “Now we can hear that sound. Where we used to have to be able to see it or wait until it caused a fire.”

**Changing construction transportation in Alaska**

From hand-drawn plans to building information modeling and from wooden, lead and PVC pipe – there are thousands of examples of how the materials and tools used by the construction industry have changed in the past 60 years.

Some examples are less obvious. Take transportation for instance.

Glen Chambers, longtime owner of Yukon Equipment, related this example about the pioneering uses of helicopters in the construction industry. Boeing brought a helicopter to Alaska to demonstrate the machine’s ability to transport heavy loads across Alaska’s great distances. Chambers met the Boeing folks when he lent them a 14,000-pound loader to use in the demonstration.

He said Boeing secured the load off the bottom of the helicopter and spent a couple of days flying the equipment around Anchorage to demonstrate for clients that heavy equipment could be delivered to a remote job site whole. Previously, Chambers said pieces of equipment too big to drive onto an airplane were broken down and reassembled at remote job sites.

Later, Boeing sent Chambers a photo of the demonstration with his loader suspended in the air. “That’s the way we deliver tractors in Alaska,” Chambers said.

**Senco: Tools from now and then**

Hundreds of tools – ranging from collections of hammers, saws and planes to pencil sharpeners and dozens of items sisters Jackie Glatt and Teri Gunter can only guess as to their original use – cover every inch of wall space in Senco’s south Anchorage headquarters.

Since Jack Butt passed away in 2002, his daughters have seen to the day-to-day operations at Senco; Gunter is vice president and Glatt is office manager.
Their parents’ collection of classic tools is so extensive it is possible to forget that Senco is actually a showroom for the latest in modern pneumatic tools.

“It started when Jack’s mother gave us a spinning wheel as a wedding gift,” Barbara Butt said of their love of collecting.

Jack Butt’s love of tools and collecting also led him to purchase and restore a collection of Fordson Co. equipment such as various tractors, a grader and a road roller.

Before buying Alaska’s Senco distributorship in 1968, the family owned Butt Construction Company of Alaska. “We thought it was something we would do as a part-time business,” Barbara Butt said.

Gunter said Senco was founded in Cincinnati 50 years ago as a manufacturer of staple machines and air compression tackers, but has since grown into the world’s leading manufacturer of air-powered fastening systems.

This year’s bestseller in Alaska is the Finish Pro 11 micro pinner; it uses hardened steel pins the size of sewing needles to eliminate the process of filling nail holes and sanding on finish work like door moldings, she said.

Though Gunter and Glatt have worked at Senco Alaska for 30 and 29 years respectively, Gunter said it still surprises her when people from the Lower 48 stop by Senco just to see her parents’ collection of antique tools. “It boggles my mind,” she said.

Gunter said she sees the collection as a testament to her father’s love for hands-on work and the many ingenious creative craftsmen who came before him.

Technology boom

In the past 10 years, power tools also have driven many changes across the construction industry, said Dave Robinson, Alaska Regional Council of Carpenters president. These days, the sound of 18-volt screw guns speeding screws into metal studs has largely replaced the sound of hammer and nails, he said.
“Metal studs are straighter, lighter weight and take up less room,” Robinson said. “In a lot of ways, it’s better than wood.”

The same technology boom that’s taken the rest of the world by storm has swept the construction trades along, too, he said.

“Engineers with slide rules; that’s over,” Robinson said. “Things like laser and GPS equipment have made everything more precise.”

Laser measuring and grading devices are used in applications from laying pipe for drainage systems to hanging interior ceilings, he said.

“The use of computers has opened up a whole bunch of stuff,” Robinson said. “It’s really high tech compared to measure twice and cut once.”

Some of that high-tech gear was put to use during the construction of the $116 million addition to the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. Click Netherfield Ltd. used Leica Geosystems’ Rugby 55 laser level and DISTOT D3 distance meter to assist in hanging glass showcases in the addition, according to a press release from the subcontractor.

Because Alaska is prone to seismic and volcanic activity, the firm designed a unique display system that hangs the 12 x 18 feet glass cases from the ceiling. The design reduces the vulnerability to seismic activity, but intensifies the need for the glass panels to be perfectly plumb, the release said.
Longtime GHEMM Co. partner Conrad B. Frank remembers how heavy equipment has changed over the years.

“The equipment just got bigger and bigger. And more expensive and more expensive,” he said.

Glen Chambers of Yukon Equipment said hydraulics represents another big change in how that equipment operates.

“Before, everything was cable operated,” he said. “Hydraulics changed the picture completely.”

He recalled the days when Yukon Equipment sold a line of cable used by heavy equipment from coal shovels to bulldozers.

In 1964, Yukon stopped carrying the cable. When the supplier asked why the company had quit carrying cable, Chambers pointed to the heavy equipment working to level the ground razed by the record earthquake.

Of all the equipment in use, only a crane on the site still used the cable, he said.

“That’s why we’re getting out,” Chambers told the supplier.

Lou Holzknecht, vice president and sales manager for Craig Taylor Equipment, said these days the hydraulics are controlled by electronics. In place of an operator’s cabin filled with a dozen levers, he said today’s machines typically have a single joystick that runs the whole machine.

That means changes to what it takes to maintain the machines, Holzknecht said.

“Maintenance no longer involves strictly wrenches and greasy elbows,” he said. “You can’t rely on 20 years of mechanical experience without the education, which comes with technology changes.”

Until a couple of years ago, GPS equipment was optional on new machines, he said. Now it’s become standard equipment that helps to deter theft and aids in monitoring...
the machine’s systems and tracking maintenance. The GPS unit transmits information to an online database that monitors RPMs, engine hours, engine temperature, etc. If the machine requires service, the GPS unit will alert the owner or dealer, he said.

Laser equipment on road graders and bulldozers also are examples of new tools that save thousands of dollars and hours of time.

On machines with laser-guided equipment, Holzknecht said operators can load the parameters for the work and the laser level will remove dirt exactly to the criteria entered into the computer.

“No longer is operator experience the only prerequisite for productivity when it comes to earth moving projects. The Laser system takes the guesswork out of the calculation.”
The first signs of trouble were subtle, revealed in casual discussions at AGC of Alaska board meetings about how contractors were having trouble finding skilled project engineers for their jobs.

Meetings would adjourn and members would go on their way, said Richard Cattanach, AGC of Alaska’s executive director emeritus, until the next time they met and talked about how the problem seemed to be seeping into the ranks of craft workers.

A massive job shortage loomed. It takes 1,000 to 1,200 new workers a year to keep pace with the state’s current construction requirements, Cattanach said, but demand for skilled workers in Alaska is expected to explode to nearly 10,000 jobs when construction of the long-awaited $30 billion natural gas pipeline begins.

This foreseen worker drought coincided with the fact that construction had lost its luster for many people.

“You don’t hear many people say they want their son or daughter to be a carpenter, a laborer,” Cattanach said. “It took us a long time to marshal our resources and decide what to do about it. We’re builders, not educators. It took a while to really get enough support within the organization to move forward.”

A tangle of problems ensnared the construction industry’s potential labor pool.

Skilled workers born in the baby boom years were aging, and would soon be retiring from their construction careers. Parents and educators were shunting children toward college as budget-strapped schools sliced away vocational-education options that had previously been available. Even worse, a national survey of high school graduates about their preferred professions revealed construction ranked 247th out of 250 career choices, just above migrant workers, exotic dancers and lumberjacks.

“We realized we had an image problem,” Cattanach said. “Used car salesmen beat us.”

Cattanach and others in AGC decided to enhance the image of the construction industry in the public eye by promoting the fact that it offers well-paying jobs in a variety of settings; engaging the interest of children and teens by showing them what construction workers do, and offering easily accessed education and training opportunities in schools and to adults interested in entering construction-related jobs.

Then it was time to figure out how to pay for those outreach efforts.

“The funding issue is one we kicked around for a while,” Cattanach said. “It was probably in 1997, 1998 there was an agreement that we would create the construction industry progress fund (CIPF).

Contractors said they were willing to put money into the CIPF if it could be mandated in labor agreements that every contractor had to pay it. A nickel an hour goes into CIPF, which raises, in a normal construction year, $175,000 to $200,000.

Cattanach spoke with newspaper editorial boards and CIPF bought TV ads highlighting the benefits of a career in construction. Those efforts eventually bore fruit.

“Polling results have shown consistently, after running the ads, that construction was one of the top-rated industries in the public’s eyes,” Cattanach said. “Those were highly successful. The next step was, how do we attract youth into the industry.”

Getting kids on board

Children begin sifting through and eliminating career options in fifth grade, so AGC of Alaska brought its BuildUp! program to elementary schools.

“It offers a hands-on activity where they actually build...
'something and participate with other kids,” Cattanach said. “It shows construction in a positive light. Boys and girls like to play in the sandbox and are always fascinated by construction sites. BuildUp! helps keep kids from de-selecting construction.”

AGC had addressed the issue of engaging children’s interest in construction. Now it was time to put in place programs that would teach entry level skills to youths at the high-school level, make it possible for college students to receive education and training at a higher level of expertise, and ease interested adults into skills training and jobs.

If all went well, the state would have a trained, experienced pool of workers in time not only for the gas pipeline but for other substantial infrastructure construction and maintenance projects needed in Alaska.

This push for entry skills construction education began in 2005, when Cattanach persuaded legislators to give the Anchorage School District $1 million to launch a construction academy at the King Career Center. AGC collaborated with the state’s labor and commerce departments, Alaska Works Partnership Inc., Anchorage Home Builders Association, Cook Inlet Tribal Council and other organizations in launching that first academy.

The program proved so popular that Cattanach and AWP director Mike Andrews approached the Legislature the following year and asked for more money to launch an adult offshoot of the Anchorage academy as well as construction academies in Fairbanks, Mat-Su and other Alaska communities with home builders’ associations.

Legislators approved $1.5 million from the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development and $2 million from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. AGC administered those state appropriations.

Academies now exist not only in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Mat-Su, but on the Kenai Peninsula and in Juneau and Ketchikan.

Kathleen Castle, executive director of the construction academies, last year expressed hope that funding for the academies could be tucked into the labor department’s operating budget rather than doled out year to year, to facilitate long-range planning.

That shift to a more stable funding source happened earlier this year, when the Legislature appropriated $3.5 million in the state’s 2009 operating budget for the academies.

Cattanach said Click Bishop, commissioner for the state Department of Labor, deserves credit for generating support for placing the academies’ funding in the operating budget.

The academies throughout Alaska had been expected to teach basic construction-related skills to 1,000 students and 300 adults, overall, in 2008, but are on track to significantly exceed that number.

Alaska House Speaker John Harris, R-Valdez, said funding workforce development initiatives like those backed by the AGC was an easy call.

Harris understood the value of construction education because he grew up in a family that operated a construction-oriented business, Harris Sand and Gravel.

He swept floors there, and then graduated to running mixers and loaders, helping run a gravel-crushing machine and working in a batch plant. He attended Lincoln Electric Welding School in Cleveland, Ohio, after graduating from Valdez High School, and later attended Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa, Okla.

“Basically from high school on I grew up with the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, went through the spill in ‘89,” Harris said. “That’s my experience. It served me well to roll up my sleeves right from the start, to learn to work hard and deliver a good product.”

Harris says AGC is cultivating a vocational-education environment the state desperately needs.

“I never thought I’d grow old, but I’m 50 now,” he said. “There’s a shortage of young people that can make the industry grow.”

An infusion of youth in the construction industry must happen, Harris said, because the state is going to see a continued growth in the military’s presence, as well as more mining, more fishing, growth and maintenance of the state’s transportation network and connection of utility interties.

“That’s all part of construction,” he said. “It all takes planning, people who are trained in safety, development of their craft, all that kind of stuff. You need draftsmen, engineers, scientists, you need everything. You need training, because there’s a whole lot more to being a carpenter than hammering a nail.”
Getting AGC initiatives enshrined in the operating budget was key, Harris said. “It’s ongoing,” he said. “It’s almost formula-driven. So many kids fall by the wayside because they’re not into going to college. They want something that’s more hands-on for them. This was a priority thing.”

**Adults forge construction skills**

As AGC nurtured its academies and other youth education programs, its officials and members were also helping Jeff Callahan at the University of Alaska Anchorage grow a construction management degree program for people interested in becoming construction foremen, construction managers, cost estimators, project superintendents, field engineers and assistant field engineers, Callahan said.

Callahan and other UAA architecture and engineering technology faculty first discussed the possibility of forming a CM program in Alaska back in 2001, but a 2002 needs-assessment survey released the following year ignited serious conversations between industry and UAA representatives.

That survey stated that while Alaska’s construction industry contributes 7.5 percent of a $24.4 billion gross state product, and is expected to experience a 27 percent increase in employment from 2005 to 2045, the closest postsecondary construction education program was situated 2,435 miles away, at the University of Washington. Alaska was one of seven states — Delaware, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming — without a CM program. The other states (with the exception of Hawaii) were located within 260 miles of a university with a CM program, however.

CM graduates are likely to find a well-paying job in Alaska upon graduation. The annual mean wage for the 880 construction managers employed in Alaska in May 2007 was $96,790, according to figures compiled that month by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those figures did not include information about the number of years of college-level coursework those construction managers had completed.

The top-paying state, according to those statistics, was New York, with an annual mean wage of $122,580 for construction managers.

A construction management advisory committee raised $106,200 in 2006 for the Bachelor of Science in Construction Management Curriculum Development Fund. The money came from 38 companies, organizations and individuals, and members and employees of AGC of Alaska served on the fundraising task force.

UAA’s CM program began as a two-year associate degree program. It evolved into a more substantial four-year course of study after UA’s Board of Regents, in February 2007, approved a CM Bachelor of Science degree program. The university’s first four CM bachelor’s degree recipients graduated in May.

Callahan, now director of UAA’s CM department, said in May that 125 students have declared CM as a major while 50 are active in the program and taking classes.

Cattanach said UA Southeast and University of Alaska Fairbanks Tanana Valley campus have since picked up associate degree level CM programs.

“The university’s been a very good partner,” he said.

### What’s ahead

Cattanach said he now runs the Construction Education Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides a mechanism for overseeing and getting funding for construction education and training programs that were once under the AGC of Alaska’s umbrella.

An education foundation opens up funding options AGC didn’t have. Individuals may now contribute, tax free, to the education foundation. Under AGC’s sponsorship, contributions were only tax free for businesses.

AGC’s training director, Bob Cress, has said the foundation will have three components — workforce development for people who are not yet in the industry; education and apprenticeships for people who have left high school, and training in specialty contractor classes for people already employed in the construction industry.

The training courses include Alaska Certified Erosion Sediment Control Lead (AK-CESCL) certifications, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and Building Informational Modeling, Cress said.

In addition to Cattanach and Terry Fike, secretary/treasurer for the new foundation and president of Alcan General Inc., members of the education foundation’s board of directors are Jan van den Top, president of The Superior Group Inc.; Glen Knickerbocker, immediate past president of AGC’s executive board and owner of Construction Solutions of America; AGC executive director John MacKinnon; Robby Capps, of F & W Construction Co.; Mike Swalling, of Swalling Construction Co.; Phil Anderson, of Phil Anderson Co.; and Dick Engelbreton, of Aurora Construction Supply Inc.

Cattanach said the Construction Education Foundation will soon be ready to accept donations.

“What it’s going to do is allow us to help students that want to go to college or get into programs with a cost involved they can’t afford,” he said. “It will help us develop new programs. Hopefully our foundation can provide the impetus to get started. I want to give something back to the industry. I want to develop a mechanism to furnish future support and the foundation can provide that mechanism.”

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**Teachers from five school districts examine the student-built shed in the carpentry program at Hutchison High School.**
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