Faulkner appoints new CEO

By Rachel Jordan

A career change, similar to a sound investment, has placed Bill Wilson as the new President and CEO of Austin-based Faulkner Construction Company.

For the past 25 years, Wilson has worked in the commercial banking industry throughout Texas, Missouri and North Carolina. A significant portion of his work was with construction companies. While working at Austin National Bank in the 1980’s as vice president for commercial banking, Wilson established a friendship with Faulkner Construction Company. From that time, the two established a working relationship that carries on today and led to this new development.

“Royce was a good client and a personable man,” said Wilson. “Throughout my entire career, I have always enjoyed working with companies in the construction industry because of the nature of the people who are in the industry. A little more than a year ago, the wheels were put in motion for a new CEO to be welcomed into the Faulkner family. At the time I was still in North Carolina. I moved back to Austin earlier this year and over time, events worked out so that I was able to assume the position.”

Wilson says he has not found any difficulty transitioning from a top banker’s position to head of one of the largest construction companies in the nation.

“I am not finding it hard at all to add value to this business, especially bringing in what I have gained from banking,” said Wilson. “Faulkner Construction is very disciplined and focused, which is an exact match to the style of business in banking. People may not be sure someone with my background has enough similar experiences to work in the construction industry, yet the vast majority of this company’s projects are repeat work for satisfied customers. All of my banking career has been focused on relationship management, taking care of customers and delivering on commitments. That is the same thing required in construction, or any business. There are so many similarities between the two types of businesses, it is not hard to find ways to handle the same or similar situations.”

Looking ahead, Wilson is excited to help the company continue to grow while providing a good work environment for employees. Faulkner Construction will continue to take care of its customers and provide the highest level of safety on all jobs. With offices in Austin, San Antonio, Dallas and the Rio Grande Valley, Wilson says the company may be looking to add offices in the future.

“We’re mad, and we’re not taking it anymore!”

By Jane Day Lottier

After an exhaustive letter-writing campaign to public officials, local plumbing contractors called a special meeting on Tuesday, July 23rd. The target of their concern was city building inspections and the 2003 budget. They are ready to take the next steps in making their voices heard. The congregation of 30 contractors heatedly discussed the current state of affairs within the inspections department.

Fueling their concerns are the simple facts, which speak for themselves. In 1960, San Antonio was 110-sq. mi., about 1/4th of its current size. The number of field Plumbing Inspectors (10) making actual inspections has remained the same for 42 years.

“Many plumbing professionals believe the department is seriously understaffed and overworked,” said Robert Jalnos, Steve’s Plumbing. “In some cases, contractors have to wait 3 days to get inspections. In addition to being undermanned, the scheduling of inspectors to take time off for vacations, sick leave, recurrent education, or personal reasons, also reduces the number of them in the field on a given day.”

In a Construction News interview with the Chief Plumbing Inspector, Robert Stricker, in March 2002, Robert was asked if he believed the inspections department is understaffed and overworked. He said, “Yes, that would be a true statement. Our inspectors are working overtime, and if you calculated the total overtime paid in 2001, it would be huge.”

Affirmed General Contracting transforms Mark Twain Middle School

By Rachel Jordan

B uilt in the 1930’s, San Antonio Independent School District’s Mark Twain Middle School is undergoing long overdue restorations, as well as new construction activity. Affirmed General Contracting, L.P., the recipient of the $14,180,000 contract, is charged with the responsibility of maintaining the school’s historic architectural appearance while expanding and modernizing its basic functions.

San Antonio Construction News spoke with company project superintendent John Cereceres regarding the project.

“This is a 3-phase project involving 94,000 sf of new construction and 48,000 sf of renovation,” he began. “Our entire scope of work, including restoration, renovation and new construction, involves 27 classrooms, a library, a cafeteria and kitchen, a band hall, choral and orchestra rooms, art labs, a health clinic, a practice gymnasium, a main competition gymnasium, new locker rooms, special needs and life skills rooms, and renovation of the existing auditorium.”

Outside, Affirmed will install a storm water drainage system, build a football field and more parking lots.

The exterior of the school is 100% masonry, combining brick and stucco. In an attempt to match the new brick with the old, crews built several sample panel mock-ups for review and selection by the architects. Specific restoration rules apply to the project, as mandated by the San Antonio Historical Commission.

“The architects have done a great job,” John added, “right down to matching the colors of the brick and mortar. At their suggestion, the masons are finishing the mortar joints with wood dowels instead of steel travelots, to maintain consistency with its original style. We’re proud to have had the honor of working with Ford, Powell & Carson, the leading restoration architectural firm in our area.

Construction News called the architects’ offices and spoke with registered architect Hector Machado. He said initial research during the design phase resulted in the following findings.

“We found the school to be vastly overcrowded and in great need of repair,” Hector explained. “The original U-shaped school has a natural circulation, and the new addition evolved to further improve the flow by creating a loop. One of the ideas principal-in-charge Carolyn Peterson, FAIA had was to compare the wide corridors to a street. They provide easy circulation and access throughout the building.”

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Contractor adds division to expand scope

Tres Resources Inc., a local site work and concrete contracting company, has added a third division to its portfolio, bringing a new name to the company’s name.

San Antonio Construction News asked president Paul Jenkins about the new division he has spearheaded, and how it will impact operations.

“Tres Resources Inc. has added four pieces of equipment and five employees, to serve as the utility division starting crew. We anticipate eventually having three crews, for a total of 12 men. We’ve got four new guys now, with one crew.”

In the progression of doing commercial work, projects begin with utilities, site work and concrete. By creating the new division, Tres Resources can offer its services as a total package.

“Instead of a single source, now Tres Resources (three sources) provides a complete package for a general contractor,” Paul added. “It’s to his advantage to deal with one lower-tiered subcontractor like us, keeping the paperwork streamlined from both sides of the fence. By offering a complete bid, we have greater flexibility for negotiations, and the opportunity to look at the package as a whole.”

Living up to the definition of its name, Tres Resources is moving into markets beyond the general contracting world. Paul said the new division enables his company to tap into projects with public entities such as SAWS, Public Works Department, county, city and municipalities. It’s also opened up the storm drain and roadwork workstructure side, too. The expansion opens up a realm of potential clients for the company, he said.

“In essence, all of the permit fees collected from contractors are funneled into the general fund,” Jalnos reported. “The contractors simply want to receive timely and accurate service from the City, a service already funded by them.”

The plan would be to adopt this new fee schedule as soon as possible this budget year. Then, hire the two new qualifications inspectors 45 days later, the third one 30 days after the first two, and the fourth and fifth 30 days later. This will bring the same revenue from the fee increase to be taken in before the new inspectors are hired. After this budget year, the additional revenue can be used to adjust the Plumbing Inspectors salaries to a more satisfactory income.

The additional manpower would allow for better service for the Plumbing Industry and the citizens of San Antonio. It would also generate additional revenue because the Inspectors would have some time to patrol their areas and catch illegal construction activity.

The contractors who attended the special meeting have resolved to seek legal advice, attend and address the City Council en masse, and solicit the favor and support of a forward-thinking Councilperson who will rally to their cause.

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Permit fees. They kept referring to the age-old cry of our forefathers – taxation without representation!”

“This is the time of year when budgets aren’t going down. Our new city manager wants to improve customer service. After crunching numbers, the contractors have devised a plan whereby they could help fund more Inspector positions by paying slightly increased permit fees. They kept referring to the age-old cry of our forefathers – taxation without representation!”

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