An honor graduate from Texas A&M in architectural engineering, Mike occasionally sits in at the Boyd company’s in-house computer to do a little programming.

MIKE BOYD: A fast pace in Texas

Famed football coach Alonzo Stagg, who knew a thing or two about track, once described the quarter-mile as the most brutal event in sports—and therefore it attracted a special kind of person.

Too long to be considered a dash, the quarter-mile was likewise too short to qualify as a distance run. So, competitors were left with one strategy.

Run just as fast as you could for as long as you could—until about two-thirds of a minute had elapsed or you collapsed. And the latter expectancies sometimes occur simultaneously.

When 28-year-old Michael Ray Boyd, of Rowlett, Texas, was elected last spring as president of the Texas Lathing and Plastering Contractors Association, he became the youngest president in the history of the organization.

For Mike this was something special—but then Mike Boyd was a quarter-miler, too. He ran in high school, turning 440 yards in 49.8 seconds, good enough to win a track scholarship to Texas A&M where he trimmed his time to 46.9 seconds while graduating with honors in architectural engineering. At the same time he ran with the college mile relay team which established the school record.

That he is the special kind of person that Stagg spoke about is demonstrated in Mike’s approach to contracting. He approaches it similarly to a 440-yard challenge and goes hard and fast while he’s doing it.

Like a relay run, he enjoys the experience of winning a bid as a part of a team effort. In the lathing and plastering market of Dallas, he makes a total effort to bid every such job that comes to his attention.

Unlike more experienced contractors, he’ll be quick to break out a package bid. And again unlike most other contractors, he picked mid-1975 — the depth of the greatest recession since the 1930s — to lead his company into diversification by adding drywall and acoustics.

With a new product line, he again ran against the grain (he also played football as an offensive end). The tall, soft-spoken Texan went out and bid a million-square-foot hospital drywall job rather than start small and work up as recommended by most contractors.

Some contractors, even those mindful that quarter-milers break full bore from the starting blocks, might say that Mike is being young and brash. Other contractors, particularly those who compete against him in the Dallas market, have probably said a few other things about him.

But whatever they say, whether friend or competitor, Mike Boyd is something special. And his father Ray, founder of Ray Boyd Plaster and Tile, Inc., of Dallas, and chairman of iaWCC’s national affairs committee, knows it better than anyone.

Which is why Ray is carefully grooming his son to take over the controls of the company that Ray originally founded in 1953 with

$1,000 cash, $500 worth of equipment and materials, and one employee. Today, the company is in the $3,000,000-plus class — and Mike is a vice president in title and in function.

With Mike pretty much calling shots, the year 1975 will probably be the biggest and most profitable year in the company’s history. This year will see the Boyd company going into the market with a fully diversified line of lath and plaster, fireproofing, ceramic and quarry construction materials.
tile, drywall and acoustics.

For all his young years, though, Mike is no newcomer to the wall and ceiling industry. As the 12-year-old son of Ray and Velma Boyd, the Dallas-born executive went to work for his father as a laborer and then worked the summers during high school as a plasterer's apprentice.

By the time he was in college, he knew enough of field operations to qualify as an office apprentice and there learned the business end of contracting.

Married to the former DuLu Paul, of Garland, Texas, Mike is the father of a son, Andy, and a daughter, Juliann. He is also mindful that his own father has given him a giant step by making available to him a future with an already highly successful contracting company—and while Mike's youth and drive may sometimes be mistaken for business brashness no one has ever accused him of recklessness.

Indeed, his approach to contracting is pragmatic and conservative. But when he does decide to move, it's simply open season on non-quarter-milers.

Now located in an attractive complex of offices and warehouses on Katy Street in Garland, Texas, the Boyd company was started by Ray, who began his career as a plastering apprentice in 1936, and a partner, Sam Crockett, following the dissolution of an earlier company that had included Ray, Sam, and Raymond Crockett.

This earlier company had been called the Northeast Texas Plaster & Tile Company, of Greenville, Texas.

The new company grew quickly and in 1960 Ray purchased Crockett's interest and located his new company, Boyd Plaster & Tile Company, in a small building at the rear of the Boyd residence. Two years later, Ray started the new office on the same street where the company is today, adding a warehouse and land on Katy Street as the business grew.

In February, 1967, the company was incorporated as the Ray Boyd Plaster & Tile, Inc.

Ray is still directly active in the business and in association affairs. He had served as President of the Texas Lathing & Plastering Association, and has served on a number of committees of the international association of Wall and Ceiling Contractors, including his present chairmanship where he led the iaWCC's fight against common situs picketing.

From its small beginning, the Boyd company now is separated into three operation divisions, Lathing and Plastering, Ceramics, and the Drywall and Acoustics division.

Mike is responsible for overseeing all divisions, with lathing and plastering representing the major portion of the work. In this division, Lloyd Mattingly is vice president and field superintendent, and Buddy Spicer is estimator. The second of Ray Boyd's sons, Pat, recently joined the company to head up the Ceramics Division, and Larrie Lambeth has responsibilities for the Drywall and Acoustics operation.

In addition to his duties with the company, Mike is also a member of the iaWCC Board of Directors, and has been elected twice as chairman of iaWCC's Southwest Conference. At iaWCC, he has also served on the Plasterers' Section of the Labor Liaison Committee, and as chairman of the Technical Subcommittee on Portland Cement, and on the Area Conference and Education Committee. Last year, he was also named iaWCC's Outstanding Young Man.

While admitting that his experience and interests are essentially in lathing and plastering, Mike is anxious to learn more about the new services that the Boyd company is now offering—and even more anxious that they produce their share of company profits.

But as busy as he is, he still found time to sit back in one of the attractive offices in the Boyd complex and talk to CONSTRUCTION DIMENSIONS about a little of the company his father built—and about the company that he intends to help it become.

DIMENSIONS: Mike, the first question that comes to mind is why you would make the move into drywall and acoustics right at a time when the construction business is so depressed?

BOYD: It really seemed like the only logical way to go, so you can't say there was any educated or theoretical way of going into it. Other contractors had made the move and were successful at it and we made our decision because it seemed the natural thing to do.

As for poor business conditions, well, if we can learn the drywall (Continued on Page 15)
and acoustics end of it and make it work now, we’ll be ready when the market does come back. You’ve got to know where you’re at and when times get bad you have to know how to survive.

DIMENSIONS: It’s been pretty generally reported that the Texas construction market has remained much healthier than in other parts of the country. Is that true?

BOYD: As far as our company is concerned it has been pretty good. Fiscal 1975 will probably be our best year. Right now 1976 is not looking as good and maybe next year at this time we won’t be where we’d like to be. But we hope to have the drywall and acoustics pick up where the lathing and plastering might drop off.

DIMENSIONS: Then the Boyd company’s diversification move was made in response to immediate market conditions rather than being the result of a long range plan or the like?

BOYD: Yes, you could say that. We don’t work in theory here. We adjust to what happens and then diversify to take advantage of a situation.

“When there’s really so much luck involved, we don’t want to be locked into a theory that might not fit the situation. There’s something new every day and no two jobs are alike—a lot of people forget that.”

When there’s really so much luck involved in contracting, we don’t want to be locked into a theory that might not fit the situation. There’s something new every day and no two jobs are alike—a lot of people forget that.

Anytime you step out of your own comfort zone, you run a danger. And for me, the wrong time to diversify is a boom time. It’s easy then perhaps but it’s also tougher, to, say, put your act together, to know where you’re at with so many things going. And when you don’t know where you’re at you’re headed for trouble.

As I said, we’ll make it work now, learn it when business opportunities are limited. Then we’ll have it.

DIMENSIONS: Was there any specific procedure or technique that you followed in setting up the drywall and acoustics divisions?

BOYD: Not really. Our reasons for making the move were to pick up the slack—and to take advantage of the situation. As a matter of fact, our motive was similar to the reasoning that led us into the tile business.

We couldn’t do the plaster to suit the tile contractors. They kept in-
sisting that everything be plumb, square—a little better than first class expectancy. So this sort of forced us into the tile business where we could control the situation.

The same holds true with drywall and acoustics. If we’re going to take it on we want to control it. So we hired Larrie Lambeth to head the division. He has some 25 years experience in this business so with his knowledge we’re not exactly sticking our necks out. And we’ve studied people for a long time and we know who’s available.

We may sub part of it out in the beginning, but after a few jobs we’ll have the people we want. We’ve already bid a million square feet hospital drywall job.

DIMENSIONS: How have you set up your organization now to accommodate the addition of a new division?

BOYD: We haven’t needed to make any major changes because we’re basically three divisions—lath and plaster, ceramics, and drywall and acoustics. There are so many millions of dollars worth of business that each division can get and we expect to go after it.

In the lath and plaster division, our estimator, Buddy Spicer, does the take off, and then I do the rest and, with my father, do the final pricing. We do it this way with Pat’s ceramic division, and we review the time schedules and such with Larry for the drywall and acoustics end of it.

I figure it will take another five years to get our various divisions established for a management procedure to get things really moving—but it’s working effectively and profitably right now and that’s the key.

“. . . we still intend to bid every lath and plaster job in the Dallas market . . . that means 90 percent of the jobs here, large or small.”

DIMENSIONS: How do you maintain control over your various jobs?

BOYD: We have our own in-house computer for that. It’s programmed to produce all our required financial reports and weekly production records on all jobs. Each job is broken down into some 20 phases—labor, materials, scaffolding and the like—and we get a weekly measurement of expenditures and dollar amounts against what was originally estimated so we know where we’re at on any given job at just about any given time.

DIMENSIONS: With business down and some harder times apparently coming up in the Texas market what adjustments have been made by your company?

BOYD: We’re not doing anything now that we don’t normally do with the exception that we’ve tightened up a bit on our purchasing.

As for work, we still intend to bid every lath and plaster job in the Dallas market where we know we have a chance. That means 90 percent of the jobs here, large or small. About the only jobs we won’t bid is where we know we won’t get the work—or we don’t want it.

DIMENSIONS: What is your ratio between bids submitted and jobs won?

BOYD: We try to get one job for every six bids, and we’ll continue to reach for that ratio. As a matter of fact, we intend to do the same on the drywall and acoustical work.

DIMENSIONS: To get jobs to bid you first have to find them. How does the Boyd company handle this part of it?

BOYD: We do most of our job hunting through contractor contacts and through the Dodge reports. The latter, of course, is mostly all bid jobs. The rapport that we’ve built up over the years with many general contractors provides us with opportunities for negotiated work.

DIMENSIONS: Many contractors have commented that one of the principle advantages in being diversified is that you can submit package bids. And they warn against breaking out the prices. What are your feelings about this?

BOYD: We’ll break out. Of course, we know the contractors
and jobs that we can break out and those we can’t. But the really hard part about it in a package bid is that its often impossible to compare. The Boyd company may bid the lath and plaster, hard tile, drywall and acoustics while other contractors may bid not only this package but carpeting, resilient flooring and ‘maybe hardware, too.

You can’t compare apples to peaches and that’s the reason we’ll break out and take our markup on certain parts. It’s never happened to us but I do know of contractors who refused to break out and the decision cost them the job.

We know pretty well how to handle the break out—and we’ve gambled right so far.

**DIMENSIONS: Both you and your father have been active in association and industry affairs. What advantages do you see in being a member of an association such as iaWCC?**

**BOYD: If you’re committed to this industry, then you should be a member of the association. There are the obvious advantages of education, keeping up with changes, and helping to improve the industry. These things help make a smart contractor smarter.

But from a practical standpoint, in 1973 when we were having, shortage problems the association contacts kept me in business that year. When I got to hurting for materials my contacts with manufacturers and other contractors were invaluable.

**DIMENSIONS: Mike, where to from here?**

**BOYD: Well, I like the idea of winning as a team. We have the team here. The Dallas market is in a 3-year cycle and when it comes back we’ll be ready.

I know I’ve been given a giant step by my father. He’s worked all his life to build this company up and make something of it. I see myself doing things at my age that a l o t o f p e o p l e n e v e r d r e a m e d about—and I don’t intend to throw all this away. And that means I’m going to keep going—fast and hard.