Observations: FROM THE FIELD TO THE BOARD ROOM

Last month we told you all about AWCI’s Pinnacle Award Winner Max O. Jensen. This month, we asked Max to share his observations of the wall and ceiling industry.

Jensen: The most obvious change is the computer, which has had a dramatic impact on our ability to receive accurate and timely reports, comparing actual versus estimated and so forth.

The financial institutions—the banks and the bonding and insurance companies—are more involved than they used to. They’ve been burned enough times that your relationship with them has to be very good if you’re going to succeed. Your relationships with financial people become more important as your company grows.

Jensen: Get a good understanding of what it actually takes to produce the work. Take advantage of every opportunity to improve your education, regardless of your starting point. Get an education. I don’t mean stop working and go to college. Attend seminars.

Never stop learning. You’ve got to keep growing as your business grows. If you don’t, you’re going to end up without a business.

Maintain your integrity. Finish the job regardless of what it costs to get it done. If you sign a contract to do something, do it and do it to your best ability, but by all means, do it!!

Be fair to your employees, your company family. Treat them fairly and expect fair treatment back. Hire good people and treat them right.

Jensen: When it came to my family, I always said, “Okay, because you know me, it will get you a job. But you have to keep it!” It’s great to work with family members because you trust them. And, sometimes you might take a little unfair advantage of them, and they still won’t leave and go to work somewhere else.

Jensen: I don’t keep secrets. Everyone in our company knows our goal and our purpose and our plan. If your employees know your plan and have input into it, then it becomes their plan.

We all have to work together. We believe in bowling teams and golf outings. We held our first few Christmas parties in our own warehouse, and we sat on mud buckets because we didn’t have enough chairs. I think it was more fun then than it is now. When we were a very small company, we’d stop and have a cake whenever someone had a birthday. Now we have so many people that we have the birthdays each month, with everyone’s name on the cake whose birthday is that month. And something about each one of them is personally recognized.

I am not suggesting that it is all golf games and parties. Those come after years of dedication and hard work.

With reference back to the subject of further education, one of the best ways to learn is by talking to and working with your industry peers. Attend the meetings and get involved with the program. There are some really great people and information flows both ways.

Jensen: Construction is one of the more interesting ways and satisfying to make a living. It’s a source of great pride to drive by something and be able to say, “I had a hand in doing that.”

Mr. & Mrs. Max O. Jensen

Construction Dimensions/June 1993 41