

Magazine

Construction

NEWS UPDATE

Associated General Contractors
Oregon-Columbia Chapter

WINTER 2011



MEET DEE BURCH

2011 Chapter President

**Chapter
Councils:
Where the Real
Work Begins**





Photo courtesy of Advanced American Construction

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Cover: Dee Burch, president, Advanced American Construction, 2011 Oregon-Columbia Chapter president.

Photo by Craig Mitchelldyer



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Vision: Building Better Communities

Mission: To be the voice and choice of the construction industry

Values: Skill, Integrity, Responsibility



Since 1920, the AGC Oregon-Columbia Chapter has served as the voice of the commercial construction industry. The association provides its members with a forum for exchange of ideas and services designed to enhance the professionalism of the construction industry including workers' compensation and health insurance; legislative and governmental representation; safety and loss control consulting; training and apprenticeship programs; and education and pension programs.

We welcome your comments! Send comments/story ideas to Attn: CNU Editor, AGC Oregon-Columbia Chapter, 9450 SW Commerce Circle #200, Wilsonville, OR 97070 or email karlah@agc-oregon.org.



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CHALLENGES Nothing New for DEE BURCH

By John Rumler



Dee Burch, his grandfather Harry Rowland, and brother Gene Burch.

Coming AGC chapter president Dee Burch does not yet have a catchy slogan for 2011, but he has clear objectives: to help the industry attract the best and the brightest young workers, to grow membership, and to increase the involvement of current members by appealing to their higher ideals.

Big challenges perhaps, but Dee has overcome so many hurdles in his life it is second nature to him, says AGC of America President Ted Aadland.

"Dee's always helping with leadership and education issues and is a tremendous asset to the industry," Aadland says. "Besides being an excellent contractor and president of an outstanding company (Advanced American Construction), he's a guy that you are truly proud to call your friend."

Past chapter president Todd Hess says Dee is a natural leader with the ability to gain consensus while being forthright with his opinions. "He understands construction and will bring insights that only come from many years of experience."



Photo by Craig Michellayer

Through a hardscrabble youth in Yamhill County, Dee Burch formed his bedrock values and learned the importance of mentoring...



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1: Dee has been active in the chapter for many years, serving and leading various councils. 2: OSU Fraternity, 1975 freshmen, third from left is Dee, second is Jay Compton. 3: Janelle Burch, Dee and Sherri Burch, Angela and Cory Carroll, Greg Lizanich, Ben, Grace & Melanie Burton. 4: 2000 AGCA National Build America Award, East Bank Esplanade: Aon representative, Konnie Schweiger, Dee Burch, and AGCA President Terry Deeny.

Born in Newberg, the oldest of five kids raised by a single mom, Dee attended school in Lafayette through the second grade in what is now the historic Lafayette Antique Mall—the quintessential little red-school house with multiple grades taught by one teacher in the same room. Dee was the youngest and smallest of all the kids. “I was fortunate to have Mrs. Cabe the first two years,” he recalls. “She was nurturing but also challenging.”

The family moved to McMinnville where Dee graduated high school in 1974. At the time Yamhill County was one of the poorest areas in Oregon. At age seven, Dee, toiled in the summers picking strawberries and pole beans, sometimes alongside Gene, Brad, and

owned a successful paving business. When it came time for him to pick a college, Mr. Compton offered to help pay for his first year’s tuition and also offered Dee a job on a paving crew.

“My admiration for John and contractors like him was embedded in me from that day on,” Dee says. Compton later served as the president of the local AGC chapter, and Dee met other contractors through him—men who were willing to quietly offer assistance to others expecting nothing in return other than hard work and the desire to find one’s own way.

Dee earned a BS in Civil Engineering from Oregon State in 1978, but with no opportunities locally he took a job with Chicago Bridge and Iron. He worked the



1975 Dad’s Weekend at Oregon State University, (second and third from left) John and Jay Compton (chapter presidents 1971 and 1999), Dee (second from upper right), and Harry Rowland (second from lower right).

Jeff, his three brothers, his sister Darla, and Peggy, his mother. He also delivered newspapers, mowed lawns, and did chores to earn money, and he began saving for college at a very early age.

His father was a long-haul trucker, and it was likely a good thing that he was out of the picture. Yet Dee never felt sorry for himself or lacked role models. “My mom made up for it, plus I had great grandparents,” he says. He was particularly fond of his grandpa Harry Rowland, a heavy equipment operator.

Another important figure was John Compton, the father of a classmate, who

western states building elevated water towers, oil and ammonia storage tanks, and nuclear containment structures. The first three years he moved seven times, working in Salt Lake City, Long Beach, Portland, Denver, and Wyoming, learning plenty along the way.

In 1981, with work drying up, Dee joined Kiewit Pacific and moved to Seattle to build the West Seattle Bridge, a highly sophisticated project. Just 25 years old, Dee realized that he needed help from some of the more experienced foremen and superintendents or he might be fired. “As soon as I asked

Photos courtesy of Advanced American Construction



"Throughout the project, Dee was hands on and demonstrated time and again that his company would meet the highest expectations, and the project would be completed on time and within budget."

"These projects are the very embodiment of the potential and promise of the nation's construction industry," says Doug Pruitt, past president of AGC of America. "They challenge our skills, stretch our imaginations, and capture our fancy."

The huge photos of the many award-winning projects adorn the offices of Advanced American Construction. Dee is rightly proud of them, but he is quick to add: "You can never get complacent because you are only as good as your last job."

for help, I was mentored by several different supervisors and my esteem for contractors and the construction industry grew even more."

In Phoenix, in 1988, he met Konnie Schweiger, one of the founders of AAC who was doing some difficult underwater construction (as a subcontractor) on the face of the Stewart Mountain Dam. The two men clicked, and Schweiger laid out his vision of transforming AAC into a heavy civil/marine/industrial general contractor. "I was established with a successful company and he asked me to jump with no safety net. I was not buying it," Dee recalls.

Several years later, however, Dee tired of the constant traveling and joined AAC. Co-founded in 1983 by Schweiger (who died in 2002) and Kent Cochran, who both did diving work for construction projects and also built bridges and dams, the company was originally named Advanced American Diving Service. The two men wanted more control, so they launched the tiny startup. The company took off, and to get even more control over their projects, in 1990 AAC became a marine/heavy civil/industrial general contractor.

Now a union contractor, AAC employs about 150 full time employees. Their portfolio includes the Eastbank Esplanade, multiple industrial dock projects for the Ports of Portland and Vancouver, and numerous projects for the Army Corps of Engineers. A few clients: Schnitzer Steel, Cascade Steel

Mills, Oregon Steel Mills, and most of the area paper mills.

AAC is currently working on a \$36 million portion of the Lake Oswego Interceptor Sewer Project. Built in the 1960s, the sewer line cuts a swath through the middle of Lake Oswego atop some of the most expensive residential real estate in Oregon. Even a minor earthquake could rupture the existing line spewing raw sewage into the lake and creating an environmental catastrophe. The project, a decade in the planning, will improve the water quality in Lake Oswego while ensuring that the sewer line will not fail during an earthquake.

AAC's biggest customer is the Army Corps of Engineers, with most of the work aimed at improving salmon runs such as the Lower Monumental Dam Removable Spillway Weir. The massive steel structure, weighing 2.5 million pounds, was fabricated in one piece by Oregon Steel Works at the old Port of Portland Shipyard and transported by tugboats on the Snake River and installed in a spillway.

Last year the AGC of America recognized the project as a Build America Award Winner, the fifth time that AAC has earned the honor. The project, one of only three in the world, allows juvenile salmon and steelhead to pass through dams near the water surface, giving the fish a simpler route and dramatically improving salmon passage by bypassing the dam's deadly turbines.



"AAC's use of advanced global positioning systems, pile templates, and cutting edge surveying techniques proved their know-how and skill in even the most demanding environmental conditions."

He relishes tackling a new set of challenges as AGC chapter president. Particularly crucial is addressing workforce issues he says. "Convincing Generation X, Y, and whatever else the younger generation is referred to, that working long hours and mastering your craft will result in a healthy, rewarding career—that is huge," he says.

Attracting new members while also spurring much more involvement from the existing ones is also a priority. "A lot of companies join for the workers' compensation or similar services. We need to get more of these folks involved in the advocacy, strategy, and planning aspects. It's all tied to the end goal of improving the business climate in Oregon," Dee adds smiling. "That's a forever project." **AGC**