

"MAKING A DIFFERENCE"**by Don Martin, Don Martin Public Affairs**

At times it may seem difficult for us to think we can do much that really *does* "make a difference." After all, how much can one person really do? How can an *individual* impact what happens locally, much less globally? What talents do we have as individuals that can, even collectively, "make a difference"?

Many of you may not know that Bill Heine, President of American Constructors, is also Rear Admiral Heine, Commander Second Naval Construction Brigade. In this capacity he oversees 8,500 active and reserve Seabees of the Navy's Atlantic Fleet. More than likely you don't know of the many other ways he has contributed to his country, his community, his church—because people like Bill prefer to shun the spotlight. It's hard to write about Bill without creating some kind of "superman"—so I decided to engage others to describe, in their own words, what a difference one individual can make.

Gary Godsey, President of the United Way, has been in various leadership positions with Bill for the last five years. *"He was asked to serve on the United Way Board of Directors for two terms, a very uncommon honor, because of his commitment"*. Gary says *"He's not afraid to say what he feels needs to be done—there are no gray areas with him. Beyond being committed, he gets things done. You can depend on him."* Jerry Bell, of the Boys and Girls Club of Austin and Travis, County, has worked with Bill for eight years. *"He brought us a sense of direction and professionalism. His commitment and concern have helped hundreds of kids stay off the streets and away from drugs and gangs."* Bill O'Brien, Plant Manager at IBM, works with Bill on the board of United Way and says of him *"an outstanding person with uncommon common sense. Despite his tremendous work schedule, Bill continually delivers anything asked of him. He's reliable and committed."* Adrian Fowler, another United Way board member, echoes, *"He's never complacent with his commitment or with his effort. If I were to choose anyone to serve on a committee, he would be the first one I'd choose. Interestingly enough, he always said he wished he could've done more!"*

Bill credits his Navy experience with helping to mold him into the person he is today. Annapolis taught him how to accomplish many tasks under pressure and within severe time constraints. His Seabee assignments in the Pacific and Vietnam taught him how to get the job done—despite seemingly unconquerable obstacles. Bill attributes his ability to work well under pressure and handle a multitude of items, many of which change quickly, to his Naval experience. He says that *"it's all a matter of focusing on an objective, whether it's a job, a project, or a task: overcoming all obstacles and getting it done correctly, when needed. Possibly most*

important, the military helped me understand that I needed to help others—it heralded my interest today in the Boys & Girls Club and The United Way," Bill says. "My military experience reinforced my value system. It taught me to do the right thing and gave me a keen sense of respect for my fellow man. It showed me how important a role of honesty, integrity, loyalty, respect and honor play in making our world a better place."

We all have the ability to "make a difference," we simply need to find a need and fill it.

Last October American Constructors participated in the Greater Austin Quality Council Forum. While hammering out details to create some kind of meaningful door prize, we were faced with a dilemma. What can we *do* that would give meaning—not just *give away* a prize? Realizing that we do have innate talents (we *build* things) we decided our gift would involve construction—specifically, working with a family whose home was in need of repairs. The needs in our community were staggering and we concluded that some expert advice would be helpful for our focus.



Because of our involvement with the United Way, we knew they could direct us. They put us in touch with the Services for the Elderly and the search began.

We contacted Ms. Valona Porter and her mother, Ms. Ercel Dickerson, whose home was selected. One of our project managers made a visit to determine the scope of needs. An extensive list was prepared outlining exactly what materials, kind of tools and manpower would be needed.



Over a period of two weeks, we began replacing, repairing, painting, and installing. There were numerous cracks in the walls and ceilings, leaks under sinks and holes in the baseboards, walls, and slab. Interior and exterior repairs were made to the windows and doors, weatherstripping, caulking and foam repairs—including around the foundation. Safety was a major concern for Ms. Porter, as she is the primary care



giver for her elderly mother. A gas line was shortened, the tub was caulked-and sealed, carpet secured, and carbon monoxide detectors were installed in the dining and bedrooms. As Ms. Porter stated "*we couldn't have afforded to have all the work done that ya'll did. I know the ceiling might be falling down around us without your help. I have more peace now that I know my mother is safer.*"

The ability to "make a difference" is within each of us—but sometimes involving ourselves in a collective effort is the inspiration we need to know how to make it happen. Making a difference requires creativity, some innate talent, commitment, and involvement. Beyond that is determining a need and seizing the opportunity.

Offering a "hand up not a hand out"

AUSTIN HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

The Purpose: To create an environment of hope, dignity and a truly human existence for all people through affordable housing.

Several years ago we were involved in the demolition of a large building. Many salvaged items were in good condition and have been "housed" in our warehouse for years! We began investigating what could be done with this "stuff" and discovered Habitat for Humanity and the RE-Store. They were contacted and brought to our warehouse to shop. The RE-Store is a building materials recycling center located at 3rd and Comal accepting donations of new and used building materials. They resell these products at bargain prices, using donations and purchased items from the RE-Store proceeds to build affordable housing. Through donations they are able to divert reusable material from landfills and reduce disposal costs. This benefits everyone: the environment, the building industry, and community. American Constructors is currently involved in establishing a program designed to work with the building community to become "RE-Builder's". Expect to hear more about this in the future.

"Hands-on" Difference

American is involved in many types of construction, but our participation in educational facilities has increased our awareness of the impact the construction process has on the end user. Whether a project is public or private, they all face extreme budgeting constraints and a need to have their facilities functioning quickly. The ability to work with the owners and design professionals to accomplish these goals has been challenging and rewarding. Sharing, growing and making a difference in the realization of the owners wants and needs, can be a stimulation for creativity—using the best within each of us to provide a better future for all of us.

Lakeway Elementary School

A new 67,000 SF facility for Lake Travis residents will be ready to open this fall, bringing to the community relief from overcrowding and a new environment for learning. Despite challenges from the frequent rains, American Constructors achieved completion on June 1st (contract date was August 1st) and teachers began moving into their rooms. In an article in the June 19th Austin American Statesman, Superintendent Gloria Berry described this \$5.5 million project as the easiest construction job she's been involved with. Hopefully the normal anxiety experienced

at the beginning of a new school year, in a new facility, will be lessened by the staff having additional time to prepare.

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Construction began in May on a new 30,000 SF, three story Campus Center. The facility will include a cafeteria, fellowship hall, classrooms, offices, student center, dormitory, and new parking lots. Designed by O'Connell Robertson and Associates, the Center is being built on the last available site of the 93-year old campus. With this in mind, it was imperative to the trustees that this facility be exceptional, yet remain within their budget. Through significant efforts by the owner, designers, and builder we were able to move forward, without compromising the design or function of the facility. The serene atmosphere and ongoing use of the campus requires our sensitivity to accomplish this project with as little impact as possible to the existing facilities. It is a privilege to be a part of the "final touch" to this historical institution-look for completion in the summer of '96.

Leander High School

Last February we began a \$9 million addition to the existing campus at Leander High School-our second opportunity to be a part of the growth in this community. In 1987 American also constructed additions to the high school. This project will add an athletic facility, performing arts center, classrooms, an agricultural center, parking lots, ball fields and a recreation area. Early in the project the Owner, Architect, Engineers, subcontractors, and American Constructors spent two days in a "Partnering Workshop". The purpose was to establish goals and a plan of action for scheduling and tracking progress, which is positively effecting the project schedule. Student Anna Boatright, in an article she wrote in April for the school newspaper The Roar states, "Although the school environment will be different for the next year, the end result will be worth the wait."

Saint Stephens Episcopal School

Since 1992, while building the Helm Fine Arts Center, we have enjoyed an ongoing relationship with the people at Saint Stephen's. This relationship continues to develop as we again have the privilege to build on their campus. Currently construction is underway on twelve tennis courts, football field lights, and improvements to roads and parking areas. As the students and faculty are anxious to enjoy the new amenities, significant efforts have been made by the owner, designer, and American to meet an accelerated schedule of completion by this fall. Working in a team environment and focusing on the best interests of all parties, has enhanced the relationships we share, while increasing our ability to deliver projects on time and within budget.

NEW WORK/UPDATES

ACI

Construction began in May on a new facility for **United Heritage Federal Credit Union**. This 1 1,000 SF building will include eight drive thru lanes on 3-1/2 acres. The new South Austin location at Manchaca and Berkeley Drive is scheduled for completion the end of this year.



Lakeline Mall—Americans' portion of work (which included moving over 500,000 cubic yards of rock and earth) is winding down as the surrounding roads begin to take shape. The mall, scheduled to open this fall, will include five anchor tenants and over 55 acres of parking on an 88 acre site.

McAllen-Phase II of the **McAllen Pavilion Shopping Center**, which included an OfficeMax, was completed June 21st, one month ahead of schedule.

ACCI

Construction is in the final stages at **UCLA's Lake Arrowhead Conference and Resort Center**. Located northeast of Los Angeles in the San Bernardino National Forest, the eight Swiss style chalets (totaling 36 units) are nestled among beautiful pine trees with spectacular lake views.



Hotel Edward, featured in the last *Projections*, was completed the end of June. This was the last of three historical reconstructions involving "building a building within a building."

ACHI / Aloha and Mahalo

After eight years in Hawaii, American Constructors Hawaii, Inc. has completed all current projects and will wait for a more robust economy before resuming operations. Thanks to all of our employees and clients for their support.

