Early Learning

“My father started his own construction company when I was 10,” says Mamon Powers, president of Powers and Sons Construction Company. “He offered me a job when I was 11, and offered to pay me as much for a day as I made in allowance for a week.”

Thus began Powers’s career in the construction industry, a career marked by ambition, hard work, and irresistible challenges.

“My third year, they gave me a hammer. It coincided with what I was learning in the eighth grade about Pythagorean theory. That was really the beginning of my interest in engineering. By my junior or senior year, I was running a carpentry crew. The math made it exciting.”

A Tough Transition

Growing up in Gary, Indiana, Powers chose Purdue engineering for two reasons. First, he learned in high school from a Purdue student teacher that there were no professional, black registered engineers in Indiana. He was drawn to that theory. That was really the beginning of my interest in engineering. By my junior or senior year, I was running a carpentry crew. The math made it exciting.”

Family Values

Powers had an internship with Amoco and accepted a position with the company upon graduating. It was a good experience, he says. “I learned that I could do meaningful work.” But every night, he went home to help his father with his business. Quickly, he realized that working with his father was more satisfying than the work he was doing at Amoco.

“I realized that I wanted to run my own show to determine my own destiny. So I went to work for my father for no pay and said we would work it out. During the next seven months I made $2,000, but I was having fun. Shortly after that, we started work on a joint venture on a commercial construction project. Our business then started to change.”

Seven years after joining his father’s company, Powers became a partner. In 1973, he became a professional engineer. In 1975, he became president of the company. Today, Powers and Sons Construction Company has become a leader in delivering fast-track projects. Some of its most visible accomplishments include the Public Safety Building for the City of East Chicago, the Indianapolis Convention Center, the implosion of Market Square Arena in Indianapolis, and the City of Gary’s new baseball park.

Staying on Top

“Early in my career, I was afraid of going bankrupt, and 30 years later, I still am,” says Powers. “My father once said, ‘Success is like trying to stay on top of a greasy ball.’”

“What has helped me the most is that I enjoy challenges, and I get motivated by obstacles. As I look at challenges in the world today, it seems we’re still not as diverse as we need to be as a society. Considering the changes in the 1960s, I expected our world to be much further along. We need to use all of our resources as a society and as a country, we will be that much further ahead.”