

Spring 2022

Infrastructure

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF TEXAS

Doug Pitcock

A Legacy as
Big as Texas

TCEQ Sunset
Review 101

Texas' Big
Three Visit
AGC

Baker
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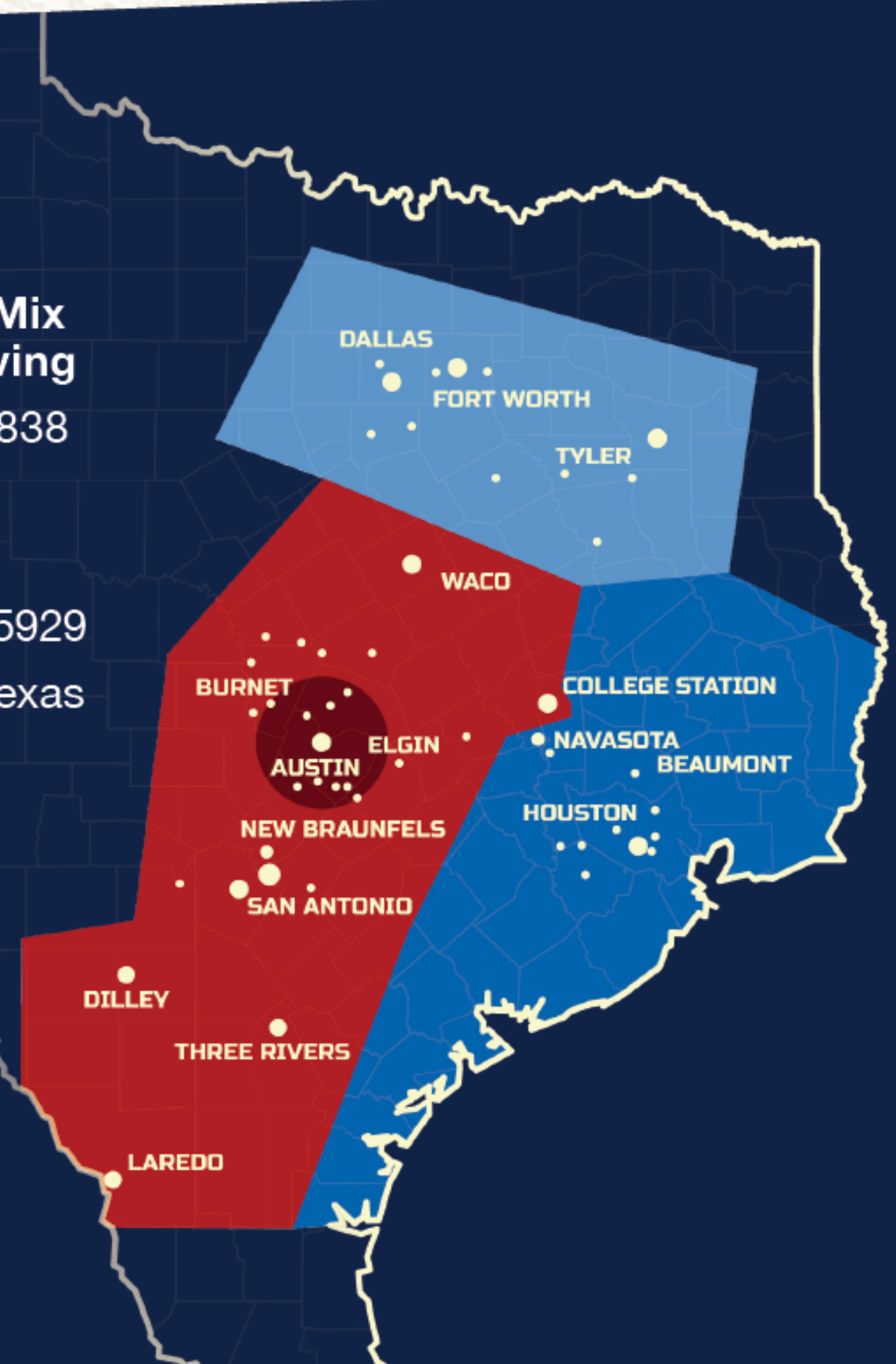
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Content | Spring 2022

- 4** President's Message
- 5** Chief Executive Officer's Report
- 6** Texas' Big Three Visit AGC
- 9** TCEQ Sunset Review 101
- 11** Doug Pitcock: A Legacy as Big as Texas
- 28** Baker Institute Aims to Bring Facts to the Highway Debate
- 33** TxDOT's Response to IIJA? Rack 'em and Stack 'Em
- 34** Remembering the Life and Legacy of Jack Garey
- 36** We Build Texas Awards

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Legends are Born from Leadership

I'd like you to take a moment to think about an individual who left a lasting impression on your life. It could be a coach, pastor, parent, mentor, boss, or friend. What characteristics did they possess, how did they make you feel, and what were you able to achieve because of their support?

In my life, I have had the great opportunity to work with many huge thinkers and groundbreakers. My first highway job was working for Arnold Oliver in my hometown of Graham before he became Executive Director of TxDOT. Mr. Oliver was a brilliant man from an extremely humble background. He was involved in the day-to-day business of TxDOT and was hands-on in problem solving. I much admired Mr. Oliver and wanted to be more like him every day I knew him.

I met Amadeo Saenz when I was the Corpus Christi District Engineer and Mr. Saenz was the District Engineer in Pharr. I got to witness his innovation and persistence which yielded great results for the Rio Grande Valley. He was my model for being a successful District Engineer. I tried to emulate his success, I never could but I always tried. Later, I worked for him as Assistant Executive Director when he was the Executive Director of TxDOT. Mr. Saenz worked harder than anyone I ever knew. He listened to everyone and when it was time to make a decision, he provided the guiding leadership to get us all on the same page.

Now, I have the distinct honor to work with Doug Pitcock, possibly the most knowledgeable person I have ever met. As my friend and colleague Bob Lanham said, Mr. Pitcock is "brilliant with a phenomenal memory. He's intense, passionate, and very, very focused. Obviously, the love of the work and love for the company comes through." Doug is also "extremely cordial and sensitive about other people." Doug lives his motto of G.A.S. (Give a Sh*t) every day. (Read more about Doug beginning on page 11).

These individuals have left a lasting impression on my life and have helped to mold me into the person that I am today. I encourage you to find a way to know people like these, listen to them, and learn from them. AGC is a great place to start.

The more you are involved, the more you can learn from those already involved. As the saying goes, you are the sum of the people you surround yourself with. And while I may be more than a little biased, the members of AGC are of the highest caliber and the leaders among our membership are the type of individuals who will leave a lasting impression on your life.



David Casteel
AGC of Texas President

Navigating the Path Forward

There have been a lot of phrases used to describe the state of the world over the last two years. One phrase that stood out among the rest and was even included in the New York Times' list of 20 Phrases That Defined 2020 (amid other significant expressions like flatten the curve, contact tracing, and essential workers), was unprecedented.

Just like the radio overplaying your favorite song, when a word or phrase is overused, it tends to lose its meaning and impact. But these truly are unprecedented times.

Not just because of what we've experienced both collectively and individually as we've worked to navigate the global spread of the novel coronavirus, government shutdowns, economic uncertainties, and new variants of COVID-19, but also because of what we continue to experience as an industry.

Supply chain issues, worker shortages, and company closures and consolidations pose real concerns for our industry.

However, these are not the first series of tribulations we have faced as an industry. We have a long and storied history as an association of overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds.

According to Doug Pitcock, the construction industry can never enjoy a crisis-free year. And with a career

spanning more than six decades, I'm inclined to believe him.

As Doug says, "solving problems is the reason that AGC exists because contractors can do things collectively that they cannot do individually." (Read more about Doug's legacy and words of wisdom beginning on page 11).

And so we will.

Just like we did during the government lockdowns where we worked together as an association to secure essential status for the highway construction industry, AGC of Texas staff and leadership are hard at work assessing the constantly changing landscape and communicating important information to our members and to TxDOT but we can't do it alone. It takes the collective voice of our members.

While I would love a year free from uncertainty and excitement, I know that is not the nature of our industry but, I do find peace in knowing that together, we are strong, we are capable, and we will overcome any challenge that comes our way.



Jennifer Woodard
AGC of Texas Chief Executive Officer

Texas' Big Three Visit AGC

Governor Abbott visited with AGC of Texas members during the April Public Affairs Reception. During his visit, Abbott pledged more support for highway construction and appealed to members to rally their family and friends behind his re-election campaign.



Immediate-Past President Kal Kincaid (Texas Materials Group, Inc.) presents Gov. Abbott with an AGC of Texas road sign while members Wade Miller (Big Creek Construction, Ltd.), John Rempe (Balfour Beatty Infrastructure, Inc.) and Matt Paggioli (Webber, LLC) look on.



Gov. Abbott engages with AGC of Texas Members Danette Shelton (Roadway Specialties, Inc.), Sharon Chandler (Flatiron Constructors, Inc.), and Shelli Thompson (Niece Equipment LP).



AGC of Texas CEO Jennifer Woodard and President-Elect Stacey Bryant (Jones Bros. Dirt & Paving Contractors, Inc.) share a friendly conversation with Gov. Abbott.



AGC members Nathali Parker (KLP Construction Supply), Johnny Weisman (Hunter Industries, Ltd.), and Immediate-Past AGC of America President Bob Lanham (Williams Brothers Construction Co., Inc.) visit with Texas Highway Commission Chairman J. Bruce Bugg, Jr., and Gov. Abbott.



AGC Member Tracy Helmcamp-Schieffer (A.L. Helmcamp, Inc.), AGC President David Casteel (Williams Brothers Construction Co., Inc.) and Betsy Casteel extend a warm greeting to Gov. Abbott.



Matt Paggioli (Webber, LLC), Troy Childers (Webber, LLC), and Tod Alderman (AmeriTex Pipe & Products, LLC) are all smiles while conversing with Gov. Abbott.

At the February Public Affairs Reception, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick agreed with AGC of Texas members that it is unnecessary for the state to use controversial Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDAs).



Clockwise:

- 1) AGC of Texas Immediate-Past President Kal Kincaid (Texas Materials Group, Inc.) converses with Lt. Gov. Patrick at February's Public Affairs Meeting.
- 2) Lt. Gov. Patrick engages with AGC of Texas Members Randall Moore (Haas-Anderson Construction, Ltd.), Trey Pebley (Foremost Paving, Inc.), and Harry Levy (The Levy Company, Inc.)
- 3) Lt. Gov. Patrick visits with AGC of Texas Members Shelley Williams (Pexco, Davidson Traffic Control Products), Carter Biel (Foremost Paving, Inc.), and Danette Shelton (Roadway Specialties, Inc.)



At the February Membership Luncheon, Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan told AGC of Texas members that he planned to include examining the state's growing infrastructure needs as an interim charge, which his office announced in March.



Clockwise:

- 1) AGC of Texas President-Elect Stacey Bryant (Jones Bros. Dirt & Paving Contractors, Inc.), Speaker Phelan, and AGC of Texas CEO Jennifer Woodard enthusiastically greet AGC of Texas members during the February Membership Luncheon.
- 2) Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan addresses AGC of Texas members at February's Membership Luncheon.
- 3) AGC of Texas President David Casteel (Williams Brothers Construction Co., Inc.) greets Speaker Phelan.



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TCEQ Sunset Review 101

What to expect during this multiyear process

By: Brian Christian, AGC of Texas

Of the many reasons we are lucky to live in Texas, one is that our state has a built-in process to regularly take a hard look at how our government works and asks the questions: Do we still need a particular state agency or government program? Is it duplicating what another is doing? Can we do better?

In Texas, this “Sunset Review” affects all the major state regulatory agencies, including the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Texas Railroad Commission (RCT), the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

That last agency is of particular importance right now, with TCEQ currently undergoing its third Sunset Review since its creation in 1993. TCEQ's regulation of aggregate production operations (APOs), concrete batch plants, and crushers is a hot topic among the general public and legislature, with several dozen industry-related bills filed every session.

The TCEQ's Sunset Review will only intensify scrutiny of the agency in general, and of its direct regulation of the aggregates industry in particular. A myriad of related issues, such as the adequacy of TCEQ's oversight and “environmental justice,” will also be brought up, raising the stakes.

But while the Sunset Review process can be very

controversial, it also provides a very real opportunity to set the record straight and influence the future direction of a state agency.

With all of this in mind, AGC of Texas is already actively engaged in TCEQ's review, closely monitoring developments and providing input. Below is a Sunset Review “101” and look downrange at where things might be heading.

Sunset Review 101

To start, the basic idea is that a state agency goes away unless it is expressly “reauthorized” by the Texas Legislature. Even if an agency is not abolished, its operations can be tweaked, and some of its functions can be moved to another, better-suited state agency. The review is overseen by the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission (commission), which is made up of five senators, five representatives, and two members of the general public. The commission is supported by a staff of about 30 professionals who break into teams and dive into the weeds of each state agency under evaluation.

Stakeholder input is vital to this process and comments provided to Sunset staff in the first stage of a review is confidential. This allows stakeholders to feel emboldened to give bark-on feedback on how an agency is, or is not, functioning.

Eventually, Sunset staff distills all of that candid stakeholder input and everything they have learned about an agency's operations (the good, the bad, and the ugly) into a staff report. That report, which contains recommended statutory or operational changes will be issued in May. The report will be presented to the commission in June followed by a formal, non-confidential 30-day public comment period.

The Sunset Commission will reconvene in September and take up or down votes on every staff recommendation, and members can even add some new changes of their own. Needed statutory changes are then rolled into that agency's "Sunset Bill" which will be filled sometime in early 2023 and will be taken up during the next regular session of the Texas Legislature.

If all goes smoothly, an agency will emerge from the legislative process with some changes and the statutory maximum 12-year extension. Sometimes, though, the process can go off the rails, and an agency may only get a short extension, as happened to the RCT a few sessions ago. Abolished agencies get one year to close out and transition any retained functions to another state agency.

However, the Sunset process does not end with the legislative session. Next follows agency implementation, with all of the usual mischief that takes place, so the Sunset process is truly a multi-year process.

What to expect during TCEQ's Sunset Review

Construction-related industries will again be under scrutiny, including how TCEQ regulates them through permits and enforcement. Additionally, related issues, such as environmental justice and TCEQ's minimum penalties have already come up. Indeed, environmental groups are publicly calling for TCEQ to have the authority to deny permits solely on the basis

of "equity and justice."

In coordination with the Legislative Drafting and Environmental Committees, AGC of Texas has made these essential points to sunset staff.

First, the concerns around quarries and allied operations are land-use, not environmental, issues. The environment is being used as a proxy to block unpopular operations that nonetheless provide beneficial products and support critical infrastructure.

Second, public works projects may be exempt from certain public notice requirements, but they still must meet TCEQ's strict air quality protectiveness requirements. Any discussion around expanding TCEQ's permitting authority should, therefore, expressly exclude public works projects.

Third, the environmental impacts of APOs and other construction-related industries must be put in the proper perspective relative to other TCEQ-regulated industries.

Finally, the registration of APOS and allied industries should remain at TCEQ. Transferring those functions to other state agencies would create a bifurcated permitting system, confuse the public, and create uncertainty for the regulated community.

AGC of Texas will continue to look for proactive opportunities to effect meaningful improvements in TCEQ's operations while setting the record straight on the real environmental impacts of our industry. Finally, as TCEQ is not the only natural resource agency under review, we are also keeping track of the reviews of the Texas Water Development Board and similar agencies.

In the end, the sunset process is one to be embraced. It provides a real opportunity for mischief, but also for regulatory reform. Either way, it requires vigilance. We will continue to stand watch.



Doug Pitcock

A Legacy as Big as Texas

By: Gary Scharrer, AGC of Texas

There will never be another Doug Pitcock.

The 94-year-old highway construction leader remains engaged as chairman and CEO of a 2,200-employee company; the largest highway construction firm in Texas building competitive-bid jobs.

Pitcock might be the only highway and bridge builder left who remembers the days before interstate highways landed on roadmaps. The early years of the company he founded in 1955 were one of uncertainty, struggle, and driven by a singular focus to keep Williams Brothers from ending belly-up.

Back in the mid-1950s, he could not have seen himself maturing into an industry leader on his way to two stints as president of the AGC of Texas. His

respected national voice eventually elevated him to president of the Associated Contractors of America, earning a long-time seat on the national stage. National political leaders listened to Doug Pitcock. Some became close friends.

While he has reduced his legendary long workdays, Pitcock still routinely works 6 days a week and his focus remains fixed on the future. It takes some nudging to get Pitcock to reminisce about the past.

“I haven't got time to worry about what we did. I'm worried about what we're doing and going to do,” Pitcock says during recent interviews in his Houston office.

“You don't gain anything thinking about the past. The past is the past. Who cares? I don't. It's not what it's about,” he says, laughing.

“The past is not a challenge. The past is history. It's interesting. But for the world to go around, you have to worry about today and tomorrow.”

But, with a little prodding, Pitcock turns introspective when he looks at his company's majestic bridges and highways teeming with traffic that help people and commerce make their daily moves.

“Why was I put on earth? The only thing I can figure out is that we should make the world a little bit better place to live because we were here,” he says. “People in construction were blessed with that reward. It's visible proof that we made the world a little bit better place to live. That's an indescribable feeling. There's a difference because you were here. Your own hands and your own effort built something that will be there forever.”

However, only the present and future offer challenges. And, for Pitcock, challenges remain an indispensable motivator. Boredom is an enemy.

“The challenges keep life interesting. If I have more than a couple of days off, I go nuts,” he says. “I enjoy work 10 times more than free time.”



Right: The Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge in Dallas was opened in 2012 and is only one of four cable-stayed bridges in Texas including the Fred Hartman Bridge. **Left:** The Fred Hartman Bridge in Houston was opened in 1995 and is the longest cable-stayed bridge in Texas.

Core Principles Lead to Success

That work has accumulated in impressive statistics during his 67 years in the business. Williams Brothers has finished 430 TxDOT jobs, paved an estimated 12,000 centerline miles and built approximately 3,500 bridges. That's more bridges than exist in 10 states.

Today, his company has crews and equipment running at anywhere from 20 to 35 construction sites at any given time.

Pitcock's core principles formed early in life. They revolve around work ethic, fairness, and loyalty.

Pitcock sees considerable change in the highway construction business with once established companies dissolving or selling to larger, international giants. He considers himself “the last of the Mohicans.” A few years ago, he resisted interest from one of those multinationals asking him to name a price. He's confident Williams Brothers will continue to grow and flourish.

A reason for that goes back to the early years when he helped found the company with the Williams brothers - John and Claude. Pitcock insisted that employees share in company profit while going into partnership with two heirs of the S.H. Kress & Co., a “5-and-dime store” business.

“One of the basic faults or weaknesses of our system of employer/employee is that the employer or employer/owner works for-profit and employees work for a fixed income or salary. And one of the things I did that I'm most proud of is to immediately start a profit-sharing plan,” Pitcock says.

The plan has morphed into one of the country's early employee stock ownership plans.

Employee-Owned: The New America

“When I die, Williams Brothers will be 100 percent employee-owned. I just think it's wonderful. It's the new America.”

That makes Pitcock proud. It helps people realize they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Pitcock has long respected public service and could have easily been a city manager or a public works superintendent. His strong belief in fairness fills him with a sense of egalitarian spirit – especially if people are willing to work hard and remain loyal.

“I do believe that ownership should be diversified, and opportunity should be given to people that aren't born with money,” he says.

Employees who own a piece of the company tend to be loyal and hard-working. And, of course, it's less likely an employee might haul off a pile of plywood or other materials from the company's inventory. That employee would be stealing from his colleagues, who might take a dim view of someone helping themselves to company (their) assets.

“It's a pretty cool deal. We do have very loyal employees. We've got, I think, the best management team that exists in the country. I guess I'm as proud of that as what I started.”

His senior staff includes President Bob Lanham, Vice President Randy Rogers, Vice President Seth

Schulgen, Vice President David Casteel, Vice President Jesse Khangura, Engineer/Estimator Bill Doreen, Director of Business Development & Diversity Tracey Aping, and Corina Dominguez, who has been alongside Pitcock for 31 years – a valued assistant whom Pitcock says he would be “dead” without.



The headquarters of Williams Brothers Construction Co., Inc. located in the heart of Houston.

Lanham has known Pitcock for nearly 40 years after Pitcock saw leadership potential in the young engineer and eventually pulled him out of the field for the front office.

Brilliant, Intense, and Very Focused

On the professional side, Lanham characterizes Pitcock as being “brilliant with a phenomenal memory. He's intense, passionate, and very, very focused. Obviously, the love of the work and love for the company comes through.”

On the personal side, Lanham says Pitcock is “extremely cordial and sensitive about other people. In a social setting, he's a lover of a great party.”

“He told me once that as much fun as building something is, he gets a great sense of satisfaction in building people and giving opportunities for people to grow in their professional careers. He loves to watch a lonely foreman grow into a successful project manager because of the environment he created,” Lanham says.

Pitcock has a specific passion for his Texas A&M alma mater – and an abiding belief in education, in general.

“He believes a good, sound quality education will lift everyone, and it also will lift society, which would go a long way to solving the world’s problems,” Lanham says.

It’s a reason Pitcock remains such a fervent supporter of the AGC of Texas scholarship program.

The Pitcock Work Ethic

Pitcock’s enduring work ethic is rooted in his childhood experiences after his family left Tulsa (Oklahoma) for Houston.

James D. “Doug” Pitcock, Jr., returned to his childhood hometown during summers to work for an uncle who owned an electrical contracting business. The young teenager had to stuff job-order materials into bags for the electrical crews to take to work sites.

Once he accomplished that daily task, he moved on to threading pipes. He had to stay busy: “I had to make sure a body part was moving at all times. If somebody looked and you weren’t moving a body part, you were screwing off.”

Pitcock held a newspaper route during high school and added a second job during summers working at a drugstore company warehouse filling retail orders for delivery to the various stores. He eventually got promoted to a delivery truck driver.

Pitcock’s circuitous road to highway construction casually started while filling in for a drugstore cashier during the Christmas holidays when the father of a high school friend noticed him and asked why an engineering student was working in a drugstore.

The friend’s father was chief engineer for the Harris

County Flood Control District. That chance encounter landed Pitcock summer jobs at the flood control district throughout his college days at Texas A&M University. He might have returned to the flood control district after college graduation but folks there warned him against getting “trapped,” so he took a job with Wyatt Metal and Boiler Co.

The new college engineering graduate did little more than carry plans from the engineering section to the shop. The monotonous routine turned into a terrible experience because it was boring – and, likewise, Pitcock was miserably bored.

Subsequently, he eagerly jumped at an opportunity for an estimator’s job at Farnsworth and Chambers Contractors. The mid-Saturday afternoon job interview should have tipped him off on what Saturdays would look like for the rest of his life.

The Korean conflict soon drew him into military service. Pitcock loved the military. He was intrigued by intelligence operations and considered accepting a commission with what today is the National Security Agency. He wanted to be an Army officer. However, he reluctantly concluded it would be difficult to raise a family while in the Army. Plus, Farnsworth and Chambers had given Pitcock a generous \$800 bonus as he headed off to the Army. The company was loyal to Pitcock. He wanted to reciprocate so he returned to his old job in Houston. For Pitcock, loyalty has remained a life-long priority.

Pitcock, who is an avid reader, (he still subscribes to print editions of the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Houston Chronicle, and Bay Area Citizen) read a magazine article suggesting that anyone who had not started a business by the time they hit 28 probably would miss out. The clock was ticking when the Williams brothers approached Pitcock. He was 27. The interstate highway system was about to launch. They wanted in on the action and needed him to run the company.



Doug and his wife, Eleanor "Puddie" Pitcock.

Long, Hard Work

Doug and Eleanor "Puddie" were relatively newly married at the time. Puddie would become his life-long friend. The couple often watched TV evangelists and played tennis on Sunday mornings before taking in an afternoon movie. She would have preferred her husband to settle into a 40-hour workweek.

He knew his aspirations and his drive to fulfill them. He was honest with Puddie: "It's not going to work that way. I've got to follow through with this thing and it's going to take long, hard work. I had to accomplish something. And so when you're out to accomplish something, you go full speed ahead."

Or, as long-time friend and retired AGC of Texas Executive Vice President Tom Johnson once described Pitcock: "He is a workaholic. And there is no moderation in Doug's personality. It's either this or that. There is no in-between. There is no gray. It's either black or white. Period. That's his personality. That mentality certainly helped grow his company. If one job is good, then five is better. If \$50 million a

year is good, then \$2 billion is better. Whatever it is, there is no moderation in his life."

But those early years for Williams Brothers were tenuous and difficult. The company did not make money for the first 9 years. Attracting a labor force was not easy as crew members didn't know if the inexperienced company would get another construction project after finishing the one on which they were working.

Pitcock hired many African Americans, whom labor unions typically shunned in the 1950s and encouraged their advancement to operator positions and other more skilled jobs. Pitcock's approach has always allowed motivated crew members to advance on their own initiative.

"They were running bulldozers and cranes; they were carpenters; they were cement finishers and we caught a lot of hell about it," Pitcock says of those early years when a large majority of his labor force was African American.

"I'm very proud that we opened doors in our area of

work, at least. We pioneered letting black men do (more sophisticated construction jobs)," Pitcock says.

Social unrest in the mid-1960s changed society, Pitcock says, and many of the company's African American crews eventually left Williams Brothers.

Building and keeping a labor force has always challenged highway construction companies. He considers it one of the major challenges facing the industry today.

"The Silver Tongue"

After finally gaining financial footing a decade into the company's history, Pitcock expanded from bridgework to include dirt-moving projects. He acquired a road-building company (Swope Brothers) and was on his way to becoming an industry leader.

After serving as president of AGC of Texas in 1968, Pitcock's involvement with the national association steadily increased.

His meeting with the country's "energy czar" in the early 1970s influenced a policy change that otherwise would have stopped fuel shipments to highway construction companies during the Arab oil embargo. Without Pitcock's intervention, the entire highway construction industry faced crippling disruption from the fuel cutoff.

His close friend, former U.S. House Transportation Chairman Bud Schuster (R-PA) once summarized Pitcock's persuasive charm: "He's a happy elephant—smiling, leaning, persuading... and eventually persuading many of those with opposing views in a soft-spoken, pleasant manner."

Industry colleagues referred to him as "the silver tongue."

The Engine That Drives the Economy

President Ford appointed Pitcock to a transportation commission with a dozen congressional members and a few industry leaders. The commission studied transportation issues for a couple years before



Pete Gilvin, Doug Pitcock, and Tom Johnson testifying before Congress in the 1970s

publishing a thick report. Some say it helped influence the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982. Pitcock sat an arm's-reach away from President Reagan during the signing of a federal gas tax increase in 1983. It was the first federal gas tax increase in 23 years. (The last one came in 1993).

It's likely Pitcock is the only highway construction contractor in history who has early, consistently, and forcefully linked highway construction with the national economy. He has long preached that highway construction is the engine that drives the economy. He makes the connection that investments in public infrastructure create a positive ripple effect throughout the economy. It follows that reliable and stable infrastructure investments mean a steady increase in economic prosperity.

Pitcock emphasized that theme during his 1984 term as president of the 27,000-member Associated General Contractors of America.

He told Constructor Magazine that year:

“The construction industry literally encompasses every segment of the economy... Because the construction industry is the primary market for the raw materials and products of so many other industries. Our industry, more so than any other industry in America, has the potential to literally move this nation in economic growth.”

It's something the ancient Romans understood, "because the first thing they did when taking over a new area was to build roads—and then things took off," Pitcock notes.

Williams Brothers' Katy freeway extension west of Houston offers a good example.

During a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the

freeway opening, one of the area economic development groups observed that increased values from new development had already exceeded the cost for the project, according to Lanham, who attended the event: "And they hadn't even cut the ribbon yet."

Simply put, roads create wealth. Commercial development always follows. Property values go up. Housing springs up around new roads. A modern infrastructure system expedites commerce and more efficiently moves people from Point A to Point B. From Lanham's perspective, road development and the subsequent development and economic growth add up to "the most Republican thing that Congress does." So, it's a head-scratcher for some that none of Texas' Republican congressional members supported the 2021 infrastructure bill (87 percent of congressional Republicans opposed the bill).

Thriving in Washington

While some loath and avoid politics in the nation's capital, Pitcock thrived in that atmosphere. He remained on the AGC of America Executive Committee for 16 years.

"I really fell in love with the Washington scene. I'm one of the few people that likes Washington, D.C. I like the thrill of being there, number one, and number two, being where all the action is and being able to have an impact on the country, however minuscule it might be," Pitcock says.

For Pitcock, one of the nicest compliments from a politician came from then Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX) after Pitcock helped to improve a longtime irritant: Texas was getting back only about 75 cents in federal highway funds for every \$1 the state sent to Washington in federal gas tax money.

Pitcock was close to President Reagan's Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis. Pitcock negotiated with Lewis to gain a better deal for Texas.

The transportation secretary eventually settled on 85 cents on the dollar for Texas. But Pitcock couldn't formally accept the offer until consulting with Bentsen. Pitcock summarized his negotiations with the influential senator. The 85-cent deal sounded good to Pitcock and apparently was as good a number as Bentsen could have managed. He told Pitcock: "We play a lot of games up here, and you just took my game away."

Learning the Highway Business First-Hand

Back at Williams Brothers, Pitcock sharpened his estimating experience and talents and gradually learned the details of road and bridge construction "because they don't teach you how to build a bridge at any university or a highway, or how to move dirt. I had to learn the business for myself."

Pitcock bought out John Williams in 1964 and Claude Williams in 1984.

His frequent visits to Washington meant Pitcock relied on then-company President Larry Deavers to manage during his absences.

By 2000, Pitcock and Williams Brothers had made a significant mark on the Houston metro area. One could peer out of a window from a Houston high-rise building and marvel at the massive network of highways carrying traffic around the clock. Most of that construction was Williams Brothers' work.

"Pitcock has been an active participant in building Houston's freeways longer than anyone else... His construction firm has lowered the cost of freeway construction in Houston, allowing Houston to build more freeways with available funding," author Eric Slotboom wrote in "Houston Freeways."

"Pitcock is perhaps one of the last of a certain breed, some would say - a dying breed of Houstonians. They are the singularly focused, relentlessly dedicated individuals who are intent on achieving

success and building something great in Houston," the author wrote. "Although few Houstonians outside of the construction industry have ever heard of Doug Pitcock, they drive on his completed projects every day. The mystery man behind Houston's freeway system has been a big asset to Houston's freeway construction program."

Inspiring Admiration and Fear

The author described Pitcock as "an intensely private figure who works behind the scenes, pulling strings and calling shots."

"Inspiring adulation, admiration, respect, fear and scorn in Houston's construction industry, Pitcock has been one of the key players in Houston's freeway construction machine."

Laughing, Pitcock says he can't dispute the description.

The industry icon concedes he can be impatient.

His attitude: "Make a decision, even if it's the wrong one."

Pitcock has earned respect from two long-time Houston elected officials from opposing political parties. Democrat John Whitmire and Republican Ed Emmett both admire Pitcock's leadership savvy. Both praise his role in developing infrastructure for the Greater Houston area.

Sen. Whitmire has served in the Texas Legislature since winning a state House seat in 1973 while still a college student. Houston's business establishment didn't give the young Whitmire any attention during his early political years. Whitmire met Pitcock a few years later when the contractor headed up a Houston business PAC.

Later in the 1980s, Whitmire and Pitcock often



(Left to Right) Top: Texas Governor Greg Abbott and Doug Pitcock; Doug Pitcock and President Ronald Reagan **Middle:** Doug Pitcock with Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee Robert Nichols; First Lady Laura Bush, Doug Pitcock, and Eleanor "Puddin'" Pitcock **Bottom:** Bob Lanham, Doug Pitcock, and Sen. John Whitmire (D-Houston); Doug Pitcock in the Oval Office with President Ronald Reagan

shared Southwest Airlines flights. They typically sat next to one another.

“What always impressed me about Doug was how well-read he was. He always had books and The Economist magazine that he read cover-to-cover. So Doug and I always enjoyed talking about world matters and world events,” Whitmire recalls.

Now that Whitmire has racked up 50 years in the Texas Legislature, he and Pitcock have plenty of stories to share involving some of the state’s storied political leaders. Most have already passed: Former Governors Dolph Briscoe, William Clements, Mark White, and Ann Richards. Former U.S. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, former Lt. Gov. William Hobby (still active), and the irascible and mercurial former Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock.

“We know so many of the same players, that no one else alive knows,” Whitmire says. “And so when I get to tell him some of the things that Bullock did to me; he’ll tell me stories about what Bullock did to him. We have a lot of fun together because we share so many common characters.”

Whitmire plans to run to become Houston’s next mayor. Pitcock describes his relationship with Whitmire as “very, very close.”

The most senior of the state’s 31 senators says it wasn’t any issue or event that clinched their friendship.

“I’ve known Doug my whole adult life. And I’d like to think I’m one of his go-to guys. He certainly is someone that I seek advice from. We just enjoy the camaraderie,” Whitmire says.

He credits Pitcock for helping him to understand the link between highway development and commerce, including jobs and economic impact.

“He’s had a huge impact on the Harris County

development in every direction,” Whitmire says.

In the earlier years of their friendship, Whitmire says, Pitcock’s commitment to family “always impressed me. He didn’t travel unnecessarily. So that always kind of struck me.”

Over the past few decades, Pitcock has become “a very significant political player, but he doesn’t want any real recognition for that,” Whitmire says. “He’s very private. Not flamboyant. He doesn’t want a lot of attention. And, of course, he loves A&M. He’s certainly donating his life savings to A&M. And he’s obviously helped plan the transition of his company to his employees. So Doug is a pretty cool man.”

Ed Emmett has been involved in Houston politics for some 40 years, first as a member of the Texas House Transportation Committee while serving in the state Legislature and later as Harris County Judge. Emmett also is a transportation expert.

Throughout his long tenure in the public arena, Emmett says, “I heard Doug Pitcock referred to almost reverentially. Politicians sought his support. Competitors wondered how he got so much work. And, those who were responsible for getting highways built were simply impressed with the way Williams Brothers, his company, was able to complete projects.”

Emmett got to know Pitcock over the years and mentioned Pitcock’s daily, early morning breakfast routine at 59 Diner. (The diner has since closed. Pitcock’s ritual now includes breakfast in the office followed by 11:15 am lunch at 81-year-old Cleburne Cafeteria, about 10 minutes from the office)

“Every morning before the rest of the world was awake, Doug was at the 59 Diner planning his, and others’ day. Put simply, Doug Pitcock’s success came from a keen mind, working long hours, and being able to craft a vision of what each project needed,” Emmett says.

Most Houstonians are not aware of Pitcock.

“But they see the result of his work in the world-class highway system he built in the Houston area and other places,” Emmett says.

TxDOT on Pitcock

Texas Department of Transportation Executive Director Marc Williams credits Pitcock and his company for a “significant influence” in building out the Houston area’s transportation network and helping the region grow into the fourth largest metropolitan area in the country.

“Not only has his leadership helped increase the economic vitality of the state and region, his company also has been a solid partner when TxDOT has needed to perform emergency work, including repairs to I-10 over the San Jacinto River, and rebuilding the Queen Isabella Causeway in the Pharr District to name a few,” Williams says.

Harris County was home to about 850,000 people when Pitcock started Williams Brothers. Today, the population stands at 4.8 million – and growing.

Currently, Williams Brothers is making improvements on I-610 and I-69 in Houston to address congestion at one of the top two chokepoints in Texas. TxDOT Houston District Engineer Eliza Paul says those improvements are improving both sides of that major interchange while making conditions safer for daily commuters relying on that very busy corridor.

TxDOT’s Director of District Operations Quincy Allen observed Pitcock up close when he served as the agency’s district engineer for the Houston region. Allen took note of Pitcock’s charity support.

Another reason why we celebrate Mr. Pitcock is for his quiet support for philanthropic causes locally and nationally. His generosity has made life better and easier for Texans and those beyond Texas borders.



Doug Pitcock, 93, driving around Houston and pointing out Williams Brothers' projects past and present.

He has also contributed millions to his beloved Texas A&M University, making that incredible community even better,” Allen says.

Pitcock has given substantial amounts to charity over the years. He prefers doing it instead of talking about his charitable contributions. Publicly, he will simply say:

“I don’t want to die with any money. I want to give away whatever I have before I die. I want to choose, whatever money I have, where it goes to charities instead of some lawyer choosing or trustees.”

Lanham says his boss is “self-conscious” about attention and never touts his numerous achievements.

“He’s not full of braggadocio. He’s done that (charity) very quietly, and very subtly,” Lanham says.

Pitcock also remains active in supporting political candidates and elected officials with hefty contributions: “You don’t buy support for your position, but you buy the ability to get facts in front of your representative,” he says.

'Keep Your Head in the Game'

TxDOT's Allen also credits Pitcock and his company for emphasizing safety in the potentially hazardous construction industry.

"Mr. Pitcock has been a true leader and pioneer in embracing safety as part of his company's culture. Making safety a priority has made his company a leader in that area and others better at delivering safety solutions for Texans by fostering a safety mindset for road workers everywhere," Allen says.

Building roads and bridges is an inherently risky business. Companies could sport perfect safety records – if construction crews stayed at home. But companies are in the business of building infrastructure. Work crews are indispensable. Risks must be managed.

Safety factors were not part of the work routine back in the 1950s when Williams Brothers started; weren't even discussed, Pitcock says. The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) would not become law until 1970. Coming up with the perfect safety training regimen remains elusive, particularly since highway construction crews have become somewhat transitory. New workers are always arriving, oftentimes lacking basic awareness of many of the industry's various job operations – or the safety terms that apply.

"So when we think we've communicated, we haven't. And that's probably the number one challenge," company President Lanham says.

Williams Brothers has been trying to simplify the safety message. Basically, they constantly remind crew members to keep their mind on their work.

For Pitcock and Lanham, that means, "keep your head in the game."

"If your head's in the game you won't get hurt. And

the game is what you're building today and what everybody's doing," Lanham says. "And the best safety talk in the world is making sure everybody knows what they're supposed to be doing today."

Logos on company hardhats and a pillow on Pitcock's office chair also amplify an informal motto: G.A.S. (standing for "Give A \$hit)."



A pillow on Doug Pitcock's office chair reading:
"Mentoring by Doug Pitcock G.A.S."

It costs Williams Brothers roughly \$1 million a month in insurance premiums. But good safety records will mean a partial return.

Pitcock formed an insurance company 40 years ago to gain more control of insurance costs. He was paying double the premium rate: "I said we either got to get it right or get out."

Pointing to an office sofa where insurance expert and transportation consultant Bill McIntyre was sitting decades ago, Pitcock remembers saying, "Dammit, Bill, I'm gonna start an insurance company."

Pitcock invited 11 other contractors to join the company with an initial \$150,000 to get started (with one employee). It now has more than 100 employees in the Dallas headquarters. If the insurance company makes money, so do the contracting companies that own it.

Vintage Pitcock

Starting that insurance company was vintage Pitcock. He knew he could control insurance costs by forming his own company—just as Williams Brothers for years has been making its own concrete, asphalt, pre-stressed materials, etc. The company can control costs, quality standards, environmental compliance, and keep projects on schedule. Those who know Pitcock affectionately call him the “consummate control freak.”

Besides feeling pride in developing a substantial company that his employees will end up owning, Pitcock also feels good about “being on the ground floor for solving construction industry problems.”

As Pitcock puts it, the construction industry can never enjoy a crisis-free year.

“It’s quite rewarding, not for me personally, but for keeping the industry moving forward. Of course, a lot of other people have been active. It’s not just me,” Pitcock says.

“Solving problems is the reason that AGC exists. Because contractors can do things collectively that they cannot do individually.”

Pitcock certainly played a role over the decades in developing AGC’s joint committee with TxDOT, which brings industry issues to the leaders of both organizations. Together they address and solve them.

Pitcock credits AGC’s retired Executive Vice President Tom Johnson for helping contractors see the importance of the association’s focus on highway funding.

“Who was in the highway funding business? Nobody. We talked about this 40 or 50 years ago during phone calls. Everyone’s letting George do it. But

nobody can find George, and we said we’ve got to be George, and we’ve been George ever since. We make things happen,” Pitcock says of AGC.

Looking Out for ‘The Little Guy’

Pitcock declines to talk openly about the efficiencies of his company’s operation because he prefers not to reveal the specifics to his competitors.

However, you can count on his sense of fairness when it comes to the industry in general. Lanham recounts an incident during his first term on the AGC Board of Directors when another member pitched an industry-related idea that Pitcock suggested should be reconsidered. He remembers Pitcock telling him: “You might want to slow down and think about this because it might not be good for most of our small contractors.”

A few board members from small companies later told Lanham they admired Pitcock for watching out “for the little guy.”

“One thing I’ve learned working with him is that he’s never forgotten that he was one of those little guys. And we try to live like we’re still one of the little guys,” Lanham says.

Pitcock and his company have long been industry advocates. Pitcock served two terms as AGC of Texas President, as has Lanham. Both have been national AGC presidents. Williams Brothers Vice President Seth Schulgen has served as AGC of Texas President. Another company vice president, David Casteel, is the current AGC of Texas President.

The state’s highway construction industry was much different decades ago—long before international companies arrived—when Texas was building its farm-to-market road system, followed by the massive interstate highway system.

“It was a lot more interesting in the early day because we were doing things that hadn't been done before,” Pitcock says. “As time goes on, you're not doing so many new things. You're just doing the same old-same old, so it's not quite as dramatic, or newsworthy.”

After watching his boss over the decades, Lanham says, Pitcock obviously “has fun doing things that haven't been done before. The tougher the challenge, the more fun and flavor he gets out of it.”

AGC of Texas Chief Executive Officer Jennifer Woodard was a shy, not-yet-confident 16-year-old when she met Pitcock, already firmly established as an industry giant.

The teenager could have been intimidated considering her career was starting at a more modest end of the spectrum: making copies and coffee.

“Mr. Pitcock always treated me with kindness and the same respect he showed to the senior staff members. He is passionate about the association and the importance of working on behalf of the entire membership.”

Seeking the Greater Good

After watching and listening to Pitcock for decades, Woodard says it's easy to see how his loyalty and dedication to AGC “is infused into everything he does. And it is contagious.”

Pitcock always approaches his work with honor, she says: “The greater good is his top priority.”

“My love for the industry and AGC of Texas is deeply rooted in his influence and example,” Woodard says. “He also happens to be one of the most generous and compassionate people I have ever known. If he

sees an injustice, he will work to make it right; if he sees someone who needs help, he will intervene. He doesn't do it for the credit or his ego.”

And she agrees with others that Pitcock is “a man committed to lifting other people up.”

“In that respect, he is a personal hero to me, and I simply love him and everything he stands for,” Woodard says.

Pitcock faced enormous loss in his personal life when his daughter Lisa Jan passed away in 2006, followed by wife, Puddin', three years later and son, Jim in 2010. Ever since losing his own family, Pitcock has learned to lean on the support structure around him through longtime assistant and family friend Corina Dominguez and his new extended family, the Johnsons.

Pitcock says he would be dead himself were it not for them—Corina, Pennie Johnson, and her family. Pennie's husband, Todd, is the chief pilot for Pitcock and Williams Brothers. He describes Todd Johnson as his “right arm.” The couple and their two daughters, Jaclyn and Olivia, have been fully incorporated into Pitcock's family life. The Johnsons live only a few minutes away from Doug.

Friends Become Family

Pennie Johnson stops by daily and checks in on him often, helping Pitcock manage the operations of his lakeside home and adding flare to planning special events and travel. Drawing on her career in the pharmaceutical industry, and as an accomplished volunteer for various initiatives, Pennie brings professionalism and organization that Doug appreciates and seeks out with all whom he associates.

“More than a simple family relationship, we have become the best of friends and compatriots, you know, my bestie,” Pennie says, laughing.



Left: Corina Dominguez and Doug Pitcock **Right:** Pennie, Todd, Jaclyn, and Olivia Johnson with "Mr. P."

Around nightly meal delivery, they binge-watch shows, debate news, politics, and pop culture of the day and are always laughing at life's challenges and amusements.

"Mr. P, as our family fondly calls him, can be tough and at times a little picky, but can't we all," she says. "He has taught me so much about life, conducting business, and new perspectives. In turn, I think we have shared our faith, and the deep connection that comes from sharing family experiences, like silly game nights, firework shows, travel adventures and even taking care of our pets."

She remains grateful for life's interesting intersection that brought "Mr. P." into their orbit.

"I often wonder why he chose us? But, what I do know is, God does not make mistakes," she says. "With two teenage girls, those experiences are never dull, and Doug enjoys every minute he can."

Pitcock, of course, never expected to be surrounded by teenage girls deep into his 90s.

"Watching Jaclyn and Olivia grow to become the beautiful, smart, young ladies they are today, has been a tremendous joy," he says.

Corina's desk is just around the corner from Pitcock's office.

"He is strong and determined. Strict, very, very strict, very loyal. It's his way or no way. And he leads by example," Dominguez says.

She was late arriving one morning soon after she started working for Pitcock decades ago. He sent her home.

"He will mold you into what he wants. I was a teen, so he has molded me to where I'm at today," she says. "I'm just thankful. I don't know how I got here right out of high school."

"I think he wanted me here because I was bilingual. And he's always admired the fact that I'm proud of my heritage and loves the way I flaunt that," Dominguez says, laughing.

She gets emotional knowing that Pitcock considers her family.

"It's an honor. And I'm very humbled by that. It's hard for me to talk about him. Because ... I can't imagine my life without him. He's everything I know. I grew up with him. And I was so close to his family. They should all be here."

It's natural for Pitcock to feel pride as he drives around Houston on highways and bridges that his company built. The Fred Hartman bridge spanning

the Houston ship channel stands out as his favorite. For him, it stirs an incredible feeling. There are more photos of that bridge hanging in the company office on Milam Street than any other.

The company's impressive impact on the Greater Houston landscape fills Pitcock with awe.

"Anytime I drive around Houston, I get to look at everything we built. We built many of the freeways and overpasses in Houston. I get a high."

It's difficult for those not in the highway construction business to understand, he says. The hours can be long. Construction crews often work at night on big-city highway projects. It can be hot; it can turn cold. It can be nasty.

"But (construction) gives you a reward of accomplishment that is really hard to get in another place," Pitcock says. "What we do is so challenging and so demanding and so consuming, but you realize how important what you are doing is. It's more than the money. I will tell you that."

However, decades in the business have accumulated so many projects that it can become numbing: "You forget the significance of them."

Corporate Culture: Fairness and No Fear

Lanham is on track to run Williams Brothers once the company ventures into the future without its founder. But Pitcock surely will continue to be part of the culture he created.

That means "fairness" will guide the company. And there won't be any fear about either the present or the future.

Someday, Lanham surely undoubtedly will be hearing Pitcock whispering in his ear.

"Fairness – and no fear. Both create a backbone for a successful corporate culture," Lanham says.

At 94, Pitcock knows he is closer to the sunset than to the sunrise. His father lived to 92 and his grandmother reached 97. Pitcock takes a daily, 30-minute walk inside his house "because you got to keep moving. If you don't move, you're dead," he says, laughing.

A bad fall during the Christmas holidays had an impact on him. He is still recovering.

But count on Pitcock to keep working as long as his health allows. That buys him satisfaction. After all, he's a guy who emphasizes that "Money is no fun. Working is fun."

"I went into this business because I didn't want to go into the blue suede shoes business. I didn't want to have to market and hustle and entertain. I wanted to do public works and to work for governmental agencies," he says.

Or, run his own highway construction business.

"What I do is so interesting and exciting, that doing anything else is really boring," Pitcock says. "So I'm here because I want to be here. I'm just as interested and excited today as I was the week we started the company."



For all that he is known for, his steadfast years of service to our country and dedication to the transportation industry, Williams Brothers Construction Company is honored to celebrate our founder and fearless leader,

Doug Pitcock



www.wbctx.com

Baker Institute Aims to Bring Facts to the Highway Debate



Edward M. Emmett

By: Gary Scharrer, AGC of Texas

Highway construction is more controversial now than in the past when people and businesses eagerly welcomed new roads and enhanced mobility and commerce from expanding infrastructure.

In recent years, some construction projects have triggered opposition. Some of it is driven by environmental concerns or the potential for displaced neighborhoods. The issue of racism also has surfaced to protest certain roads. The opposition can stall projects. For example, the proposed \$9 billion reconstruction of I-45 in the heart of Houston has invited lawsuits and federal intervention. The massive project remains on the backburner pending a resolution to the various objections.

Some of the opposition comes packed with emotion.

But what are the facts?

How did today's highways get where they are? What has been the impact of those roads and bridges?

The Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University has launched a research project to provide elected officials facts in the planning for tomorrow's infrastructure. The facts-based research is intended to help counter emotions swirling around modern-day highway projects.

Directing the project is Ed Emmett, a former Harris County Judge and former Texas legislator.

"We don't take positions here at the Baker Institute, but we give facts to the policymakers so that they can then decide what's going to be the future role of highways," Emmett said during a recent interview on the Rice University campus.

He gets particularly perturbed when critics ascribe racism to highway projects—past or present.

Communities typically wanted highways. And interstate highways routinely cut through the downtown areas of major cities encouraged, in part, by local business leaders who desired commerce from increased traffic.

"There would be loops later, but the first were going to go downtown. And tell me how you get downtown without going through a minority community. So (minority displacement) may have been an effect. But I don't think you can say it was the intent," Emmett says. "Yes, some of those highways did go through minority communities. And maybe the decision to go through downtown was not the right decision in the first place. But that was the decision."

"There is a lot of misinformation regarding highway history and impacts. Society is not as simple as one cause, one result. Having the Baker Institute do fact-

finding can only help the greater conversation,” AGC of Texas President David Casteel said. “This research and deep dive will help decision-makers in their deliberations on which projects to fund.

“I have had the opportunity to be on multiple policy boards for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). These organizations look at many factors in determining which projects and initiatives to fund. More knowledge of facts will only help them,” Casteel said.

Neighborhoods have changed over the years

People should consider the composition of neighborhoods when certain highways were built instead of focusing exclusively on the character of present-day neighborhoods, Emmett emphasized.

Early interstate highways also displaced some affluent folks living in downtown areas, including Houston, Emmett said. Eventually, wealthier people moved from downtown to suburbs built around new highways.

One of the state’s first freeways was Houston’s Gulf freeway that dissected neighborhoods near the original Houston Country Club. Loop 610 went through Bellaire, another upper-income area. The Southwest Freeway also carved up an area of nice homes.

“Now, people are questioning that whole thought process. And they’re doing it based on what I call today’s ‘wokeism,’ rather than what were the facts,” he said.

AGC’s leader agrees. Contending that highway development created today’s problems “overlooks many other societal factors such as regentrification and desegregation that changed the urban environment,” Casteel said. “I think the issue is much more complicated than some would argue, and the

work of the Institute will help all of us understand the fuller picture.”

Emmett’s role in the political arena helps him understand the political considerations surrounding public policy. For 12 years, he served as head of county government representing 4.8 million constituents in Harris County.

That experience makes him acutely familiar with Houston’s proposed reconfiguration of I-45, which includes expansion work from central Houston all the way up to Beltway 8 in Greenspoint. The Texas Department of Transportation wants to widen the freeway, adding HOV lanes and additional main lanes. The project will also reroute I-45 around the east side of downtown, potentially requiring hundreds of families to relocate. Hundreds of businesses also could be affected.

The country’s Interstate Highway System produced significant economic growth over the past half-century in addition to enhanced mobility, making it much easier for people and commerce to travel. However exaggerated the various social equity and environmental justice issues might seem for some, others see them as legitimate.

“We can’t just say they’re ridiculous. And if that’s what policymakers are going to consider, then let’s be sure they have the right facts because you can’t just say, ‘well, that has nothing to do with it,’” Emmett said. “Voters are a strong group, and if they say we want to understand the social equity and environmental justice aspects of a highway, OK, then, let’s be sure that they have the right facts.”

Emmett’s transportation experience

His background in transportation policy spans decades. He served on the House Transportation Committee as a member of the Texas Legislature from 1979 to 1987. Two years later, President

George H. W. Bush nominated Emmett to the Interstate Commerce Commission.

After three years on the commission, Emmett served as president of The National Industrial Transportation League from 1992 until 2003. He then founded The Emmett Company, a consulting firm specializing in transportation policy.

Emmett served on the H-GAC Transportation Policy Council (TPC) during his 12-year stint as county judge. He chaired the TPC for two years.

Emmett has received international recognition for his work in transportation and logistics policy. He was named Transportation Person of the Year by Transportation Clubs International and one of the Top 20 Logistics Professionals by Logistics Forum. He now chairs the Texas Department of Transportation Freight Advisory Committee and serves on numerous transportation-related advisory boards.

The institute's research will focus on the Houston area and expand to other Texas communities. Emmett sees potential for a national study "because every area seems to be addressing the same subject and can we find out who was actually displaced? Why were they displaced? And what was the outcome? Was it worth it?"

Other communities also debating highways

The debate over highways extends far beyond Houston and Texas. Some El Paso community leaders are questioning a proposed \$787 million expansion of I-10 through downtown.

"Across the country, communities are rethinking highways that sliced through urban fabric," El Paso County Commissioner David Stout wrote in a recent column. "The north-south freeway (U.S. 54, now known as the Patriot Freeway) destroyed thousands

of homes and uprooted thousands of families, ravaging the heart of modern El Paso, much of which still has not recovered.

"The Downtown 10 Project represents a major opportunity to have these discussions and to truly recover some of what was lost in the heart of the city," Stout wrote. "The future of El Paso must be more than 18-wheelers rumbling through the heart of our community. A deck park might grab the public's attention, but it is a distraction from the much larger issue at stake, and when it comes to equity and environment, it is nothing but an expensive Band-Aid on a cut to the bone."

In Michigan, Paul Ajegba, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, recently talked about the displacement of minority populations with the construction of I-375 which carries motorists to Downtown Detroit.

"The generational wealth that was lost is incalculable from homes and businesses that couldn't be passed down to the next. We're only starting to recognize where we built freeways separated neighborhoods. We don't want to make the same mistake again."

Modern highways built our economy

A modern highway system drives the economy. That system benefits from eminent domain which is needed to acquire property to build those roads and bridges. In other words, the economic good for the community offsets an individual's dislocation.

The country's interstate highway system, largely built in the 1960s and 1970s, bypassed many small motels and gas stations on older roads. A system that harmed some turned into a huge benefit for the country.

"And so everybody understood it. But now we're going back and questioning," Emmett said.

He is leading a team of graduate researchers and undergraduate interns that will rely on academic experts and economists at Rice University, the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University, and other academic centers. The team will also assess information and records from the Texas Department of Transportation and local authorities.

The research will look for answers to:

- Who was actually displaced by major highways?
- What were the demographics of the impacted neighborhoods?
- What factors were considered in locating major highways?
- What have been the economic, social, and environmental impacts of major highways?

“What are we going to do in the future to minimize disruption to particular populations? And you can't do that without knowing what the facts have been,” Emmett said.

It's important for research to be released as it's developed rather than waiting for a final published report, he said. The first installments should come out this spring.

“What I don't want to do is produce something that goes on the shelf because the debate is going on right now. And that's what people have to understand,” Emmett said. “Here, locally, we've got the I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project, which some local officials have said things already about people getting displaced. They're not malicious, but they're ignorant because the population—the demographics of who lived there in the late 1950s and early '60s—is totally different than who lives there now.”

The long-time community leader and transportation expert is hopeful a delicate balance between the

various interests is possible—once the issue is framed with facts and people focus on the need to keep a mobile and modern society moving forward.

Don't dump good projects

Speaking for the industry, Casteel said, “No one wants to build a 'bad' project, but we shouldn't dump good projects based on incomplete analyses.”

Policymakers should consider the impact on homes and businesses that stand to be displaced by highway construction projects, Casteel said. “But for the 'anti' agreement not to be scientifically weighed with the 'pro' argument is bad public policy.

“One argument we see is, ‘if they improve the highway it will just fill up again. That argument ignores the investment increases that contributed to the tax bases that improved schools and parks and a myriad of other public services that grew from the original highway improvement,’” Casteel said.

“The example cited in Houston is the Katy Freeway Expansion. Those against expanding other highways say the Katy Freeway was a waste because it is busy now,” Casteel noted. “But that overlooks the investment made in Katy and the surrounding area including some great new schools partially attributable to the improved transportation opportunities afforded by the freeway improvement.”

That's why research and facts are imperative for policymakers and elected officials, he said.

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TxDOT's Response to IIJA? Rack 'em and Stack 'Em

By: Bill Hale, P.E., Chief Engineer, Texas Department of Transportation

With the passage of the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) last November, Texas is expected to receive up to \$28.7 billion over five years for roads, bridges, and other vital multimodal projects—a possible increase from more than \$4 billion a year, increasing annually, until reaching approximately \$5.6 billion for the fifth and final year.

Specifically, Texas anticipates receiving \$26.9 billion for highway programs, \$537.2 million for bridges (replacement, rehabilitation, preservation, protection, or construction), \$450 million for rural transit, and \$407.8 million for charging stations for electric vehicles.

With this additional funding, TxDOT plans to accelerate projects that are already in the 10-year plan. We'll also look for new projects to let or put "on the shelf." We call this process, "rack 'em and stack 'em."

Rack 'em: The "letting factory"

The rack 'em part of the above is letting, the process of receiving and opening bids for construction and maintenance projects across the state. The "letting factory" is the process we use to get projects efficiently and effectively through the pipeline—TxDOT's construction process from beginning to end.

In this process, we aim for a regular monthly letting target of \$500 million, this helps level contracts so there is some consistency in workload since wide variations from month to month can make it difficult for contractors to plan for their staffing needs.

This means each year (on average), we aim for:

- 25 large projects (\$50 million or more),
- 75 medium projects (between \$15-\$50 million),
- And about a thousand smaller projects (up to \$15 million).

Planning for a \$6.5 billion annual letting allows us to meet a \$6 billion letting even if we experience budget underruns. If we experience overruns, we can push projects to the next fiscal year.

This helps us use our funding to effectively and efficiently deliver transportation projects. And the proof is in the numbers:

- From FY 2016 to FY 2021, we increased our construction letting totals by more than \$1.5 billion.
- Statewide, TxDOT currently has \$30 billion worth of projects under construction—the largest in our state's history.

Stack 'em: The shelf

We also put some projects on the shelf by over-programming or developing more projects than will fit into our budget. This gives us no shortage of appropriate projects to put into letting when the opportunity arises, like when we get additional funding sources (like the IIJA), or bids that are lower than expected for one project freeing up funding for another.

The rack 'em and stack 'em strategy helps us get transportation projects developed, designed, constructed, and opened for public use, which helps us with our core mission: Connecting You With Texas.

Remembering the Life and Legacy of Jack Garey

By: Gary Scharrer, AGC of Texas

Former AGC of Texas President Jack Garey was remembered for having “a passion for work, a passion for play and a passion for humanity” during a memorial service held in April.

The former highway contractor passed away on March 18 at age 92 following a brief illness.

Garey was not your ordinary highway contractor. He was not an engineer. He had no construction experience. He started his career as a trial lawyer, earning wide acclaim for his success representing injured workers.

But trial lawyers later turned on him when Garey realized the worker’s compensation system was broken—and nearly putting his new company out of business. He became one of the architects for a new worker’s comp system in the late '80s and early '90s.

Jack served as AGC of Texas president in 1998.

Earlier, a restless Garey pursued real estate investments while practicing law and bought an abandoned quarry full of lime residue, holes, and rocks in the Round Rock area north of Austin. The land needed cleaning, so Garey bought an old Caterpillar and a couple of well-worn dump trucks to get the job done. He enjoyed the work and hired a



few people to help out on the project but held on to his day job at the law office.

The state’s real estate bust in the mid-to-late 1980s influenced Garey to try the highway construction business.

“We had never bid highway jobs, but we were pushed into it. In 1988, I bid my first one. I hired some people who had been doing highway work, and that action started up a new career where I ended up with over 100 employees. We did \$30 million to \$40 million a year. It went well. I enjoyed it, but, again, I had never planned to be a highway contractor—and there I was,” Garey said during interviews for “Connecting Texas.”

He also dabbled in investments and in horse racing. At the memorial service, former Southwest Texas University President Edward Burger recalled that Garey said “horsie” before “mamma.”

In 1989, he bought “Heritage of Gold” at a horse auction for \$30,000. The horse would earn \$2.4 million.

Reflecting back on his life many decades later, the

retired attorney turned highway contractor turned philanthropist mused, “My life seems to have been one series of unplanned events after another.”

AGC of America Immediate-Past President Bob Lanham enjoyed serving with Jack on the AGC of Texas Finance Committee in 1999, one year before Lanham became president of AGC of Texas.

“I remember him as the consummate gentleman and always being patient with the ‘young guy’ in the room. I received from him a great education on the business of horse racing. But I never got the answer to my question on whether horse racing was riskier than contracting,” Lanham said. “To hear his employees, speak of him, it was obvious that they loved and respected him.”

Laughing, Lanham recalled an animated discussion at a Finance Committee meeting where he lobbied for the chapter to buy a new Suburban for the association’s use.

“I was rather hot about the springs poking through the seats and snagging my slacks (we had to wear

‘uniforms’ to the board meetings back in the day). Jack questioned the need of the expense—like any good finance committee chairman.”

Lanham still remembers his response: “Come on Jack, you spend more in a month on horse feed!”

Garey donated tens of millions of dollars to charity. The chief benefactors were Southwest Texas University, where he served on the board of regents, and the City of Georgetown. Garey’s generous philanthropy reflected “Jack’s love for humanity,” the former university president said.

Besides his love for horses, Garey had a special attachment to dogs. One of his final gifts came in the form of a contribution to build a 4,000-square-foot house for elderly dogs. “Garey’s Big Dog Bunkhouse,” based in Bertram, can house 39 elderly dogs.

Garey is survived by his wife Doris and son Glen, as well as stepchildren and grandchildren. Gary’s wife Cammy died in 2012.



Above: Jack Garey posing with a painting of his racehorse.

Right: Jack with two of his beloved dogs, Oak (left) and Duchess (right).



Previous Page: Jack and Cammy Garey with their dogs.

We Build Texas Project Awards

The Texas Project Award Program was created in 1987 by Raymond E. Stotzer, Jr., Engineer-Director of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation to recognize the Department and contractors who have worked together to bring high-quality projects through difficult circumstances. In 2020, the award program was rebranded to We Build Texas which continues to embrace the original principles and expands upon them.

Design Award: Dallas District | US 75 Widening Project



US 75 in Collin County was designed and built nearly 60 years ago to connect what was then a small string of suburban communities. In the intervening years, Collin County has experienced some of the most rapid growth in the United States. A recent study by TxDOT concluded that the county's main north-south highway would see its daily traffic of 230,000 vehicles steer full speed ahead to 420,000 a day by 2035.

(L-R): Duane Milligan, P.E., TxDOT Deputy Director, CST; Neal Frisinger, P.E. and Suja Mathew, P.E., Dallas District Design Section; AGC of Texas President David Casteel; Lance Simmons, P.E., TxDOT Director of Engineering and Safety Operations. Not Pictured: Thadeus Egar, P.E., Collin County Area Office

Construction Awards

Austin District | Kingsland Bridge Project

In 2018, raging floodwaters destroyed the RM 2900 bridge over the Llano River in Kingsland. The loss of the bridge required a detour that tripled the daily commute for over 5,500 drivers. A quick response was needed and the Austin District and Capital Excavation Company rose to the challenge.



Award Recipients TxDOT's Derrick Schulze, Jose Beltran, Sr., Capital Excavation Company, and staff

Dallas District | I-20 and I-45 Bridge Rehabilitation

The outdated and lengthy ramps of I-20 and I-45 near Hutchins in Dallas County were about 50 years old and carried over 142,000 vehicles every day. The Dallas District and Gibson Associated worked together to complete the project using an innovative approach.



Award Recipients Mark Person, Gibson and Associates, Inc., and TxDOT's Elecia Moore, P.E.



Houston District | I-69 Bridge Reconstruction

The I-69 Southbound Mainlanes Bridge Reconstruction Project was developed by TxDOT's Houston District and constructed by ISI Contracting as an accelerated project to restore the deck and riding surface of the northernmost span to its original design and performance requirements. The Houston District and ISI Contracting partnered together to deliver the project with exceptional efficiency and speed.

Award Recipients: TxDOT's Paul Ely and the Construction Team from ISI Contracting, Inc.

San Antonio District | Street Bridge Project

This project was for the rehabilitation of the San Antonio Street Bridge over the Comal River in New Braunfels. Although the historic bridge was unique in design and recognized in the National Register of Historic Places, it was not functional or safe for the current traffic and pedestrian demands. Through partnering and innovative solutions, the San Antonio District and Capital Excavation Company resolved several challenges to bring this much-needed project to fruition.

Award Recipients: TxDOT's Carlos Arcila, P.E., and Victor Beltran, Capital Excavation Company



Pharr District | I-69E Frontage Road Bridges

This project was for the construction of frontage road bridges on I-69E over a Union Pacific rail line and the construction of a pedestrian bridge. The existing frontage roads end at the rail line, preventing motorists from continuing along the frontage road unimpeded. The Pharr District and Foremost Paving worked together to overcome a number of challenges to deliver a successful project that has increased mobility and safety for the traveling public.

Award Recipients: TxDOT's Rene Davila, P.E., and Jamie Freeman, Foremost Paving, Inc. (not pictured)



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