

Jack Sanford, Sr. Instilled the Values that Guide Falconer Today

Jack Sanford Sr. never asked anyone to do something that he wasn't willing to do himself, and people knew that. From the beginning, he was willing to do whatever it took to make sure the job was always done well. "You can pull a rope but you can't push it," he used to say. He meant that the best way to lead was by setting an example that people would follow. He wore work clothes and work boots and spent nearly every day out in the field getting his hands dirty working along with the men who worked for him.

"His word was his bond," says Jack Sanford Jr., "and if he told someone he was going to do something, he would fulfill that promise." He was a man of such integrity that in the early 70's, Thomas Rutherford of Rutherford Bonding and Insurance agreed to bond the company based only on a conversation and a handshake with Jack Sr. The two men became good friends and the two companies still work together today.

Jack Jr. would like his father to be remembered for his integrity. "If he told someone he was going to do something, he would fulfill that. If we made a mistake or built something out of spec on a job, we'd take it out at our expense and replace it. There was never much of an argument. If we were wrong, we were wrong," says Jack Jr. "He respected his employees and appreciated each and every one for they brought to the table. He knew that you could buy all the equipment you want, but without the good people to be there every morning, there's no business," he adds.

The values that Jack Sanford Sr. believed in and passed along to employees--legacy, integrity, team and excellence-- still guide Falconer Construction today. And that's the best legacy of all.

Employee Spotlight

Mac Chambers, Getting it “More Than Perfect” After 25 Years

Ask Mac Chambers what he likes best about working for Falconer Construction, and he'll tell you he likes doing “a little bit of everything-- concrete work, pipe work and a little bit of tree work, too.” Mac is now a concrete finisher, but when he started with the company 25 years ago, the company was much smaller.

“Now people just do one job, but when I started, it was a smaller company,” he says. “I had a chance to operate a piece of equipment every now and then, like a loader or a back hoe, and drive the truck. We had two backhoes, and 25 or 50 loaders.” He adds that when he started, he didn't know anything about construction work.

He's learned a lot over the years. “Jack Sr. taught me really well. I got to work in the field with him. He taught me how to lay pipe, how to put the tile with the pipe and how to lay the beams. He was a nice guy and a good guy to learn from,” Mac says. He adds that Mike Payne taught him how to do the invert when setting manholes, how to brush and broom it and get it on a straight line so there are no high spots to interfere with water flow.

“Getting it more than perfect” is how Mac describes Falconer's commitment to excellence. He explains that when the job is done really well, “people know they can rely on you. We do a lot of jobs at the university, and before you know it, they come back to us to do another job.”

As far as Mac is concerned, teamwork goes beyond what happens during the work day. He's been working for foreman Tim Clore for 13 years. “He's a great guy to work for, and sometimes we get together on weekends. We've been working together for a long time, and we're still friends,” he adds with a grin.

After 25 years, we're very glad that Mac is still part of our team.

"I've driven trucks, earth movers, rubber tire backhoes, track excavators. I've done concrete work and water line work, used tampers and rollers and a whole lot more," says Hudson Anderson. He started working for Falconer in 1979 when Jack Sr. hired him. The variety of jobs he's been given to do is one of the things he likes best about the company. He's stayed so long because "I like what I'm doing and Falconer has been good to me."

In the thirty years he's been with the company, he's worked with a lot of different people on many job sites. One of his first jobs was laying pipe at Fashion Square, working for Mike Payne. He's now running the backhoe on the South Lawn Project at University of Virginia. It's one of many jobs where he's worked for Andy Fitzgerald.

He once worked on an emergency railroad repair job in Halifax, North Carolina. The company took a crew down and they worked around the clock for ten days to repair a washed-out track so the trains could get through again.

Asked what it was like to work with Jack Sr., Hudson smiles. "He was a wonderful person. He taught me lots of things on the job. When I was new, he asked me to help him with concrete he was doing, even though I didn't know how. He said that was alright, and I should just get it down and he would come in behind me and finish it. He'd give me a ride to and from sites. One time he even ran my equipment when I had to be off for a couple of hours."

Hudson talks about how Falconer shows its commitment to excellence. "Falconer is looking for you to be at your best. We want the job to go smoothly and neatly and to be the best we can do. We all have to pull our weight as a team to make sure the job goes well," he says.

Finally, he has some advice for new employees: "If you want to advance, learn all you can and be good at what you do. And remember to be safe so you can avoid accidents on the job."

Falconer Construction Company

Employee Spotlight: Howard Desper

Howard Desper places a high value on teamwork. Howard started working for Falconer in September, 1988 as a pipe layer, becoming a pipe foreman in 1996. "If it weren't for my crew," he says, "the ball wouldn't bounce." He explains that the men now on his crew, Larry Fitzgerald and Jesus Zamora [VERIFY SPELLING] have been there for six or seven years, and their longevity and versatility enable the team to be highly productive, consistently meeting their daily goals. "I run the backhoe, and I don't have to stop the equipment all the time to explain how things should be done. The men are leaders in their own way, and they know what to do." He says they respect each other, and the men will do anything he asks them to, any hour of the day or night. Howard is good at fostering leaders, too. One team member, Steve Phibbs, went on to become a superintendent for Falconer.

Howard's first job was working on the Little Debbie plant in Stuarts Draft. Since then, he's worked almost entirely on projects at U.Va., with Superintendent Andy Fitzgerald. He estimates that he's done about 90% of Andy's pipe work. Howard says that Andy has had a big influence on him, teaching him about responsibility and how to work well with a crew.

He says it's been a pleasure working for Falconer, with "good people and good pay." He adds, "Falconer has been good to me, and I'd like to stay here until it's time to retire."

Employee Spotlight

David Garwood is an all-around leader at Faulconer and in the Army Reserve. He joined Faulconer in 1983 as a Superintendent, when the company had about 35 employees. He worked directly for Jack Sr. "I had great respect for him," David says. "Once I was on a job in a blinding snowstorm, trying to run a jackhammer to dig under a gas line. He got in the ditch with me and said 'let me do that for awhile.'" Like Jack Sr., David has spent his share of time down in ditches, especially if someone hasn't shown up on the job one day.

Faulconer's emphasis on safety is one of many things David likes about the company. "They're progressive, always looking for better ways to do things. They send us to schools and conferences so we can do our jobs better. They provide good equipment that is well maintained. And they really try to live by the values. At our Superintendents' meetings, we talk a lot about treating our customers well so we'll always be their contractor of choice."

David's leadership also extends to the Army Reserve, where he is a Command Sergeant Major with the 80th Training Command (TASS) in Richmond. He says, "I especially wish to express my appreciation for the support Jack and his father have given me in my Reserve career. When I needed to go, there was no question."

David is a leader who Faulconer is proud to have on the team.

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