



Dad would take employees to Panama City to deep sea fish every year. This is from 1983. Dad has the blue shirt and white hat, I am in front of him with the red shirt, and Bobby is to his left.



The three of us (1984).

AllSouth Sprinkler Company

By John McCullough

I was 12 and my brother was 14 when we started in the industry. Our father started his own business in 1969. We would sit in the garage, cutting and assembling hangers for jobs. I think he paid us 50¢ an hour.

When my brother was old enough to drive, we would leave school at noon every day and head to the shop, which was as close to a barn as it could get. It was then we demanded a raise. One dollar an hour. Hey, 100% was good! Every Saturday and Sunday, we would be there.

We continued working all through high school, and during the summers he would give us the weekend off. We were probably making \$3 to \$4 an hour by then, and no time to spend it.

Our dad bought my brother his first car: a 1959 Ford Fairlane for \$500. It was then handed to me when I turned 16. I drove it for a short period and decided “what the heck, I’m working all the time, and have this money with no time to spend it,” so I bought my own first car when I was a senior in high school. So did my brother.

My brother went to Georgia Tech his first year out of high school. Dad sent him there to get an engineering degree. He sent me to West Georgia to get an accounting degree. He had a plan for us.

My brother stayed at Tech for about a year and decided to go back to work. If I remember right, he went straight into design. I, on the other hand, changed my major to psychology and remained at West Georgia for about four years, still a freshman. I went straight to the field, running a backhoe. I earned my way back in the office doing design. I think my brother was then running the shop and field.

Design was not for me. I told Dad to put me in sales and got sent to the field. That worked for me. I hung pipe for years and my brother was now in design.

Then the worst thing happened, I got married. We were popping out kids left and right so I told Dad I needed to work in the office so I could be close to home in case she needed me. So, he taught me how to estimate/sell. This is where the four years of psych started paying off. In just a few years, I had

brought him new and very loyal customers.

Around 1983, Dad decided to move from the barn to a new building. He bought five acres. He hired a metal building company to put up a 12,000 sq. ft. building. He took it upon himself to build a two-story wood structure office attached to the metal building shop. Dad would come in the office every morning and stay until noon. After lunch, he and this college kid would go and work, building our new office. He would get office, field, and shop volunteers to come help on Saturday and Sunday. He was so proud of his venture that all the sprinkler pipe was painted red, and he even special-ordered chrome uprights for the shop. The office was filled with o-rings. We moved into the new building in 1984.

As the years passed, I loved wearing my estimating cap and am pretty sure my brother enjoyed wearing his design manager cap as well. Dad felt pretty comfortable with the two of us, so he spent most of his time being politically correct. He joined AFSA, GFSA, and was appointed to the Congressional Fire Committee in Washington. He was very instrumental in getting retrofit laws passed. I could go on forever, but I know I could never fill his shoes.

Dad semi-retired around the age of 60 — he would take Wednesday’s off to play golf. Golf and old cars were his passion, second to fire protection. He passed in 2000, on a Saturday morning at the office. He was fine at noon when the shop closed and the last designer left. A massive heart attack got him around 1:30. My brother and I were prepared for a lot of things, but not this. There are so many unanswered questions that still go through my mind, especially with the economy in the dump. He made it through a smaller recession, but nothing like this one. All I can do is to pray for another day.

About the Author:

John McCullough is with Allsouth Sprinkler, and his brother, Bobby McCullough, is with Atlanta Sprinkler Inspection and Maintenance.

For more information visit: www.allsouthsprinkler.com/our-history/.