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## Celebrating a quarter century



On Jul. 24 the Austin Glass & Mirror team gathered at the Zilker Club House to celebrate their 25th anniversary.

"My brother and I always wanted to have a business together, but being from Dime Box, TX, the big city didn't really appeal to me," says **Don Bayer**, president, **Austin Glass & Mirror Inc.**

Both Don and **Jimmy Bayer** graduated from Texas A&M University. Don says that when the head of the construction science department told him of an opening with a glass company in Columbus, TX, he almost didn't call to arrange an interview.

"I didn't know anything about glass, but I decided to give it a try."

He got the job and befriended **Johnny Kallus**, who was also working with the glass company. Shortly thereafter, Jimmy joined the team, and the men worked to-

gether from the late '70s until 1984.

The trio started Austin Glass & Mirror Inc. in 1984 in a building on Prairie Lane. "We decided that it was a good opportunity to start on our own." Don says that Austin was still in a boom when they started.

"It was good for about two years, and then in '86 the bottom fell out and things got really tough.

"Those first two years gave us enough stability to ride through that first hard curve. Once we got through that, it was a matter of staying steady."

Over the years, Don says a lot happened within the company: the team moved into a building they had built on

*continued on Page 25*

## Recovering 9/11



L-R: Chris Blades and Jason Andrus with the model of Texas' 9/11 Memorial.

When **Fazzone Construction** was awarded a job to renovate the Texas State Cemetery last year, **Chris Blades**, project manager, says he never expected to come across a piece of history.

As the team prepared the site for construction, they found a model of something housed in a Plexiglas case. No one was quite sure what to do with it.

Blades says that at the time he didn't know too much about the 9/11 Memorial at the Texas State Cemetery.

"I hadn't gone out to explore the grounds yet. We were there to do the renovation, so that is what I stayed focused on.

"As we progressed, we were instructed to dispose of this contraption that was sitting on a table, and in the way."

*continued on Page 25*

According to Blades, his foreman, **Miguel Paz**, felt that the small-scale model of the 9/11 Memorial was "too cool" to just throw away. He brought it back to the Fazzone office lobby.

Third-generation stone carver and father of the company, **Dominic Fazzone** didn't think that it would be appropriate to keep the model in their office since it was not designed or built by anyone on his team.

So Blades took the model home. "My kids were into collecting turtles, and I thought, 'Hmm...this could make for a great turtle habitat!' Because I didn't realize what it was, it had no real value to me."

That evening, Blades began examining the details of this little model - the

## Familiarity breeds content

If you've been doing work for a client for 10 years, it's not only an indication that they like what you're doing, but it also helps in the construction process.

That's what **Chris Higgs** says he found out during **McComb Construction Company's** latest project for Austin Telco Federal Credit Union.

"With our 10-year relationship with the owner, we had no problem in starting the project quickly," he says. For a decade, McComb Construction has worked with James Poplin, credit union president, on remodels, design, engineering and new construction.

In fact, Higgs, who was project manager for the 2,122-sf credit union branch in Buda, says familiarity enabled his team to shave several weeks off the design process. The project finished both ahead of schedule at just shy of five months as well as under budget.

Not that the project was without its



The new Austin Telco Federal Credit Union branch in Buda has a standing-seam metal roof.

challenges.

Higgs says the site didn't have electrical service to it, so they knew they'd be working off generators to start. However, the property sellers were out of state, and the power took three months to go through legal and engineering.

"The entire structure was built with generators," he says. Permanent power was completed about three weeks ahead of the building.

Higgs describes the exterior of the single-story building as a pleasing combination of brick and stucco, complemented by a standing-seam metal roof. "Extensive landscaping helps integrate the drive-through lanes and surrounding site improvements," he says.

The green attributes of construction include the structural steel frame made from recycled steel. In addition, the building has energy-efficient air conditioners

*continued on Page 25*

**continued from Page 1 — Celebrating a quarter century**

Decker Lane, they took on bigger jobs, they hired more people and technology made its way into the business.

"We used to run down the street to borrow a fax machine because we didn't have one at the shop. Then, when we did get one, we couldn't understand how we ever went without it!"

Another major turning point in the company's history was the loss of one of the originating partners.

"During that time Dell Computers was expanding, and we had several large buildings we were working on. Unfortunately, Johnny fell sick, and that was very difficult for us. To see him struggling with his illness while trying to keep the business going was very tough.

"We made it, though, and Johnny is still very much a part of the company, and he celebrated [this milestone] with us in spirit."

Before Kallus died, the three brought on another partner, **Larry Morgan**.

"Larry's specialty was the bigger

projects, so it gave us the boost to go up another level. His son **Shon Morgan** works with us. Larry has since retired."

Don says that his own sons — **Chris, Craig** and **Kevin Bayer** — have also joined the company.

"I want this to keep going, and with the boys, we are real blessed. I don't think it will be a problem when the day comes that they are running things, and we are on the sidelines watching."

Don says the company that he, Jimmy and Kallus started 25 years ago could not have been possible without the help of his employees, his clients and his suppliers.

"I enjoy working with the people we work with every day. Our employees, well, we've all sort of evolved into a family! It makes it nice to get up and come to work every day, and I hope they enjoy it as much as I do."

*Austin Glass & Mirror Inc. specializes in commercial glass installation services.*  
—va

## Exchange of ideas

**M**echanical contractors got together at their annual conference at the Moody Gardens Resort Hotel & Conference Center in Galveston Jul. 22–26.

In addition to educational sessions and a product show, a golf tournament took place at the Moody Gardens Golf Course on the last day. The Mechanical Contractors Association of Texas (MCA) held the event. —ab



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**continued from Page 1 — Recovering 9/11**

wording, the design. He says he began to look at the abandoned piece of art in a different light.

"I did a lot of research and found out all sorts of stuff! It had received awards. There were articles written about it. This was definitely something special."

Needless to say, the turtles never moved into the model. Blades began taking steps to find a more appropriate owner.

"I was taking some classes at ABC and met **Sharon McGee**. I told her about this, and asked her if she could help me get it to the right people."

Blades said that McGee, formerly of **R.M. Mechanical**, knew some people who worked with **O'Connell Robertson**, the architectural firm where the designers of the memorial had interned.

After several months of calls and messages back and forth, **Jason Andrus**, O'Connell Roberts, got in touch with Blades to recover the model that he and nine other interns had designed.

Their design, which includes two steel columns from Ground Zero, was chosen in an open competition that the state was holding in 2002. The 9/11 Memorial was unveiled at the Texas State Cemetery in 2003 on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

Andrus recalls that the interns devoted many lunch hours to planning the memorial. "We bounced ideas around, and it



The 9/11 Memorial at the Texas State Cemetery includes quotes from various Texas figures, including Rick Perry and George W. Bush, and steel columns from Ground Zero.

was truly the ultimate collaborative effort.

"It was the first competition we'd entered into as a group, and we certainly didn't expect to win. It is probably the most exciting thing to be a part of in my career so far."

Blades describes his motivation in getting the model back to Andrus: "I just knew that this model — independent of the actual memorial — had an aura about it. People would come by my house and examine it, and everyone was so moved by it. It just became a mission to get it to the right person."

"It feels like a blast from the past!" Andrus says, adding that architects typically do not get their models back. "It's been a while since we designed it, and even since construction on the real thing has been completed. To get it back, especially this much later ... it's just surreal."  
—va

**continued from Page 1 — Familiarity breeds content**

and lighting, low-flow plumbing fixtures and Low-E glazing materials.

The project superintendent was **Asa Thornton**. **Jaime Palomo**, **CasaBella Architects**, was the architect, and **Chris McComb**, **AMC Design Group**, was the civil engineer.

Key subcontractors were **Smith Contracting**, site work; **Prism Development**, concrete; **Monticello Masonry**; **Accu-Craft Millworks**; **Longhorn Interiors**; and the MEP team of **Logic Mechanical**, **Ted Breihan Electric** and **Mag Plumbing**.

Founded in 1987, McComb Construction Company is a building distributor for Butler Manufacturing Company's pre-engineered building systems. McComb Construction also focuses on design and engineering services, design-build, general construction, construction management and renovations.

**Jim McComb** is CEO, **Keith McComb** is president, and **Chris McComb**, P.E., is vice president, business development.  
—ld/va



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