Allen and Grace Industries: Building Bridges Together

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Why purchase bridge building equipment? This question was crucial to the owners of Grace Industries of Bath, Pennsylvania, in early 2009 when they chose Allen Engineering as the supplier for their bridge deck finisher.

Opened in 1982 by Ron Check, Jr. and his brother Todd - both Civil Engineers with no desire to be stuck in an office – along with their father Ron Sr., Grace Industries hit the ground running with contracts for parking lots, landscaping, and small pipe projects. Steady growth was experienced as the company expanded their project list, and by 1995 they were completing all of their own excavating, demolition, concrete curbing, sidewalks, retaining walls, bituminous paving, underground utilities and landscaping. By that time, single span bridge building was also an integral part of their business, but it was all subcontracted out, leaving them at the mercy of someone else's timetable.

The decision to tackle bridge building in-house was a natural progression in the business. As Ron stated, "The transition from doing small projects and single span bridges to doing full bridge construction was… quite easy." Since Grace Industries already built roadways, bridges, box culverts, concrete structures, and sport stadiums as well as installing both artificial and natural grass surfaces, all of which were handled in-house, adding the bridge building would also alleviate the scheduling issues, allowing them to be more competitive in the market place. Decision made, and having been around this type of work for years, Ron and Todd paid close attention to their sub-contractors' work and work practices, identifying excellence in suppliers and personnel whose resources would ease the transition.

Enter August 1, 2007, and the heart-wrenching tragedy in Minnesota of the collapsed bridge on I-35, shedding light on the poor condition of many bridges. Factor in the subsequent legislation in the form of ACT 44, which provided enough funding to expedite critical highway and bridge projects across the Commonwealth of PA. Add the 2009 disclosures by Penndot (Pennsylvania Department of Transportation) of $1,026 billion in projects funded by the ARRA (American Recovery & Reinvestment Act) and a list of $1.8 billion in projects scheduled to go to contract in 2009, and a staggering figure, close to $3 billion - the most highway and bridge work ever produced in a single

year – revealed further need for the services offered by Grace.

Having rented bridge deck finishing machines for years, the Checks naturally considered the two companies that they had rented from as possible suppliers for purchasing a machine. Also under consideration was Allen Engineering Corporation. Grace contacted Allen through their local dealer Advanced Concrete Technologies from Lancaster, PA. While comparing companies, an unexpected attitude surfaced… "As we evaluated these three manufacturers, the two that we were familiar with took the approach of 'here are our machines, they are what they are, we are the big boys and therefore our machines must be better.' However, Allen took a different approach. Their sales people sat down with us and asked us what we wanted out of a bridge deck finisher and what our needs were. When we looked at the quality of all the machines, we noticed how Allen paid attention to small details not found on the other machines. Even with that, what put us over the top was when the owner of Allen insisted on a conference call with us and the Allen sales staff. He wanted to hear what we were looking for and how his company could better provide it for us. As a small business, that is the level of attention we wanted. We wanted to know when we needed something or needed support it was going to be there. The other thing that was unique to Allen was the knowledgeable sales staff both locally and at Allen's headquarters. They knew what they were talking about, understood the machine and its capabilities, and were able to answer our questions."Grace Industries took delivery of their Allen Model 4836B Bridge Deck Finisher in mid 2009 and have been pleased with their decision. Answering the current heightened need in bridge work, Grace is confident that their dedication to the industry and their high workmanship standards added to the quality and performance of the Allen Model 4836B and the support system in place at Allen Engineering will provide their clients with the excellence that they expect and deserve. Further, Grace Industries would proudly recommend the Allen Bridge Deck Finishers to any contractor in the bridge building business.

For further information on Grace Industries, visit us at www.graceind.net.

To learn more about the products and services offered by Allen Engineering Corporation, visit our website at www.alleneng.com.