

Napier pays a tribute to his mentor, Monty Chilcote

At the 2005 Scholarship Awards presentation in June, Nick Napier, the man singled out by EGCA President Mike Arme for being the catalyst for bringing EGCA's Scholarship Awards Program to fruition, offered an amusing, yet poignant, tribute to the man he considers his mentor, the late Monty Chilcote, who is this year's scholarship honoree.

Napier, president of EGCA Contractor Member 4 Point Pipeline Construction, and an EGCA board member, traced Monty Chilcote's professional history, noting that Monty had arrived in San Diego from Wyoming about 40 years ago, "with not much more than a dump truck and a skip loader."

Nick described Monty as a man with "an intimidating persona and a fearless gambler," and then proceeded to tell the story of how Chilcote made good use of that gambler's instinct to pull off a coup that put his fledgling general engineering construction company on the map.

In his early years here, Chilcote was a concrete subcontractor, installing curb, gutter, sidewalks, and concrete alleys near the beach areas for the City of San Diego. While that business was good, "it appeared to Monty that the 'big money' was being made by general engineering contractors such as V.R. Dennis, Daley Corporation, and R.E. Hazard. Therefore," Nick explained, "what he needed was a contract for a turnkey project. So he negotiated one with a local developer."

Nick described the subdivision as one that included grading—which Chilcote's outfit would perform—as well as the underground improvements, curb and gutter

installations, and street paving. "Upon its completion, the 'Who's Who of the San Diego Construction Industry' would know that a potato farmer from Wyoming was in town," Nick said.

Undeterred by the hard fact that the only asphalt plants in San Diego back then belonged to V.R. Dennis, Daley, and Hazard, Monty proceeded with the work. Each of "The Big Three" had already made it known that they would neither quote nor furnish asphalt for what would be Monty's signature project.

That was OK with Monty, who hadn't even bothered to ask the Big Three to quote his job. Undeterred, he proceeded to grade the subdivision, install the underground improvements, and then install the curbs and gutters. As the job went along, various Big Three representatives would visit the site to ask Monty who was going to handle the paving work. Monty's consistent response was that he had a contractor on line to perform the work.

More time passed, and now Monty had begun to balance the streets for paving. "What was going on? Monty had yet to contact even one of the local three paving companies for a quote," Nick said. By this time, the Big Three's curiosity was close to fever pitch. A Daley representative who had been on site just the day before, came back again the next day to ask who was doing the paving work.

"Fortunately for Monty, someone earlier that day that given him an envelope, which was protruding from his shirt pocket," Nick said. "Monty tapped the envelope and told the Daley



Nick Napier delivers his tribute to his mentor, the late Monty Chilcote.



Rodney Chilcote, left, Monty's son, receives a special plaque commemorating his dad, Monty, from Nick Napier.

Photos by Paul Nestor

representative that the V.R. Dennis representative had, early that morning, hand-delivered their quote. It appeared that V.R. Dennis would get the work, Monty said. Dumbfounded, the Daley representative asked if they could quote the work. 'Hell, if V.R. Dennis wasn't going to hold to the agreement, why should Daley?' Monty responded, 'I haven't got much time. We're planning to schedule paving for Monday. If you want to quote this project, I have got to have your price today. I plan to execute a subcontract with V.R. Dennis tonight.' "

Within hours, the Daley representative was back with a hand-delivered quote for Monty. With that in hand, Monty proceeded to V.R. Dennis' office. Equally surprised that Daley had quoted the job, V.R. Dennis agreed to undercut the Daley proposal, Napier reported.

"The subdivision was paved that following Monday by V.R. Dennis, and M.L. Chilcote Construction Company was off and running," Nick said.

Subsequent to that job, as Nick pointed out, the Chilcote organization graded hundreds of projects in the years the company was in business. "Approximately 11 million yards of dirt were moved to grade the (South) Poway Industrial Park development, where fellow EGCA members are located today," Nick said. "How many commuters each day travel the portion of Highway 52 Chilcote constructed that runs into Santee? How many pass over the concrete drainage structure he built crossing the San Diego River at Mission Center Road, or Qualcomm Way? Whether he was moving millions of yards of dirt or rock, installing major underground improvements, building concrete drainage structures,

custom homes, or simply pouring curb, gutter, and sidewalk, Monty Chilcote did it with a flare that was all his own.”

Nick’s tribute closed with his recollection that “Monty was my mentor, a role model, both good and bad, and a father figure. If you knew him you liked him. He had his vices—hardly a saint—but he loved life like no one I have ever met. He ate and drank too much. He liked to hunt, play golf, and—if he could find a taker—would gamble on the direction a bird would fly from a fence.

“He was truly a giant and contributed so much to the San Diego Construction Industry.”