

Mamon M. Powers Jr.

President
Powers and Sons
Construction Co.
BSCE '70

*For his outstanding
achievement and
leadership in the
civil engineering and
construction industry*

Early Learning

“My father started his own construction company when I was 10,” says Mamon Powers, president of Powers and Sons Construction Company. “He offered me a job when I was 11, and offered to pay me as much for a day as I made in allowance for a week.”

Thus began Powers’s career in the construction industry, a career marked by ambition, hard work, and irresistible challenges.

“My third year, they gave me a hammer. It coincided with what I was learning in the eighth grade about Pythagorean theory. That was really the beginning of my interest in engineering. By my junior or senior year, I was running a carpentry crew. The math made it exciting.”

A Tough Transition

Growing up in Gary, Indiana, Powers chose Purdue engineering for two reasons. First, he learned in high school from a Purdue student teacher that there were no professional, black registered engineers in Indiana. He was drawn to that challenge. Second, by visiting other high schools through the elite inter-city student council, Powers saw that students at other schools were exposed to more and knew

more. He resolved that he would go to a college that could ensure no one would ever question his academic ability or background. For Powers, the answer to both challenges was Purdue. But Purdue would pose its own challenges for him.

“On my floor, I was the only student taking remedial math. I realized right away that I had to work really hard. Later, when I was a sophomore and enrolled in regular math classes, I discovered that about sixty percent of the students who started out in accelerated math had dropped back, and that I was then taking the same classes as those students. That was encouraging.

“While I got caught up, it was not easy, and there were many days I thought I would not make it. But you can be intimidated or you can be motivated. The choice is yours. I felt that I was going to work really hard and make this happen.”

Family Values

Powers had an internship with Amoco and accepted a position with the company upon graduating. It was a good experience, he says. “I learned that I could do meaningful work.” But every night, he went home to help his father with his business. Quickly, he realized that working with his

father was more satisfying than the work he was doing at Amoco.

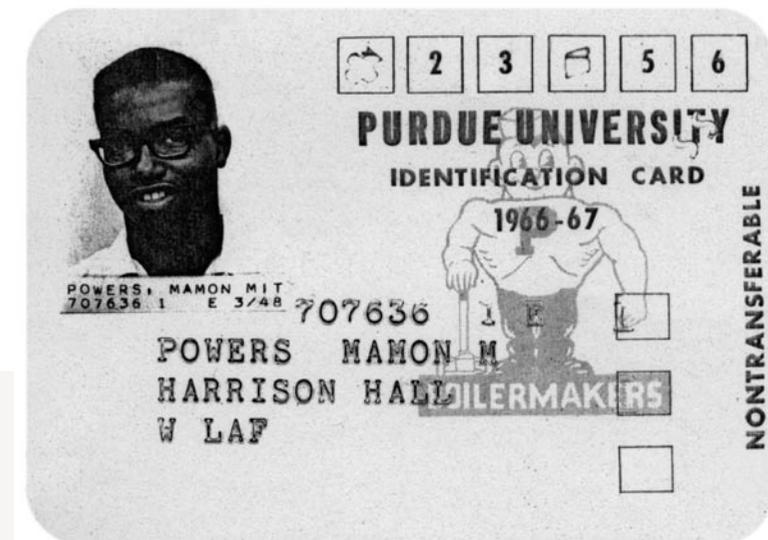
“I realized that I wanted to run my own show to determine my own destiny. So I went to work for my father for no pay and said we would work it out. During the next seven months I made \$2,000, but I was having fun. Shortly after that, we started work on a joint venture on a commercial construction project. Our business then started to change.”

Seven years after joining his father’s company, Powers became a partner. In 1975, he became a professional engineer. In 1987, he became president of the company. Today, Powers and Sons Construction Company has become a leader in delivering fast-track projects. Some of its most visible accomplishments include the Public Safety Building for the City of East Chicago, the Indianapolis Convention Center, the implosion of Market Square Arena in Indianapolis, and the City of Gary’s new baseball park.

Staying on Top

“Early in my career, I was afraid of going bankrupt, and 30 years later, I still am,” says Powers. “My father once said, ‘Success is like trying to stay on top of a greasy ball.’”

“What has helped me the most is that I enjoy challenges, and I get motivated by obstacles. As I look at challenges in the world today, it seems we’re still not as diverse as we need to be as a society. Considering the changes in the 1960s, I expected our world to be much further along. We need to use the resources of all of our people. If you have an eight-cylinder car, you don’t only use six cylinders. If we use all of our resources as a society and as a country, we will be that much further ahead.”



- 2002 Civil Engineering Alumni Achievement Award, Purdue
- 2001 Purdue Old Master
- 1998 Lecturer, Krannert Executive Forum; Honorary Member, Chi Epsilon, Purdue Chapter; World Presidents Organization; Chief Executive Organization
- 1997–1987– Trustee (3rd term), Purdue President, Powers and Sons Construction Co.
- 1985–87 President, Calumet Builders Association
- 1984 Trustee, Operating Engineers #150 Health, Welfare and Apprenticeship Funds
- 1983–85 Chairman, Construction Advancement Foundation of Northwest Indiana
- 1980 President, Calumet Chapter, Indiana Society of Professional Engineers
- 1975 Registered Professional Engineer
- 1971 Powers and Sons Construction Co.
- 1970 Planning Engineer, American Oil Co.

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