

ALABAMA

# CONSTRUCTION NEWS

Academy of Craft  
Training puts  
students to work

PAGE 24

2017 Legislative  
agenda released

PAGE 22

2017 Chairman of the Board  
David Pugh

PAGE 52



# 2017 Chairman of the Board: David Pugh

WHEN DAVID PUGH ENTERED LAW SCHOOL IN THE 1980s, he went with a specific, not-so-typical plan in mind: to one day own his own construction company. “I thought a law degree or an MBA or both, in addition to my engineering degree, would make me a better manager of a construction company,” explained Pugh. “My plan all along was to be in construction and hopefully run my own business.”

Pugh was interested in construction from a very early age thanks to his father, an engineer at Chicago Bridge & Iron. “I was always around construction, and there was something about it I found so fascinating,” Pugh added. “I was fascinated by the level of effort, planning and execution required to build a complex construction project,” he explained. “I admired the enthusiasm, work ethic and willingness to take on risk that I saw in the men and women who worked in construction. I appreciated that when you build something there remains—long after you are gone—a visible, tangible monument and reminder of what you participated in doing.”

That fascination led Pugh to his first construction-related job in high school: working on a maintenance crew for a property management company. In college—he attended the University of Alabama as a civil engineering major—he landed jobs at Chicago Bridge & Iron and for Georgia Power at Plant Vogtle when it was under construction. Upon graduation, he went to work for Harbert Construction as a project engineer, where he worked for two years. “I learned so much during those two years,” Pugh said. “Garry Ard was my first boss at Harbert. He was really a mentor to me. Now, today, it means a lot to me that I’m following in his footsteps as he was also a former chair of ABC of Alabama.”

After two years at Harbert Construction, Pugh decided to attend law school. When applying, he turned to John Harbert for a recommendation letter. “He agreed to meet with me. I was actually scared when I went to his office to talk to him because

so many people had talked about how much he disliked lawyers,” Pugh said. “To my pleasant surprise, Mr. Harbert was fascinated by the idea that someone with an engineering background and actual construction experience was going to law school. He

*“He’s a lawyer, he’s an engineer and he’s a contractor. David’s experience representing general contractors, subcontractors, owners and designers gives him a very broad range of knowledge about our industry.”*

—Randall Curtis, 2016 Chairman of the Board

thought that meant I would be able to be an attorney but speak his language.”

Pugh’s original idea to own his own construction company didn’t happen exactly as planned. After graduating from Vanderbilt University Law School, he got a job at Bradley as an associate in Bradley’s Construction Law Practice Group. But his overall goal of working in the construction industry never changed. “After law school I was focusing specifically on firms that had a construction law practice, and Bradley was one of the leaders in the Southeast, if not the country, in carving out a construction law practice as a specialty,” Pugh said. “I quickly saw that a job there meant the opportunity to work with a variety of contractors, many of whom are ABC members today.”

The ability to serve the construction industry he loves as a construction attorney convinced Pugh to remain in private practice. And throughout his successful career at Bradley thus far, Pugh has exhibited his knowledgeable background in the construction industry and his passion for it. He has worked



*Bottom Row, L to R: Jackson Hill; Arlan Lewis; Carly Miller; David Owen  
Second Row, L to R: Mabry Rogers; David Pugh; Luke Martin; Wally Sears  
Third Row, L to R: Aman Kahlon; Daniel Murdock; Chris Selman*

with owners, general contractors, subcontractors, engineers and architects. He's advised clients at every stage of the construction project: from conception and planning to performance and closeout. He has even argued before the United States Supreme Court representing a pipe subcontractor involved in the construction of a natural gas pipeline in Florida and Alabama. "David has such a passion for the construction industry," said Mabry Rogers of Bradley, who has known Pugh since he joined the firm. "He loves construction and the application of law to construction. One of the most remarkable things about David is that he is as comfortable talking directly to the industry as he is talking to lawyers for the industry. To me, that is a hallmark of

why David is a natural leader for ABC of Alabama." Adds James Archibald, a partner at Bradley, "David is not a lawyer with an engineering degree. Rather, he is an engineer who practices law. In over 20 years of working together, I have seen David do some amazing things in courtrooms and arbitration proceedings all over the country, but David is most at home, and truly at his best, when he is walking around a job site with mud on his boots. David is passionate about the construction industry,

---

and he brings a unique understanding of and appreciation for the many challenges that contractors face and overcome every day.”

Pugh’s background in and passion for the construction industry not only has guided his career at Bradley, but also has led Pugh to a strong commitment to ABC of Alabama. He has long served on numerous committees and boards at both the state and national level. And now, he’s stepping into the role

of 2017 Chairman of the Board. “I’m excited to take on this role with ABC of Alabama,” Pugh said. “With my particular background, I hope to be able to relate to every member’s needs and interests. I think I understand the unique perspectives of each party, whether they be a contractor, subcontractor, designer, supplier or associate member. I can truly bridge the gaps between the different points of view—at least that is my goal and my desire.”

Those in the association who know Pugh well are not shy in speaking of his abilities to take on the leadership role and guide ABC of Alabama. “I believe David will be one of the best chairmen ABC of Alabama has ever had,” said Garry Ard, CEO of Ard Contracting. “He will be one of the best because he knows so much about the construction industry from his experience on both sides. And he doesn’t do anything half-heartedly.”

Hoar Construction’s Randall Curtis, last year’s chairman of the board, has also seen Pugh exhibit the qualities needed to guide the association. “After the last two months of transitioning with David into the leadership role, I’m confident we have the right guy for the job,” he said. “He’s a lawyer, he’s an engineer and he’s a contractor. David’s experience representing general contractors, subcontractors, owners and designers gives him a very broad range of knowledge about our industry. David is also very passionate about ABC, specifically membership growth and our legislative agenda at both the federal and state level. ABC of Alabama is in very good hands with David leading us in 2017.”

Added ABC of Alabama President Jay Reed, “David’s leadership is already starting to reap benefits for our association and industry early in his term,” he said. “His knowledge of the workings within our association, plus the industry’s needs, has him prepared to take over the association. He has so much knowledge of the industry’s pulse that he has certainly hit the ground running with the strategic plan. While David does serve the industry as an attorney, you can tell he is a contractor at

*“At the end of 2017, I want there to be a consensus that we pushed the envelope and made not only the association but also the industry better. That’s my hope and the goal I aim to achieve.”*

—David Pugh, 2017 Chairman of the Board

heart and is truly listening to the needs in ensuring our board of directors addresses those.”

As with any job or project Pugh has ever taken on, he’s come into it with specific goals in mind. As chairman, Pugh has three main goals for his term that he’s determined to achieve. One of those is increasing membership, something he had already been working on last year as membership chairman. Under Pugh’s leadership in 2016, the association saw

more than 70 new members for the year. But Pugh is focused on increasing that number in 2017. “It’s not numbers for numbers sake; it’s increasing our visibility in areas of state where we haven’t traditionally had a large presence,” Pugh said. “We are intentionally looking at growing in areas where we haven’t been before so that we can truly speak on behalf of the entire state.”

Another goal for Pugh is continuing to pursue excellence in government affairs. He wants the association to be even more involved legislatively. “Our association is great at affecting legislation and government affairs activities,” Pugh said. “We’ve transitioned into an offensive role where we draft, sponsor and promote legislation that’s good for our industry and makes it easier to do business. We also need to continue trying to be the best at identifying and promoting economic development legislation because it’s in our members’ best interest.”

Workforce development is another topic that Pugh is focusing much attention on as well, especially with the success thus far of ABC’s Academy of Craft Training. “We’ve got to devote more attention to this topic and build upon the success of the Academy where we’re seeing young people being trained for careers in construction,” he added. “We’re also focusing heavily on developing young professionals in the industry to get them actively engaged. At the same time, we’re finding ways to keep past chairmen involved in the association. It’s important to keep them engaged because they represent a wealth of knowledge and experience.”

Despite the intense goals on the agenda and the work waiting to be done, Pugh is excited about the accomplishments already being made and the challenges that lie ahead. “One way to say it is that I want to move the needle,” he said. “At the end of 2017, I want there to be a consensus that we pushed the envelope and made not only the association but also the industry better. That’s my hope and the goal I aim to achieve.”