



Keeping Time

One's education comes in many forms whether we intend it or not. We can develop it on our own or we can be lucky enough to have a father or mentor who encourages and teaches us even when we don't realize it at the time.

I was 13 years old when my professional career as a structural mover began. Working summers and earning my own money was good. I spent a lot of time with my best two friends sledgehammer and digging spade during those years, however I wouldn't say they were the most enjoyable friends with which to spend time. In the southeastern region of the country where we worked houses were low to the ground, requiring a lot of excavation. It allowed me to become an expert with the help of my friend digging spade. One may think being closed in, in the dark under a house with lots of dirt to move could be boring. But, in an odd sort of way, it was peaceful.

After a couple of summers I began paying attention to the color and texture of the different types of soil and began recording the length of time it took to dig the various size jobs. Same thing with my friend sledgehammer: I kept the time on how long it took to breakup rock, concrete or brick.

Even though we have progressed tremendously in the years since I worked as a teenager digging for the placement of beams or breaking things to clear a path, those old skills are still used occasionally. There are times, even now with the best of equipment, it still comes down to hands on and physical strength.

For sons working for fathers or mentors whose job you hope to one day have, and the employees who hope to one day own a piece of the action there are lessons to be learned here. When the father or boss has you working on some skills you consider to be archaic, outdated or even a waste of your time, remember: to quote a price you must know how much time will be involved in the project. In our industry it is very important to serve time

in an apprenticeship. You learn things on your own, while working in various stages of the business that others may not teach you.

For the sons or employees who want to become the best in the business one day it will be to your advantage to consider the following: a laborer for three years, a key man for three years and a foreman for five years. To do so under the direction of a master mover you can also develop your personal skills along the way. Becoming an owner or handling the business is an earned education through personal labor on the job. But to avoid being left behind, education learned in a classroom is also a must.

Now, 42 years later, when I walk up to a prospective job that appears to be a tough bid project with complicated issues to consider, I think about the man who had me dig it, break it, take it apart, put it back together and record the time. I survey the opportunity, do the math, consider unexpected issues that could arise, arrive at a plan of action and say, "Thanks Charlie Blake."

D. Michael Blake

