

# **BEN JOHANNEMAN**

## A Life Well under Construction: Ben Johanneman's Amazing Civil Engineering Achievements

Graduate: Class of 1996    By Brent Sherman, Spring 2010

Walking up and down the worksite with his safety managers, Ben Johanneman looks for any sign of unsafe activity. On a daily basis, Ben completes many different tasks such as meeting with the different members of his staff every day to ensure that the construction of a twelve-story vertical expansion onto a pre-existing twelve-story building runs smoothly. One of Ben's greatest lifetime achievements, this project has challenged him in new ways. Becoming one of the most astounding civil engineers of his time, Ben's life has dramatically changed since he graduated in May of 1996.

Ben defines his life by saying, “The thing that is the most fun about life to me is that you have so much control over it.” Over the years, Ben has definitely had control over his life. During high school, he maintained a 4.0 grade point average; and became valedictorian; he also won numerous scholarships such as the Kimball International Scholarship and became a National Merit Scholar.

Completing high school in 1996, Ben studied civil engineering at the University of Kentucky. Pursuing his dream, Ben continued his excellence with another 4.0 GPA and named the University of Kentucky Most Outstanding Civil Engineering Junior and Senior. Assiduous and determined, Ben kept up his schoolwork and won multiple top notch awards earned by only the most outstanding engineers. Toward the end of his college career, Ben worked as an intern for Traylor Brothers Construction on the William Natcher Bridge in Rockport, Indiana.

After college, he quickly found a project engineering position at McCarthy Building Companies based in St. Louis, Missouri. As a project engineer, he helped complete many different projects and quickly moved up the ranks to a project superintendent. After countless hours of diligent and prolonged work, Ben quickly became a project manager while working on the Virginia Beach General Hospital. Then, Ben finally reached the project director position for the construction of the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Alkek Expansion in Houston; in this position Ben oversees a staff of about twenty-five project managers, superintendents, engineers, and about 500 construction workers every day.

In his Houston profession, Ben had to devise a plan to allow the construction workers to lift the needed materials to the correct place. After many hours of thought, Ben and his staff finally came up with a plan to place an extremely large crane inside the existing elevator shaft, while the hospital continued to run smoothly. Not long after Ben completed this feat, Hurricane Ike challenged his idea on whether it would stay structurally sound. Not only did the crane remain standing, the entire hospital continued to remain functional throughout the course of the high vortex winds. This mind-blowing feat is only one of many Ben has been apart of since leaving high school.

Ben's occupation has also required him to live in numerous cities: St. Louis, Denver, and several other places throughout the country. In Houston, Ben also works as a committeeman for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo-a three week long event held in Houston each year. Composed of state-fair type activities, rodeo competitions, and concerts, all of the proceeds fund scholarships for Texas students.

Successful and happy, Ben continues to live and work in Houston today. Ben has worked many hours to become a project director in one of the leading construction companies in the world. For current students, Ben offers this advice, "At this moment, you have a multitude of options as to how you can use this moment. Sometimes I think of it like the coolest virtual reality game possible. Why would a person want to play a game with constraints when you have the ability to do anything you want?"