

TRIED & TRUE

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SPRING 2023

FRATCO

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To Tried & True Readers,

The world at large sees spring as a time of renewal and rebirth. But I think for most of us in this sector, we see the season more like a return to normalcy. As the weather warms and the ground softens up, a familiar feeling overcomes us: something deep inside that tells us it's time to lace up our boots, roll up our sleeves and get back to work.

Sure, it's a special year for Fratco as far as celebrating our centennial goes, but it's also business as usual as far as our day-to-day mission is concerned. And, as always, that mission can be summed up in a few words: perfectly meeting our customers' needs, no matter what those needs entail.

That statement also acts as the theme for this issue of Tried & True. "The Supply Chain Explained" offers a literal explanation for how our customers' needs are met before, after and throughout the process of product creation and fulfillment. Then, "Back in the Day" offers some perspective on the way our products actually get into the ground with a look back on how installation practices have developed.

With all that being said, the words "business as usual" carry a different weight for those of us embedded in a family business. That's why we drew on the collective experience of our many family-owned business friends to offer up some useful insight in "Passing the Torch."

It's hard to believe that it's been so many years since my own father, Steve, handed off the torch of Fratco's leadership to me. He left big shoes for me to fill, and I'm reminded of that when I lace them up, roll back my sleeves and join the Fratco family on the floor and in the field to help carry on the great work we do. I look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,



Chris Overmyer
President and CEO

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Locations

1 **Francesville**
4385 S. 1450 W.
P.O. Box 368
Francesville, IN 47946

2 **St. Anne**
499 S. Oak St.
St. Anne, IL 60964

3 **Mt. Pleasant**
1600 W. Washington St.
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

4 **Algona**
2502 E. Poplar St.
Algona, IA 50511

5 **Westfield (Stateline Tile)**
23942 IA Hwy 12
Westfield, IA 51062

★ **Corporate Office**
105 W. Broadway St.
P.O. Box 311
Monticello, IN 47960



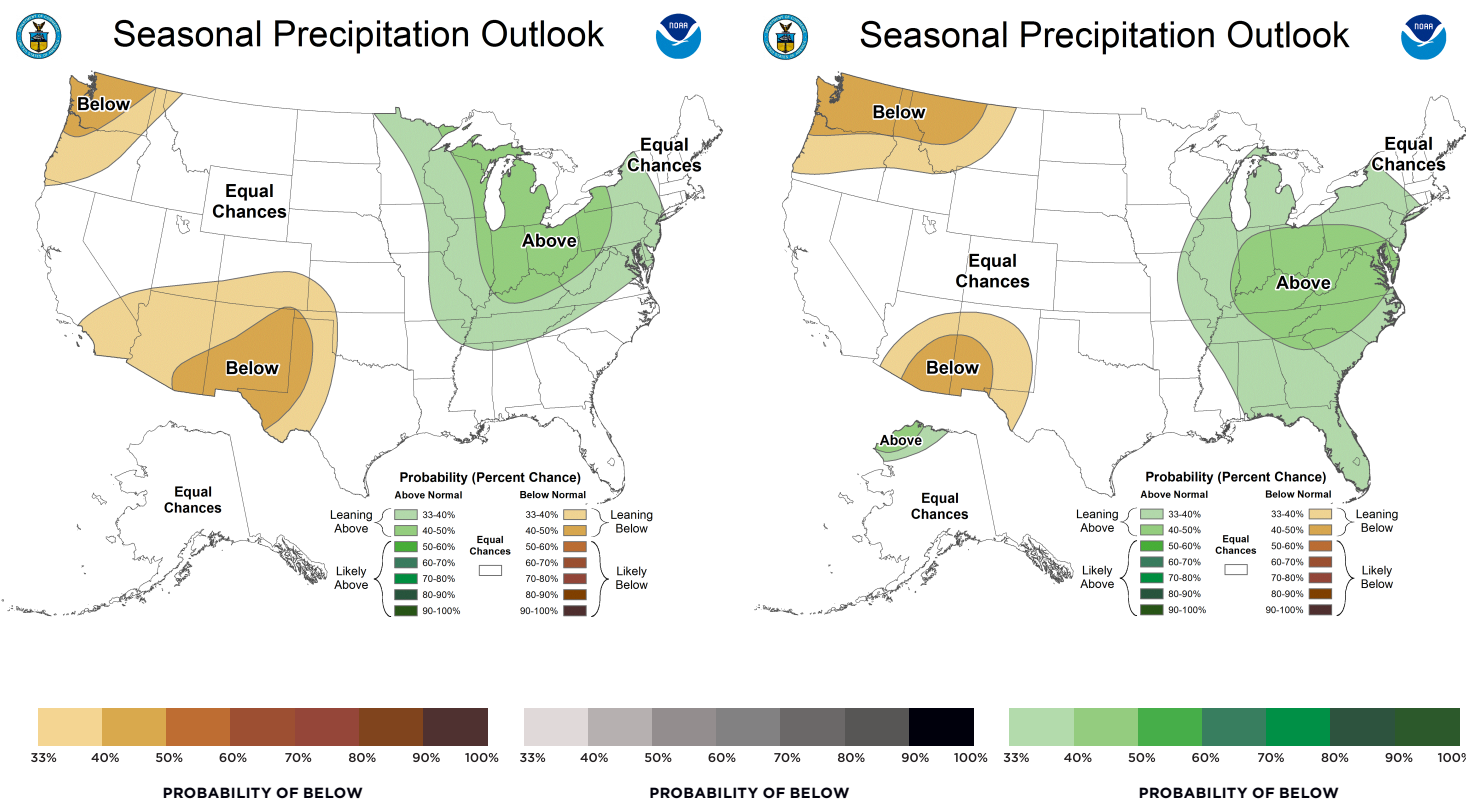
PRECIPITATION OUTLOOK

FROM THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

2023

APR-JUN

MAY-JUL



Nothing about the future is set in stone, and weather predictions are no exception. But in an industry where thorough preparation is fundamental, having an idea of what lies ahead can be the difference between business as usual and battling rain delays. Always keep an eye on daily and weekly weather outlooks, but also set yourself up for success by planning ahead through seasonal forecasts.

For the latest weather information, visit the National Weather Service's website.

www.noaa.gov

MEET JERRY WEILAND

SALES REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE MIDWEST AND WESTERN REGIONS



Fratco always has an eye on the horizon for what's next, and one person on the front lines of the company's careful expansion is Jerry Weiland: a Fratco sales rep of two years serving customers across the country from North Dakota to Texas.

"My strategy has been to cover lots of territory," explains Jerry, speaking with Tried and True over phone as he drives from South Dakota to Iowa on Fratco business. "I'm spreading out and getting lots of new things started for when Fratco becomes more concentrated in these areas."

While the unprecedented scope and scale of his mission might deter other people, Jerry's many years of experience as an agribusiness expert have prepared him well for the ambitious undertaking. Before Fratco, Jerry spent more than a decade working for a major seed company with over 50 locations around the country. In another past role, Jerry helped farmers grow their operations as an ag loan officer. Combined, these experiences have given Jerry a wealth of knowledge to leverage when explaining the benefits of investing in good drainage to new clients.

"Everyone in this business is looking for that return on their investment," Jerry explains. "After all, if you're not always looking to increase your production, you're just doing it as a hobby—and it's a pretty expensive hobby, right?"

For the rare exceptions where installing drain tile isn't the right move for an interested farmer, Jerry appreciates that Fratco's policy of unwavering integrity encourages him to tell him like it is.

"I've met people who were wanting to lay tile where they didn't have excess water to leach out the salts in their soil. I told them flat out: 'I don't want to sell you tile because it's not going to work for your situation.'"

The willingness to turn away eager prospects for honesty's sake speaks volumes on the character of Jerry and Fratco alike. But as Jerry points out, it also speaks volumes about the quality of Fratco pipe.

"It makes life pretty easy as a salesman when the product is quality-driven with the reputation to match. It's like the old sales joke goes..." Jerry says, laughing: "Stop talking unless you wanna lose the sale."

With the incredible results Jerry has produced for Fratco during just these past two years, it's plain to see he's a man who knows exactly when to speak up and when to let quality speak for itself. The company thanks Jerry for the groundwork that he's laid out all across the country and looks forward to the day when the seeds he has planted bloom to their fullest Fratco potential. ■

THE SUPPLY CHAIN EXPLAINED

From raw resources to refined products and everything in between

From natural resources drawn out of the earth to highly engineered drainage buried underground, the supply chain acts as the circle of life for products like Fratco pipe. Let's take a closer look at how the system of global supply actually works, where it all began and why it might be changing in the not-so-distant future.

Source, Refine, Combine, Fulfill

In broad strokes, a supply chain consists of a few fundamental steps:

1

Sourcing raw materials:

The unrefined resources needed for industry are extracted or harvested by organizations that specialize in the task.

EXAMPLE A company drilling for oil or mining for minerals



2

Refining those materials into parts:

Raw materials are purchased by businesses that specialize in making components used by other businesses to manufacture products.

EXAMPLE A chemical company that synthesizes petroleum into different types of plastics



3

Combining those parts into products:

Refined parts are purchased and assembled, combined, remolded or further processed into products for the market to be sold.

EXAMPLE Fratco making corrugated pipe from HDPE plastic



4

Fulfilling or delivering those products:

Whether it's the company themselves delivering their products to the customer, or a logistics company moving other businesses' goods to retail outlets for purchase, this is where a newly-made product comes in contact with its new owner—or reseller—and the supply chain comes to an end.

EXAMPLE Fratco pipe transported on Fratco trucks to a distributor



Naturally, every link in the chain is connected by some method of transport: oil is moved to refineries via big rig or barge; freighters carry minerals in bulk across oceans; Coca-Cola trucks deliver refills to Mom and Pop's drug store. Transportation infrastructure is the backbone of the supply chain, which is why Fratco is proud of the role its products are able to play in the construction of infrastructure itself. To learn more, check out the article entitled "Off the Farm" from the Fall 2022 issue of *Tried & True*.

Continue Reading

FORGING TODAY'S GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN

Supply chains have been around for centuries in one form or another. Due to the dangers that came with traveling in the ancient world, however, mankind's earliest supply chains were strictly local—the village farmer grew the wheat, the village baker bought it to turn into bread, and so on. If you lived during these times and your village happened to lack a “link” in the chain, you were simply out of luck (and bread).

As knowledge of the world progressed and traveling vast distances became more viable, regional trading networks like the Silk Road and the Spice Routes formed. These were used to transport goods between societies that were both geographically distant and culturally distinct from one another.

After the goods had been transported—usually by trading caravan or ship—workers and craftsmen in the nation of purchase would further refine their imported materials to suit their customers' tastes—tastes that were often quite expensive, as was necessary to afford foreign goods. Today, the ornate togas of ancient Roman aristocrats and the intricate outfits of British royalty are considered emblematic of their civilizations, but neither garment would have been possible without imported Chinese silk. On the other side of that coin, much of the cuisine we have come to associate with certain regions—Chinese Pepper Steak, for example—relied heavily on spices and ingredients sourced from other nations. Looking back through history, it's interesting to think how many things now considered staples of various cultures were actually the product of intercultural commerce.

Unfortunately, the earliest formation of a truly global supply chain likely dates back to the intercontinental slave trade that arose between North America, Africa and Europe during

the 16th century. Slaves and the goods they produced were extremely profitable, and the promise of riches drove merchants to brave the immense risks and complex logistics required to maintain these more demanding trade networks with the limited technology at their disposal.

With the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the global supply chain we know today really started to take shape. In North America and Britain, factories made mass-production possible just as railroads made transporting products a breeze compared to caravans of the past. Meanwhile, the adoption of steam-powered vessels made moving goods across the ocean more efficient than ever before. Later on, as more countries like China, India and Mexico industrialized, they too became essential links in the global supply chain—one that was quickly beginning to look more like a web.

This new system of supply and demand left little room for local preference. Now, if an American manufacturer wanted to match their competition's prices, they couldn't afford not to source their parts from countries where lax human rights laws meant reduced labor costs. Thankfully, consumers themselves eventually took a stand against these practices to great effect—particularly in the USA.



Today Fratco is proud that—in a century of doing business—the company has always operated with an all-american labor force alongside quality components that are ethically sourced.

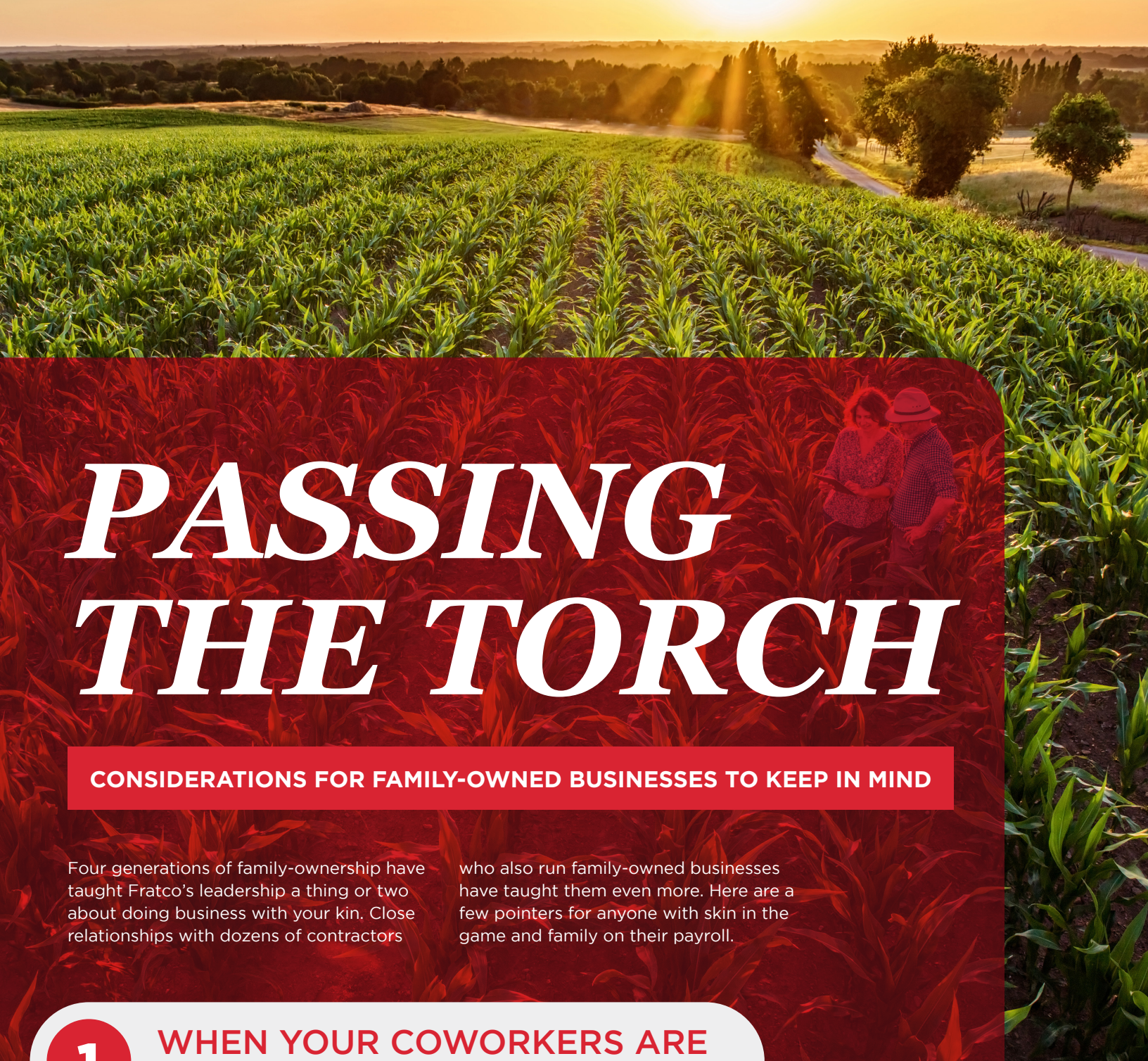


WEAK LINKS REVEALED AND SOLUTIONS FOUND

Before COVID swept the globe in 2020, many thought of the global supply chain as an efficient, well-oiled machine. Conditions brought on by the pandemic, however, revealed the supply chain to be far more fragile than even experts were aware. Due to facility shutdowns, labor shortages and infrastructural failures, many critical materials became limited or unavailable to manufacturers around the globe. The global resin shortage of past years—the ripples of which are still being felt—is a great example.

As a silver lining to the situation, the concept of supply chain resilience is now making the rounds among industry leaders with huge stakes in international commerce. In the USA, new local-sourcing and tech-driven initiatives are underway to fortify our corner of the global supply chain. Recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, in particular, hold the promise of a global supply chain that can predict its own disruptions and prevent a full-blown crisis.

Fratco leadership, too, has been taking action to strengthen their logistical operations. Recently, in the face of mounting gas prices, the company invested in a new fleet of smaller, more agile delivery trucks to lower fuel expenses that may have otherwise impacted customers. The idea is just one of many ways that Fratco approaches the future with a mindset of “adapt, evolve and thrive.” ■



PASSING THE TORCH

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESSES TO KEEP IN MIND

Four generations of family-ownership have taught Fratco's leadership a thing or two about doing business with your kin. Close relationships with dozens of contractors

who also run family-owned businesses have taught them even more. Here are a few pointers for anyone with skin in the game and family on their payroll.

1

WHEN YOUR COWORKERS ARE FAMILY, BUSINESS IS PERSONAL

In a typical job environment, spats between coworkers have more room to de-escalate naturally over the course of evenings and weekends spent outside the workplace. But when your job is a family business, your coworkers come home with you—along with any tension that's been built up through the workday. Additionally, the stakes of unresolved conflict are much higher in a family business. Getting fired from a job is nothing to sneeze at, but getting “fired” from your family is a truly traumatic and life-changing event.

To prevent your business coming between you and the people you love most, always treat the members your family-owned business with an extra teaspoon of respect and goodwill. If you also have employees that aren't related, that means giving them an extra serving of respect as well—no special treatment allowed, everyone deserves the same level of respect.

2

PEOPLE AREN'T COAL: PRESSURE DOESN'T TURN THEM INTO DIAMONDS

Authentic interest is essential when it comes to involving family members in your business—especially your children. Your kids love you, but there's no guarantee they'll love the trade you've chosen or the business that you've built. It's easy for you to confuse the two as a parent, and it's also easy for your children to accidentally project their love for you onto your business when they feel like doing otherwise would disappoint you.

Rather than pressuring your children to carry on the torch after you retire, lead them by example. Show them that you're passionate about your business and wait patiently

for their interest to pique. Make the prospect of joining your enterprise a soft sell, rather than a hard one. In the words of Fratco customer and Lick Creek Enterprises owner Jim Mathias when asked whether his kids would ever take over his business: “If they want it.”



Read more about Lick Creek Enterprises and our work with them

3

IF THEY'RE NOT A GOOD EMPLOYEE, THEY PROBABLY WON'T BE A GOOD LEADER EITHER

This last piece of advice can be a bitter pill to swallow, but not every truth in life can go down smooth. The future of your business depends on good leadership, and here at Fratco we believe that the best leaders are made on the job—not from blood, but through hard work.

Former CEO Steve Overmyer began helping out in the Francesville plant when he was just six years old. Current CEO Chris Overmyer's early experience in the company was very similar. As each grew into adulthood and chose to become full-fledged employees, they were expected to perform to the same standards as anyone else. Each

put decades of hard work into the business before they became a leader in the company. In other words: they did everything they could to prove themselves worthy.

When considering your business's succession, try to see your relatives as employees first and family second. Watch what they do, how they treat other members of your team and how they speak about the business. If they take it for granted, maybe it shouldn't be granted to them. Your family can always share in the fruits of your business's success, but they aren't necessarily entitled to a seat at the helm of the ship. ■



Back in the Day

HOW TILE WAS LAID BEFORE MODERN MACHINERY

Excavation and drainage installation is hard work. It entails long hours outside in the hot sun maintaining intense focus, all while operating complicated

machinery with the proper amount of skill and finesse. But can you imagine how much harder past generations had it before modern technology?

Up until the late 1920s, most trenches for tile were dug with simple hand tools and back-breaking labor. While steam-powered trenchers—first invented in the late 1800s—made the task much easier for a minority of well-off farmers, agriculturalists of the era were rarely able to afford them. This was a time when the majority of farmers were poor—at least in terms of currency needed to invest in cutting-edge technology like steam-powered devices. It's a bit like expecting an uber driver

to have the cash on hand to buy a brand new Tesla—sure, it may be a worthwhile investment for their job in the long term, but the cost of such a prospect might be a barrier to most people in the profession. Such was the case with most farmers and early machinery back in the day.

In addition to more difficult excavation, laying tile was much tougher in the past as well. Clay as a material is both more brittle and more rigid than the modern plastics used to make today's

corrugated pipe, and as a result the clay tile of old was highly unforgiving in comparison to modern pipe—and also much heavier to cart and carry.

Thankfully, there were a few tricks of the trade that past trench-diggers and tile-layers devised to make their work less daunting. For one, farmers tended to approach tile installation with a strictly “as needed” mentality. With a discerning eye, they would appraise their fields for “problem spots” where crop growth had clearly



suffered from too much water in the ground. They would then mark these spots as places to lay tile when timing and resources allowed.

Some farmers did plan and complete all-encompassing tile networks on their properties, however. For these endeavors, the natural contours of the land were often utilized to take some of the edge off the labor. A natural dip in the ground could become the foundation for a tile trench if the conditions were right.

When the time came to dig, they embraced strength in numbers with large teams of more than twenty people all working at once. For grading, excavators placed stakes in intervals to help gauge elevation by sight or—if lucky—with surveying tools of the day.

Overall, the amount of time and effort that went into laying tile in these times is a long-standing testament to

the value of subterranean drainage. No sane person would ever consider the undertaking if not for the value they saw in return. That value still exists today—more than ever before, thanks to advancements in drain pipe engineering and industry specific equipment—and with much less hassle involved. ■



DISTRIBUTOR SPOTLIGHT

JIM VANTIGER

As an 88 year old Iowan farmer, James Vantiger doesn't have any regrets in life. Born in 1935, James, who goes by Jim, had a typical farm boy childhood. Coming from generations of farmers, Jim said, "I knew what I had to do." He didn't see any reason to attend college. After graduating high school in 1953, Jim started what he called "the School of Hard Knocks."

He was deeded 100 acres of farmland by his father in West Point, Iowa and so began Jim Vantiger's legacy. Farming all the light hours of the day, Jim needed help keeping up his house on the farm. He found a lovely couple looking for a home to rent. In exchange for feeding him a few times a day and washing his clothes, he let them live there rent free. Jim worked tirelessly and never hesitated to get creative to solve a problem. He worked the land given to him to the best of his ability.



In 1956, he married his life-long partner, Georgianna, who he would spend the next 66 years with until her passing last spring. Shortly after marriage, Jim's grandfather deeded 160 acres to Jim's father who in turn passed it to Jim, which was another blessing that Jim would take full advantage of with his diligence and hard work. The following year, Jim started his grain broker business, which he still runs today, called Vantiger Farm Market. With the number six being the apparent theme for the Vantigers, Jim and Georgianna were then blessed with six children.

Jim slowly bought more farmland until he owned a whole square mile of what he called "the richest ground in the world - but it couldn't drain." So began Jim's passion for water management and his journey to make it more accessible to southern Iowa.

He remembers the early days of farming when clay tile trenches were hand-dug with an 18 inch spade or sometimes with a steam engine. "That sure was a lot of work," he remarked. Jim's memories of those laborious times helped inspire this issue's article on pre-engine-powered excavation techniques, which can be found on page 12. With a chuckle Jim told us "that's what the backhoes are for now!" He snickered as he told a memory of his buddy who built his house on high ground and could only get to by boat just because of the immense amount of standing water.

For years it was difficult to get quality pipe to his small town in the middle of Iowa farm country. He would have to get up in the middle of the night to help unload trucks of pipe that were being shipped in from out of state. It was a real inconvenience. He would even try to coordinate his grain trucks to pick up pipe while out on their deliveries.

In 2006, when Jim caught wind that Fratco was looking to expand their operation to Iowa he tried to think of how he could advocate for them. He knew it would be very beneficial for the economy of his small town if they chose Mt. Pleasant, plus, to have Fratco manufacturing right down the road would open so many doors for Jim's customers.

Community was always of great importance to Jim. He is a well known philanthropist in southeastern Iowa and believes deeply in giving back to his community. By supporting Fratco, Jim was also supporting his community. So, he went down to the local real estate agent's office and told him he wanted to help Fratco find some land in Mt. Pleasant. The agent told him there was only one piece of farm ground left - 287 acres out by the highway. Jim recounted, "I took an interest in it and called up Chris Overmyer, and Fratco ended up buying it!"

Jim's son started to handle the day to day on the farm so his focus could shift to his new business, Vantiger Equipment and Supply, which was founded in 2007. Now part of the Fratco family, Vantiger Equipment and Supply helped to bridge that gap even more between farmer and accessible pipe for ag water management.



The Vantiger Family, 2014



Jim Vantiger (left) and Alan Kruszka (right)

[Continue Reading](#)



Jim Vantiger with his six children (1968)

For almost 20 years, Fratco has provided quality jobs and added stability to Mt. Pleasant, a town that has been through economical struggles in the past. Mt. Pleasant's small town feel certainly hasn't changed as Jim still runs his business on the honor system. If one of his contractors or farmers come in when he isn't there, they can just grab what they need and leave him a handwritten note. The quaintness of Jim's story so closely aligns with our values here at Fratco; community and family matter. We are proud to call Jim family and look forward to continuing to work with him and in his community for many years to come.

When he's not selling pipe and grain, you can find Jim watching movies and just sitting back relaxing. He still owns that square mile of farmland, but at 88 years old, he lets his son do most of the physical labor. As he has aged, it's become more difficult for him to be in the trenches of daily farm work. He recently had a quadruple bypass and had a pacemaker put in, but none of that is slowing him down. He says he goes to bed every night and his brain never stops—sometimes waking up in the middle of the night just to figure out how to do the next day's job to the best of his ability.

Fratco thanks Jim for the wonderful relationship they've shared ever since the company opened their Mt. Pleasant location. Experienced and loyal customers like Jim have led Fratco to their 100 years (and counting) of successful business and partnerships. ■

Mottos Jim Lives By:

“If you're starting up in the morning with a frown on your face, you're gonna have a frown all day. You gotta have a good reason to be up in the morning.”

“Buy the best, to h*ll with the rest!”



WATER MANAGEMENT PROS GATHER FOR NEW INDUSTRY EXPO

The first-ever North American Conservation and Drainage Expo (NACADE) made its debut in January of this year. For three days, the Hyvee Hall convention center in Des Moines, Iowa was abuzz with experts from every corner of the sector—all of them eager to network over cutting-edge research, age-old experience and strong-willed opinions on the state of the water management industry.

Subjects ranging from drainage water recycling to wetlands restoration were presented by some of the sector's most respected and accredited researchers, while spirited discussions were held in roundtable format over topics including best installation practices and how to maximize water management system efficiency.

Efficiency in general was a highlight of the show. Although this was NACADE's maiden voyage, the

convention proceeded smoothly thanks to the organizers' good planning, preparation and oversight. Any hitches or hurdles that arose during the expo were quickly and carefully resolved. It was obvious to all in attendance that everyone involved in the expo's creation truly had their hearts invested in the task.

Fratco applauds everything NACADE's organizers accomplished. The company is also proud to have played a key part in the expo's formation as a founding member sponsor. But perhaps more than anything else, the Fratco family is thrilled that an industry as critical as water management at last has a recurring trade show grounded in the virtues of sustainability, conservation and good ag business practices. ■



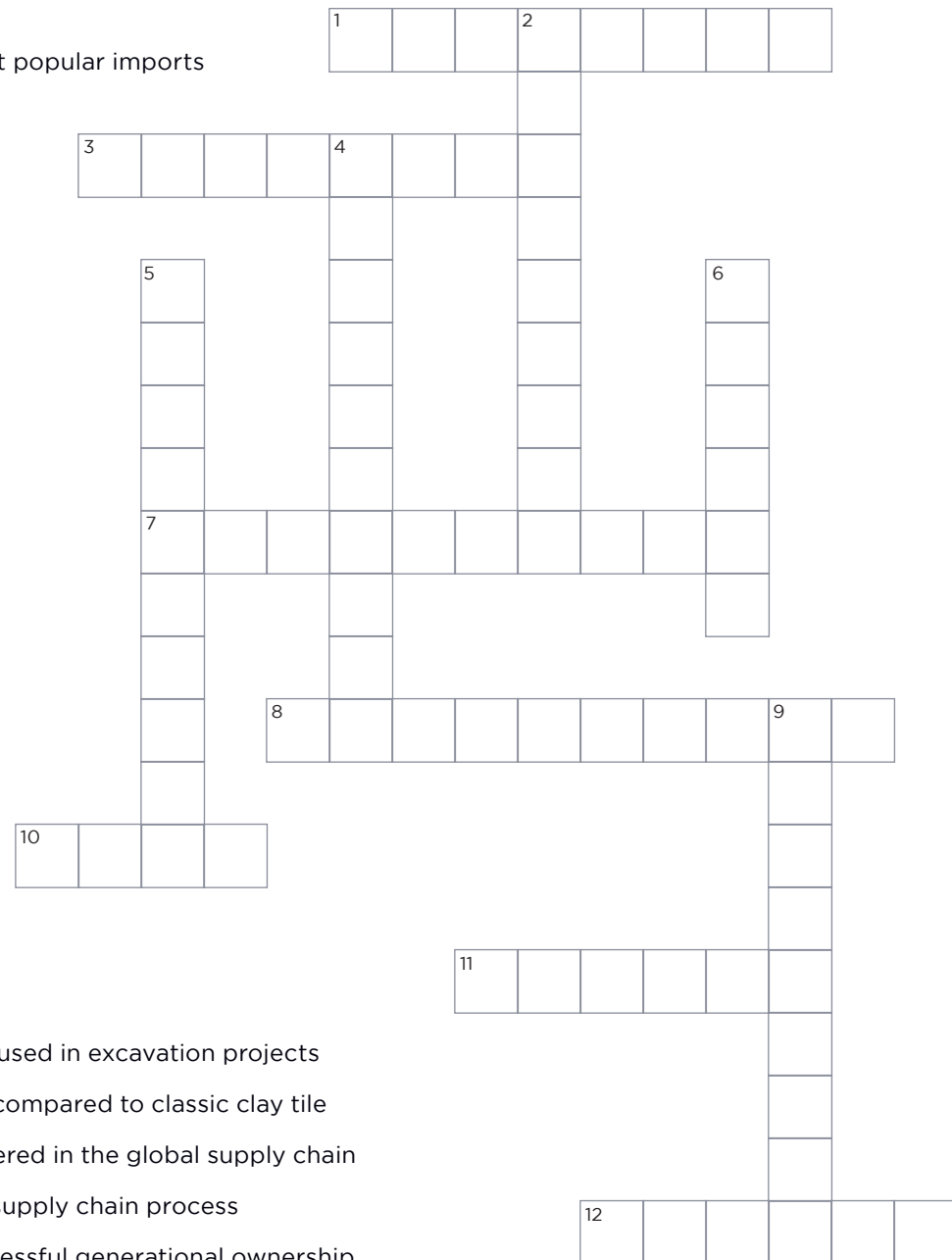
Fratco wishes to thank everyone who stopped by the company's booth this year and looks forward to attending the convention again in the future.



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. The needs of this person are always Fratco's main concern
3. Something to avoid when getting kids involved in family business
7. Passing of the torch from one business leader to another
8. Intelligence behind the future's self-aware supply chain
10. Major Chinese export of the past
11. Drainage industry tradeshow
12. One of the ancient world's most popular imports



DOWN

2. Early steam-powered machines used in excavation projects
4. Type of Fratco pipe most often compared to classic clay tile
5. 18th century revolution that ushered in the global supply chain
6. Second step in the generalized supply chain process
9. Type of interest needed for successful generational ownership

ANSWER KEY
1. CUSTOMER 2. TRENCHESS 3. PRESSURE 4. SMOOTHCORR 5. INDUSTRIAL 6. REFINED
7. SUCCESSION 8. ARTIFICIAL 9. AUTHENTIC 10. SILK 11. NACADE 12. SPICES





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