

A SALUTE TO AN



CUSTOMER

VANDERPOOL CONSTRUCTION, INC.

Longtime Indianola, Iowa, site-development contractor focuses on quality work and community progress

When Toby Vanderpool was a young boy, his father Mike, owner and president of Indianola, Iowa-based Vanderpool Construction, would sometimes take him out to a prospective jobsite. They'd tour the site, go over the blueprints, determine what special equipment they might need and try to figure out how long the job would take. Then they'd work on a bid right there in the pickup truck.

Many years later, Toby graduated from college and was considering going into a totally different field, but he said, "I think those early days in the pickup truck may have influenced me even more than I realized."

After a conversation with his father, Toby returned to Vanderpool Construction and today is general manager. Mike remains president of what is now a third-generation family business, started by Cliff Vanderpool in 1955. Mike's wife Marylee is the vice president.

Part of the office team at Vanderpool Construction, Inc. includes (L-R) president Mike Vanderpool, safety officer and credit manager Mark Clark, office manager Terry Mercer, controller John Chew, residential estimator and septic tank sales representative Carolyn Sheets, accountant Scott Wicks and general manager Toby Vanderpool.

"The fact is, construction work is extremely satisfying for me, just as I know it is for my dad," said Toby. "You get to see progress being made every day on the job. Then over the long term, you see it throughout your community. Knowing we have played a part in much of the progress and development that's occurred around here makes me feel good about who we are and what we do."

"You've got to be willing to put in the time in this business," added Mike. "It's hard work, but I guess we must like that. I've worked 12- or 13-hour days all my life and still do, and I've never really even thought about it. It's just what we do. I like the challenges of construction work. I like being outside on the job, making things happen. I like the people — our employees and our clients. I find construction work to be very satisfying and I take a lot of pride in what we've accomplished over the years."

Full-service site work

Vanderpool Construction has come a long way in the last half century. In the early years, Cliff worked on small sewer and water jobs with teenage son Mike helping him out. Today, the company employs almost 40 people and is a full-service site-development firm.

"We do all types of commercial and residential earthwork, sewer and water work, and municipal utility work throughout south-central Iowa," noted Toby. "On our site-development projects, we take a job from beginning to end for a client and do everything with our own crews except the asphalt paving, which we sub out. In addition to commercial properties and residential subdivisions, we do individual house lots. We also do ponds, erosion control and demolition. We have an aggregate operation and in the winter, we do snow removal."





This 385-hp, 133,160-pound PC600LC-7 is the largest of eight Komatsu excavators crews from Vanderpool Construction, Inc. count on from Road Machinery & Supplies Co. Here, the big excavator works at a site-development project called Airport Crossroads, south of the Des Moines Airport.



Mike Vanderpool (left) and his team at Vanderpool Construction work closely with veteran RMS territory manager Bob Newman to meet the company's equipment needs.

Vanderpool Construction counts on a team of experienced employees including (L-R) truck driver Denny Adamson, foreman/operator Gary Mercer, general manager Toby Vanderpool, foreman Steve Roush and truck driver Paul Songayllo.

Vanderpool also recently started a new business doing precast concrete septic tanks, which the company installs in countryside residential developments.

Some big jobs the company has done include a municipal swimming pool for the city of Indianola; numerous projects at Simpson College, such as installing a new, artificial-grass football field; and several large food and retail stores throughout the region. Currently, Vanderpool is helping build Airport Crossroads, a commercial property south of Des Moines; Lincoln Ridge and Trail Ridge subdivisions in Indianola; and almost all the site work for a company called the New Home Store, which builds premanufactured houses.

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Toby Vanderpool loads aggregate into one of the company's dump trucks with a Komatsu WA50 wheel loader at Vanderpool's office and shop complex in Indianola.



Vanderpool Construction celebrates 50th anniversary

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Experienced, hardworking employees

The Vanderpools count on a talented, hardworking group of longtime employees to handle jobs like those in an efficient, professional manner.

"Without our employees, we wouldn't be anywhere," acknowledged Toby. "The best thing is, we can pretty much just turn them loose and know they're going to get the job done and get it done right. They treat each job as if it's their own. Just like my dad and me, they take a lot of pride in the final product we put out and that's something I'm not sure every company can say."

In addition to immediate family members involved in the business, Mike's son-in-law Justin Peterson works for Vanderpool Construction. Key field personnel include foremen Gary Mercer, Steve Roush, Randy Aldridge, Justin Chew and Jeff Smith.

"We're a family-owned company and we try to extend that family atmosphere throughout our work force," Mike explained. "I know everybody who works here. They're not just employees; they're friends too. We're able to communicate and that definitely helps us on our jobs."

Equipment that's "as good as it gets"

In order to do quality work in a timely manner, Vanderpool Construction counts on an equipment fleet spearheaded by eight Komatsu hydraulic excavators. The excavators range from a compact PC78MR up to a PC600LC-7, and include a PC400, a PC270 and a total of three tight-tail-swing units.

"In terms of productivity and reliability, we think Komatsu excavators are as good as it gets," asserted Toby. "We got the almost 70-ton PC600 a couple of years ago, partly to improve productivity, but also to improve safety. After going to a 24-foot trench box, we found the PC600 just lifts it right out with no problem whatsoever."

"It makes our work safer for the operator and improves production," Mike contributed. "With the additional capacity of the PC600, our jobs really move along."

Mike says safety and productivity are also why the company likes the Komatsu tight-tail-swing excavators (PC228US, PC128UU and PC78MR).

"Anywhere that space is a consideration, they're great. You can sit there all day and just dig and swing and not worry about hitting anything. If your track misses it, you miss it."

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Below: Foreman/operator Jeff Smith uses a Komatsu PC270LC-6 excavator for underground utility work at the Lincoln Ridge residential development in Indianola.

Right: Jeff (center) is with his crew, son and pipelayer Brandan Smith (left) and operator Andy Johnstone.



Vanderpool maintains excellence

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"Another benefit is the visibility," added Toby. "With the tight-tail-swing machines, you see everything because you can just spin around. You're not going to back into a piece of equipment or a rock box, or worse yet, a person who has just walked up behind you."



Crews use Komatsu excavators on a new development in northwest Indianola called Lincoln Ridge. The utility crew with the PC400LC-6 excavator, pictured above, includes (L-R) pipelayer Brad Witt, top man Cody McKasson, pipelayers Brad Chase and Chad Andrew and foreman/operator Randy Aldridge, who is operating the PC400 below.



The Vanderpools also acquired a Komatsu D65EX-12 dozer and WA50 wheel loader from RMS. They use the D65 primarily for rough grading, fine grading and ripping, while the WA50 transports material around a jobsite. "Operators like the D65 because of the user-friendly controls and comfort," reported Toby. "And the WA50 is so versatile, it's everybody's favorite machine. Every foreman wants it on his job."

Both Vanderpools also praise RMS and veteran territory manager Bob Newman from the company's Des Moines branch. "RMS and Bob have never tried to hide from anything," said Mike. "When we call, they're always at the other end of the line and when we need help, they get to us quickly. I also trust them. We've done deals over the phone or on a handshake."

"Bob has done an excellent job for us whether we're looking for machines or attachments," affirmed Toby. "He's competitive on price and has always provided us with good information and advice."

"Best in the Midwest"

After commenting that Vanderpool Construction has "dug a hole in every street in Indianola," Mike indicated the company has no intention of standing still.

"We've diversified through the years and we've expanded geographically. We probably won't go much farther for work because we like our employees to be able to sleep in their own beds every night and they like it too. It's one of the reasons we've been able to keep so many good people for so long."

Eventually, Mike expects to pass along some of his duties to Toby and other managers, but that's down the road. Both he and Toby are optimistic that the family business will continue to a fourth generation.

"I have four children and I suspect at least one of them will want to be involved," Toby predicted. "In the meantime, we'll continue to look for new opportunities and try to maintain our pattern of slow and steady growth. However, my main goal is to maintain the consistent excellence of our work. We want to be known as the 'Best in the Midwest,' and as long as we keep our customers happy with quality work, we certainly think we're going to be right there with the best." ■