

Snowstorm in the Gym



I was recently introduced to Mike Pickel, co-founder of Texas Traditions Roofing in Georgetown, Texas. We were busy preparing case studies for our education issue, so I asked him if he'd worked on any interesting school projects lately. He replied, "Well, I did just get a call about a snowstorm in the gym."

It took a second to wrap my head around that statement. A snowstorm. In the gym. In July. In Texas.

Now, that got my attention. I must admit, that wasn't at all what I was thinking about when I asked

about projects for our education issue. Our case studies usually put the spotlight on marquee projects like the new basketball arena at Ole Miss or the new indoor football practice facility at Liberty University covered in this issue. We were also following stories about a metal roof on a new construction project in Texas, a large hot-mopped modified bitumen re-roofing project in New Jersey, and a solar installation on a school in North Carolina.

But a snowstorm in the gym—I had to hear more about that. Talking with Mike Pickel reminded me that trophy projects are one thing, but there are less glamorous but no less important tasks that can make up the typical day in the life of a roofing contractor.

Texas Traditions had helped out at Summit Christian Academy in Cedar Park, Texas, before, solving some tricky leaks in the mechanical wells over the classrooms that had puzzled other contractors for years. "They started saying we were miracle workers," Pickel recalls. "I said, 'No, we're just roofers, ma'am.' But they just loved us from that day forward."

So, it was natural that school administrators called Texas Traditions when an unusual problem revealed itself in the gym. "They called us and said, 'We've got a problem out here. We don't know what's going on. It looks like it's snowing in the gym.'"

Pickel doubted it was a roof leak, but he went out and took a look. "It did look just like snow," he says.

Luckily, Pickel had seen this once before. Years ago, he had a residential customer with the same problem—army ants. "Sure enough, army ants were up there just eating away at that iso, and it was falling down like snow through any crevices or cracks."

Working with the private school to handle small problems is just part of the job, notes Pickel. So is helping administrators manage their budget to prepare for necessary re-roofing projects. "In some cases, we have to patch these roofs and nurse them along until they have the money for a roof replacement," he says. "You do what you have to do to help a client. So, now we're a pest control guy as well."

Replacing a roof is something building owners might do just once in their lives, so explaining what's involved is critical, notes Pickel. "You've got to educate the owner," he says. "You've got to go out and craft a custom solution for each client. That's what we tell our residential roof advisors all the time: Stop selling and listen to the client. That's key for us. We excel at listening to the client and problem solving."

Listen to clients and come up with a plan to meet their specific needs. That's great advice no matter what line of work you're in. **R**

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