

# Minority businessman builds on God's foundation

► Continued from cover

on a plastic glass window he was installing in a tub-style baptismal font and talked about the beginning, when his father had his own construction business in Union City and he worked on job sites as a boy. His father died when he was 14 years old, but Hockett, now 42, knew he would follow him.

He learned the tricks of the trade in carpentry and masonry by going to job sites, watching others as they worked and "asking a lot of questions. There were a lot of people who were willing to teach me."

But he also found something disturbing at the job sites around the area.

"I got into it because I didn't see a lot of minorities in the business," he said. He feels because he is black he has faced a tougher path than if he were white. "We can't get the funds we need. You've got to constantly prove yourself. (But) I had it up in my mind that I was the type of person I didn't want anything handed to me."

Shirlene Mercer, now a



Mercer Manuel

representative for Congressman John Tanner, saw the same problem from 1987 to 1991 when she coordinated finding minority contractors for construction jobs that had state and federal funding.

Eventually, she was able to get about 30, but "they had a limited amount of services they could provide because of, primarily, their financial ability to get involved," said Mercer, who is black.

Industrial 1 Source, "the only minority full-service industrial sales and service" company in Jackson, also faced a problem getting funding from Jackson banks, said president Cynthia Manuel.

Manuel, who is also black, has had good support from Union Planters National Bank of Humboldt. Still, Manuel says many banks don't want to take the risk.

## God in business

It was mostly small jobs and demolition for Hockett after he formed Hockett Construction Co. about eight years ago in Jackson. He operates it out of his home in the Humboldt area.

Introducing God into the business was the advice of Clark Shaw and Noah Jones of the Old Country Store, who Hockett said gave him work early on and encouraged him.

"They told me, 'If you want to be successful, do God's work, do something for God and you can be successful,'" Hockett said.

When he read about the church burnings, Hockett said he saw his chance to serve. He approached the Macedonia congregation and the Rev. Sherron Brown. Though Hockett had never done a project that large, Brown said there was no question who would get the job.

"With his spiritual guidance and skill, we just went with him," Brown said.

About a week after the concrete was poured, Hockett began to see how much this job

**TO GET IN TOUCH**

Emerson Hockett runs a construction business out of his Humboldt area home. His business number is 901-784-7113.



meant to the community.

"The members and the people of the community would come around the job site and they were so excited about it." A crew of eight to 10 volunteers would show up each day, "good Christian men" who wanted to see the church built quickly. And just driving to work each day was different, he said.

It hit him that "I was building a church on a ground where someone had destroyed God's work," he said.

He kept that in the back of his mind as they built the classrooms around the sanctuary, raised the roof and installed the spotlights inside the sanctuary so that it would be easier for elderly members to read their Bibles. He put engraved pictures of hands clasped in prayer in the windows and a raised cross into the wall above the entrance, symbols he vows to make his trademarks in other jobs.

But it didn't really hit him until he drove up to the dedication of the building in late October and saw about 300 people standing in the parking lot, admiring his work. They didn't know he was the builder and he walked among them, listening.

"They were saying how nice it was and how proud they were of it," he said. "Man, it just brought tears to my eyes. It's like a direct connection with God. That was my payment."

## His message

It took eight months, more or less. Neither Hockett nor the church will discuss how much it cost but Hockett said building a similar church "if I was in it for the money" could have cost \$300,000 and it was done for less than \$250,000, though he won't say how much less. Part of the economy came from suppliers in the area.

"Most of them I worked with were white. They didn't look at me as a minority," Hockett said. "They looked at me as a Christian man trying to do something and they wanted to be part of it."

His work caught the eye of the Rev. Walter Thomas, who hopes to start rebuilding Johnson Grove before the end of the year though in a new lot on Huntersville-Denmark Road.

"I was very pleased with the work he did, I'd heard about him doing good work," Thomas said.

The churches give Hockett physical proof of his abilities. And what started out as brick and mortar and wood is now his testament, and more, his message.

"I was hoping that it would be a lot of inspiration to a lot of the young blacks that if you give something back, good things will happen to you," he said.

**LOTTERIES**

Thursday, Nov. 16, 1995

**FLORIDA**  
Cash 3: 1-7-1  
Play 4: 4-4-2-8

**GEORGIA**  
Cash 3: 4-2-2  
Fantasy 5: 9-13-21-28-31

**ILLINOIS**  
Pick Three-Midday: 1-1-6  
Pick Three-Evening: 3-1-1  
Pick Four-Midday: 7-9-7-7  
Pick Four-Evening: 4-4-4-7

**INDIANA**  
Daily Three: 3-9-0  
Daily Four: 3-2-2-2  
Lucky 5: 1-20-21-22-31

**KENTUCKY**  
Pick 3: 4-7-8  
Pick 4: 7-0-8-8  
Cash 5: 10-11-16-29-33

**MISSOURI**  
Lotto: 1-2-3-13-35-41  
Pick 3: 6-5-8  
ShowMe 5: 1-10-11-13-23

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