

## Ground-Breaking Research in Grand Forks

The next miracle drug, mechanical masterpiece, or biological breakthrough may come out of Grand Forks, North Dakota, developed in the new REAC 1 building on the UND campus. Owned by the UND Research Foundation, the two-story, 40,000 square foot facility was constructed for various companies and researchers to do experimental work.

Bergstrom Electric was hired as the electrical contractor and started work on the facility in the fall of 2007. Because of its research emphasis, the building is mostly composed of labs and some office space for the researchers. There are also several differences from most other campus buildings.

*"They have a very high-tech card-access security system,"* explains Vern Thingvold, Bergstrom's Project Manager. *"They know when you came into the building and when you left. And they have a very elaborate air handling system to keep everything clean."*

There have been several different challenges for the Bergstrom team as the project has progressed. First, the crews started work in the winter and had to trench after the first snow, when frost had already gone into the ground. Special equipment is required to

**Right: Bergstrom crews lay the conduit for the electrical panels in the new REAC 1 building in March of 2008.**



**The new REAC 1 building is located next to the Hilton Garden Inn on the UND campus**

trench in those conditions. Luckily, Bergstrom is the only company in the area to own the equipment necessary for this kind of trenching. *"We've made it a common practice to trench in frozen ground,"* says Thingvold. *"Our machine can trench through asphalt, concrete, or ground that's frozen solid so we can start on a project whenever the owner wants."*

A second challenge has been the large number of change-orders on the project.

There was a large amount of vacant, unoccupied space when the project was bid, and the plans only called for temporary lighting in those areas. However, those spaces soon filled up, which has required numerous additions to the project so that the each room is wired appropriately.

*"We've had to keep very close track of our work, to determine if it's part of the original contract or should be considered*

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one of the change-orders," noted Thingvold. Now that the project is finishing up, parts of the building are occupied while Bergstrom finishes wiring the rest. This will make their work more complicated as the environment has to be kept very clean because of the sensitive research going on in the building. All Bergstrom staff on-site will be required to wear special suits, similar to hazardous material suits complete with dust hoods, to maintain cleanliness while they finish the

remainder of the building. "These will be full-containment suits, which include breathing equipment and everything," describes Thingvold. "They don't want anything foreign in there."

The building cost a total of about \$20 million and will be completely finished later this summer. The electrical construction piece will be over \$1.5 million when all the work is completed. Bergstrom crews installed over 750 light fixtures in the building and will have laid about 100,000 feet of conduit and about 300,000 feet of wire.

"It's been an interesting project to work on," Thingvold commented. "There were more empty panels and spare circuitry in this building than I've ever seen in my life. But they need to be ready for

whatever future needs these researchers might have. I don't think most people know the high tech research that's going on right here in Grand Forks. We were glad to be a part of it." ◇

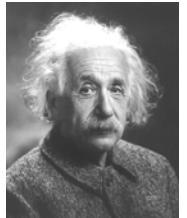
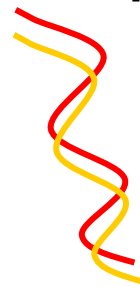


**Left: Bergstrom employees lay the conduit for the main service equipment at the REAC 1 building.**



If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?

- Albert Einstein



## Spotlight on: **Russ Penn**



Born in Bethesda, Maryland, Russ Penn is a self-proclaimed Navy brat and traveled with his father until 1962 when they settled back in North Dakota. He attended the old St. James high school in Grand Forks and also had schooling at UND and various electrical training and management courses, including the Project Management Courses at the University of Purdue. Russ and his wife Linda have three daughters (Jenni, Tammi, and Crista), three grandchildren (Ivy, Wyatt, and Ryder), and one 10 month old Shih Tzu puppy named Moka! Russ is a Project Manager and has been with Bergstrom Electric since 1996

**What are some of the projects you are currently working on?**

The Maple Manor addition in Langdon, Marvin Window's Corporate Office addition

in Warroad, and the East Grand Forks High School Ventilation Addition.

**What was your most memorable project or experience at Bergstrom Electric?**

There are several! My first project with the company was the MinDak Seed addition - a design/build project. We did all the design, including the control design for this one - that was fun! Then there was the Alerus Center and the Canad Inn projects - two of the largest projects that I've been involved with for the company. These were complex but yet again fun since you have to dedicate all of your time to them.

**Did you or do you have a mentor or person that inspired you?**

That would have been the guy who got me involved in the electrical trade - Mr. George

Bateman of Bateman Electric. He trained me, taught me how to treat customers and work with other trades on projects. He also taught me how to treat employees by the way he treated me!

**If you could meet anyone in the world, who would it be and why?**

George McGovern - best I could tell he was one of the most honest, straight-forward political persons I've ever followed.

**What do you like on your pizza?**

Everything except fish. I've really gotten to like chicken pizza! ◇

# Fargo Branch Office

Opened in the summer of 2000, the Fargo office of Bergstrom Electric was originally created to support the Cass County Jail Project.

*"We were covering the Fargo Territory and its projects out of the Grand Forks office and then we landed the jail project,"* explains Bergstrom's South Regional Manager Steve Mundahl. *"It gave us a good reason to open a separate office here. It was just me for the first year, but we've been steadily growing ever since."*

Now with approximately 38 electricians, technicians, and office staff, the Fargo branch office is often busy with several projects going at the same time. In addition, the personnel supports Bergstrom's Bismarck branch office. Together the two offices make up the South Region of Bergstrom's territory.

*"Switching to Regional Management a few years ago has made it much easier to coordinate manpower and equipment between projects,"* explains Mundahl.

The Fargo Branch office heads up projects between Jamestown and into Minnesota, and from Hillsboro south. Recently, in fact, Bergstrom finished a project for Lowe's in Rapid City, SD.

Currently, Fargo staff is working on several projects including the new South Fargo Walmart and St. Anne's Church. Several staff members are also supporting the Bismarck office right now, which has grown busier in recent months.

*"Our Bismarck office is in a growing stage right now, just like we were a few years ago,"* explains Mundahl.

The Fargo office does approximately \$5 million worth of work every year and has completed a number of projects, including the NDSU Living Center West, several school and church projects in the area, Cavendish farms in Jamestown, the state hospital in Jamestown, the Dilworth Walmart and

then the Super Walmart, the Jamestown Kmart, Concordia College Housing in Moorhead, the Home Depot, Lodoen Library, Michaels, Sec Self Storage, Sheyenne Crossings, and a Starbucks.

Perhaps as important as the long list of successful projects is the high quality personnel that Bergstrom retains.

*"What stands out to me more than anything is the friendships that have developed between our field personnel,"* notes Mundahl. *"We work on morale here and I'm proud that we have a good working atmosphere. They enjoy getting up in the morning and coming to work."* ♦

**Photo Top Right:** Bergstrom Electric's Fargo office staff: Steve Mundahl, South Regional Manager; Dan Thomas, Electrical Estimator; Perry Kleven, Service Manager; Paul Soderquist, Project Manager.

**Some of Bergstrom's projects are shown at right: the MeritCare North Addition, NDSU Living Learning Center West, and the townhouses on the Concordia College campus.**



# Cliff Notes

Summer is here, but with the cool temperatures we have been having, you would think this is going to be an early fall.

We have been somewhat fortunate here in the Midwest to find enough work to keep everyone busy during this economic down turn.

We anticipate a busy fall as we see several projects get out of the ground for winter construction.

With fall we are ramping up to get our apprentices registered for apprenticeship classes starting August 17th through (IEC) Independent Electrical Contractors — Dakota's.

I would like congratulate all of our students who graduated last fall

and have went on to take and pass the journeyman's exam for their state licenses.

With the help of the apprenticeship classes provided, the students have the knowledge and confidence to pass the exam and excel in their future as licensed electricians.

I would like to thank all who could attend the IEC Golf outing at the Rivers Edge Golf Course in Manvel, ND. This is held after graduation in appreciation for those that completed their apprenticeship as well as the contractors that help sponsor the IEC. It was a great turn out and anticipate the same next year.

## Family Night at the Races

This years annual event will be held on August 14th. All employees, their spouses and children are invited to attend for a night of fun, food, prizes and refreshments. The employees have a choice to attend the races on that night at either the River Cites Speedway in Grand Forks, the Red River Valley Speedway in West Fargo or the Dacotah Speedway in Mandan.

In addition, we give out prizes to the children in the stands between the three locations.

So everyone enjoy what is left of the summer! We all know what is just around the corner.

- Cliff Moen, President



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