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'BREATH OF FRESH AIR'

William Pitts builds on lessons learned as a kid

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It's been a good year for William Pitts, president of W.G. Pitts Co., a Jacksonville-based design/build company. He's celebrating a baby expected in December, a fast-expanding business, a new partnership and a listing in the Florida 100.

The W.G. Pitts Co. offers services in real estate brokerage and management, construction design build, land planning and bid negotiation. When Pitts founded his company in 1996, he already had inside knowledge of the commercial real estate business. When Pitts was 11, his father opened a motel and restaurant off US 1 north of Callahan.

The property was beautiful, but the traffic left much to be desired.

"I learned very early on that the location of a piece of real estate for any development is vital," Pitts said. "My father sold the place when I was in the fifth grade. The last I saw of the restaurant, it was demolished and up for sale. Don't

try to purchase real estate that is in an area or loca-



William Pitts: "My mother and father were very instrumental in creating a desire to succeed."

tion that is taking a downturn."

The experience left an impression on Pitts, who said his family's successes and failures in business all were influences on his career.

His parents, having grown up in the depression era, were well trained in handling adversity. My father taught me that you are going to encounter challenges, problems and make mistakes. Learn from them, don't repeat them and move on," said Pitts, the youngest in a blended family of 12 children.

"My mother and father used to buy eggs by the case from the Gold Kist plant," he said. "Meals were produced on a large scale."

Pitts is a senior in University of North Florida's Building Construction Management program.

"I usually take one or two classes each semester," Pitts said. "This has become such a way of life I will probably take one or two classes in something forever."

When he has time to relax, Pitts reads the Bible, construction-related magazines, biographies, and books on business, history, political philosophy — particularly those by author Ayn Rand.

"I was very inspired from reading Herb Peyton's autobiography, 'Newboy', and seeing how a man of humble beginnings can have such a positive impact on a community," Pitts said.

Peyton owns Jacksonville-based Gate Petroleum.

Perhaps that inspiration contributed to Pitts' listing in the Florida 100.

"[The listing] shows that a young company with proper management and controls can be not only moderately successful, but extremely successful in competition with older companies that have been around a long time," said developer Neal Harris, with whom Pitts partnered to form an Orlando office. "It's really a breath of fresh air."

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