



# The perfect partners

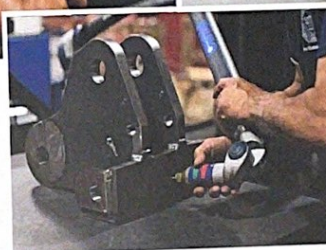
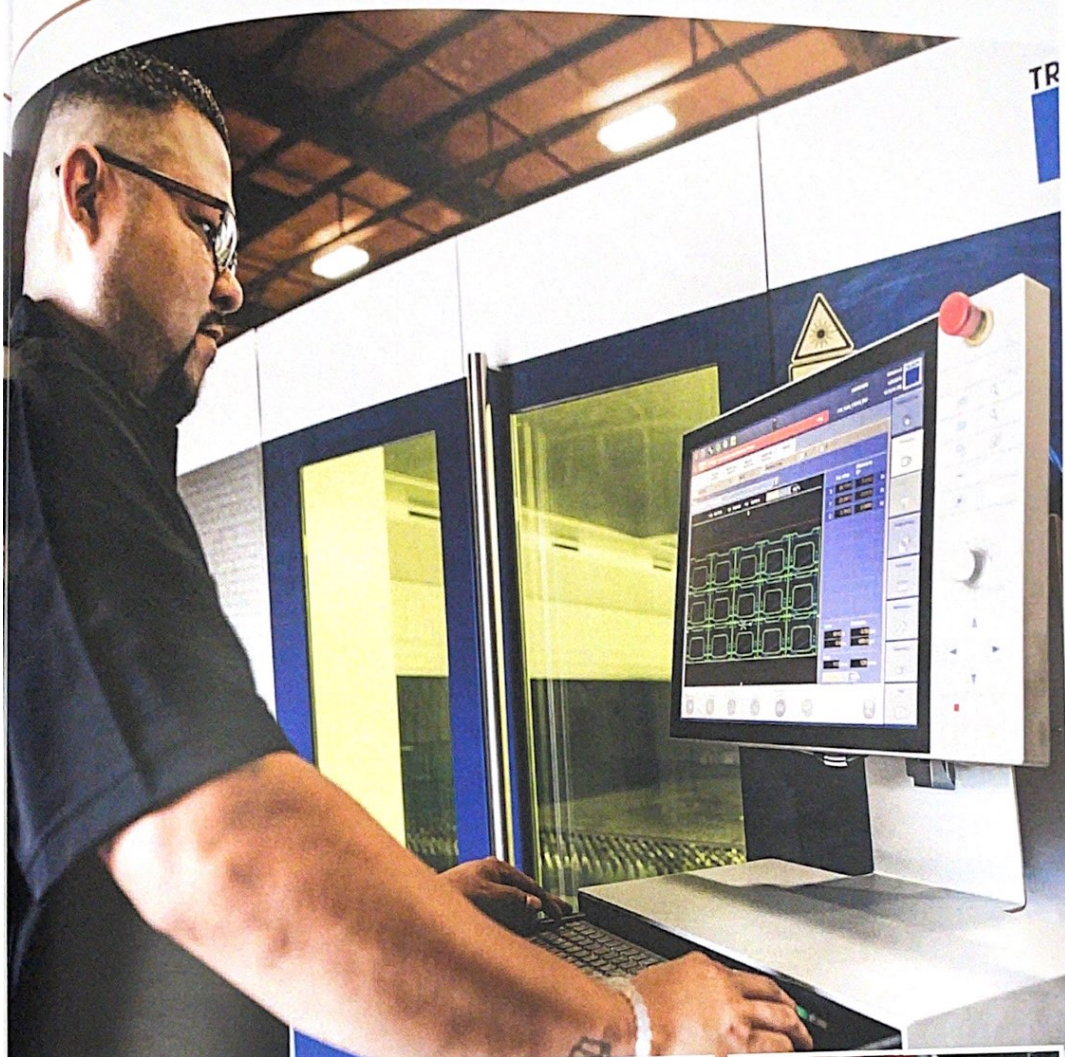
With a focus on metal fabrication, **Anchor Partners** is steadily building up a portfolio of manufacturing entities with a proven performance record and a willingness to grow with both their customers and the industry as a whole

**T**he Willbanks family have been in the steel industry now for more than 70 years, and in 2021 this legacy continues through the efforts of Tra Willbanks, Owner of Anchor Partners. Headquartered in Southlake, Texas, Anchor Partners specializes in manufacturing and metal fabrication, seeking to grow by acquiring organizations with a proven performance record and a positive, growth-orientated culture. Today, its businesses include Anchor Fabrication, BOH Defense, Abby Manufacturing, and Quality Industries Precision Metalworks (Quality Industries).

To gather the full picture as to how Anchor Partners came to be, it is a good idea to go back more than 30 years to when Tra's father established Anchor Fabrication in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1990. What began with the purchase of a 25,000-square foot custom metal fabrication facility, quickly expanded through the subsequent years to become an operation offering laser operations, forming and cutting. In 2006, Tra became CEO of Anchor Fabrication, and it has since continued its upward trajectory in becoming one of the nation's premier metal fabrication partners.

"One of the unique characteristics of





Tra is that he has always been more of an entrepreneur by nature," explains Greg Frye, Chief Operating Officer of Anchor Partners. "As such, he knew fairly early on that he didn't just want to own Anchor Fabrication, instead his goal was to build a portfolio of privately held manufacturing businesses that would perpetually add value to existing assets as it grew."

Joining Anchor Fabrication within said portfolio was firstly Abby Manufacturing, which was acquired in 2015. Operating in the Midwest — where it serves clients in Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas and Alabama

— it specializes in medium-to-small scale metal fabrication projects. In 2018, BOH Products came into the fold. BOH proudly serves the US military, government, commercial and international clients with its Field Pack-Up (FPU) product line, which is used for moving/storing various materials through ground, sea or air platforms. Then, in 2019, the organization purchased Quality Industries, a Tier 1 supplier to Class 8 trucking manufacturers offering a full range of fabrication services.

Moving into 2020, and Anchor Partners decided to structure itself in such a way that its three fabricating businesses — Anchor

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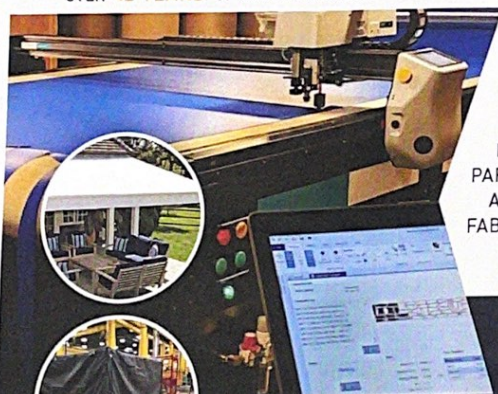


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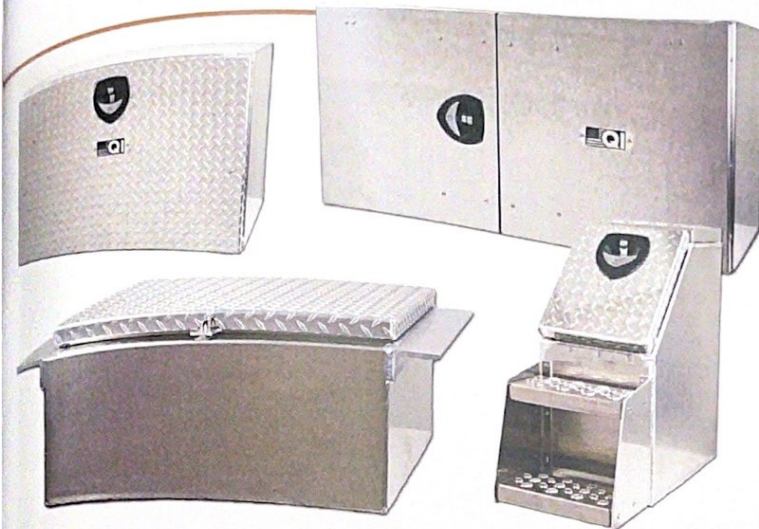
Fabrication, Abby Manufacturing and Quality Industries – would make up one of two divisions of the organization, while BOH (essentially an OEM selling a finished product line) would sit within the other. The two divisions will then be able to align themselves accordingly as new businesses are brought into the fold in the coming years.

"We approached several of our current large OEM customers, and they quickly realized that there was a significant opportunity to provide additional offerings thus creating a cross-selling potential between our divisions/businesses," Greg details. "This was extremely well received, and influenced the transition of our strategy into one where we invite customers to tell us what they want to build or what services they require, and we can then facilitate that through our portfolio of companies.

The strength of Anchor Partners' offering lies – at least in part – in the diversity that each of its businesses bring to the table. "What our fabrication businesses share is the fact that they are all experts when it comes to metal, however each has its own unique core competencies," Greg concurs. "Anchor Fabrication, for instance, is what we would consider to be our heavy gauge, large welded assembly specialist, while Abby Manufacturing is more of an expert when it comes to mid-gauge solutions, and Quality Industries is very much our hub for aluminum expertise. So,



## Anchor Partners



when you look across the board, you can see that we have really worked hard to cover a complete metal offering from one end of the scale to the other."

As COO, Greg is tasked with overseeing operations at all of Anchor Partner's businesses. One of the things he has done with each is go in at an operational level and introduce shared best practices such

as Lean and 5S systems to make each a process-driven entity. "We have made sure to implement a number of quality processes throughout each business, as well as making sure that operational underlying processes are consistent across the board. For example, we are transitioning each one to the same ERP system, Epicor 10," Greg states. "We also purchase similar equipment for all of



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our facilities – for instance all of our fiber lasers and press brakes are manufactured by Trumpf – and this gives us fantastic continuity of supply and allows us to redirect our efforts to another of our companies should any issues arise at one of the others. It also provides our maintenance teams with a degree of simplicity that allows them to go in and quickly fix any problems, as well as deliver any preventative maintenance. This high level of redundancy is critical and provides a built in contingency plan to ensure we can support our customers' needs.

"Among the different equipment and technology-based investments that we have made in recent years are the addition of eight fiber lasers, new plasma machines, approximately seven press brakes, and several new robotic welding cells. Another big addition for us in the last 12 months has been the purchase of an automated panel bender. This marks the first time that we have invested in such a piece of equipment, and we will be adding more of this technology – again from the same manufacturer – going forward."

Organization-wide best practices also extend to the people side of Anchor Partners.



with a culture having been developed that is based on five guiding principles: Care, Commit, Create, Act with Purpose, and Go Beyond. "It helps that many of the businesses that we look to acquire are founder-owned and lead family-type business, as these tend to share many of our own beliefs and qualities," Greg says.

Looking back on 2020, collectively Anchor Partners enjoyed a strong year, in spite of the challenges presented by Covid-19, and took significant steps towards finalizing its rebranding of the organization to focus on the group and its range of manufacturing and metal fabrication capabilities.

Understandably, a top priority for the coming months is to complete this branding process, which it hopes to conclude with the launch of a new website by May 2021. "By the middle of this year, we want to be able to showcase to everyone Anchor Partners' fabrication division and highlight to them exactly who we are, and what we can do for them," Greg declares. "From there, the other thing we will be looking to do is identify additional acquisition opportunities so as to

make our divisions larger and more diverse. That means taking a look at suitable companies and asking ourselves if acquiring them makes sense, will they add value, and do their specialisms either complement or add to those that Anchor Partners already possesses.

"The great thing is that, as a result of all of the work that we have completed to date – and will complete in the next several months – we have given ourselves a platform upon which we believe we can achieve even greater growth going forward. Indeed, bringing all of our respective capabilities to bear under one entity has already demonstrated to us that there is a wealth of opportunity out there for us that we didn't have in the past!" ✱

### Anchor Partners

**Services:** Manufacturing and metal fabrication

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