



## Open Ears, Open Mind

**L**isten longer than you talk is the philosophy John Kelleher tries to live by every day as general manager of Francis Constructors, Inc., a contracting company that has been in business since 1978. “If I try to listen to everything someone else says before I shoot my mouth off, I’m more likely to understand their position and be able to come to a better judgment,” he says.

While this philosophy has made him successful, he readily admits it has tested him a time or two in the business world. Still, Kelleher likes to give people the benefit of the doubt. He is quite puzzled why other people don’t feel this way; why people are so hard on one another. At one time, he began walking down the path of being difficult with other people, but soon saw that the high-pressure style just didn’t motivate people in a positive way. Over the years, he has determined to be different and make a difference in the ways he treats people.

“I treat employees, subcontractors, and other people I deal with as well as I can,” he says. “I try to respect their position and listen to people. I have found that a more cooperative effort tends to get better results than sheer will-power.”

While Kelleher can find his day consumed with all the big and small details of running a successful business—legal matters, budgets, project management—his real daily goal is to focus on his customers so they understand he is selective with those he works for and that they are valuable to him. Ultimately, John Kelleher is a man who sticks with his principles of honesty and forthrightness, and he hopes that’s what people will remember him for.

by Cynthia Scanlon

photography by Mike Eller

# Has the Passion

Gerry Murphy believes successful people are passionate people. He is unequivocal in his belief that successful people in any business—but especially in the contracting business—need a passion for what they do. “If you don’t have passion, go do something else,” says this president of McCarthy’s southwest division, which includes Arizona, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico and Mexico.

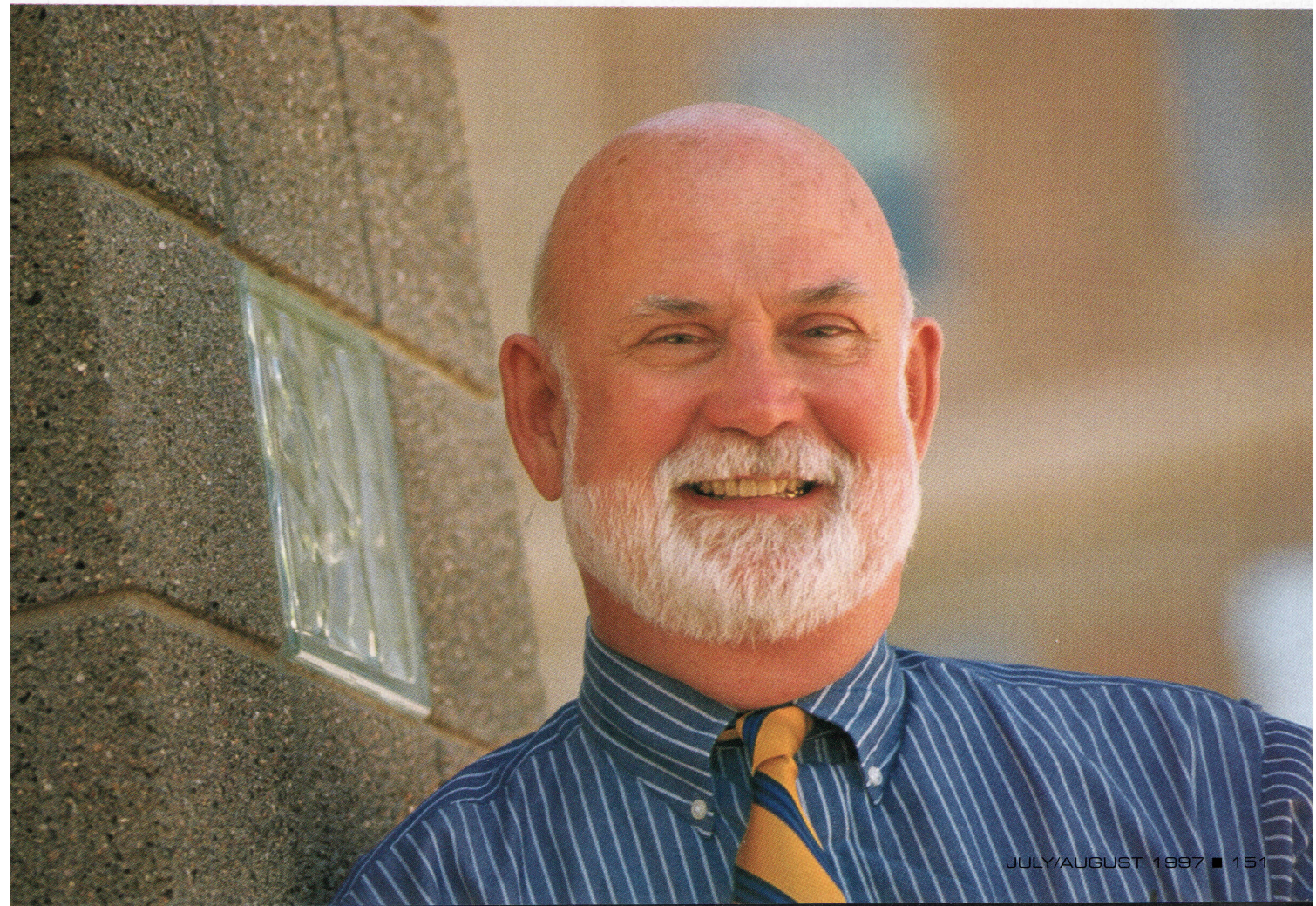
He points out many of the tradesmen in his company have a genuine love for the work they do, and he feels that spills over to create and drive the quality his company is known for. “Our tradesmen are proud of finishing concrete, or proud of assembling forms, or proud of the high-class tile work they can look at when they are finished,” he says.

Along with passion, Murphy is also a big believer in being truthful, telling it like it is whether the other party wants to hear it or not. But he believes in sharing truth in a compassionate manner that leaves people with their self-esteem intact. “Do it with courtesy and with humor if you can,” he says. “But tough situations never go away, so I believe in facing them truthfully and straightforwardly.”

In the end, Gerry Murphy, who is chairman for the Arizona Commission on the Arts, would like to be remembered as a man who raised a great family, ran a sound business and helped a lot of people grow in that business. And one who contributed to his community. To accomplish all this he reminds us and himself: “It starts with passion.”

by Cynthia Scanlon

photography by Mike Eller



# Putting it All in Perspective

On some days Joseph McCaleb, president of Conelly Swinerton Construction, says he feels like an official meeting attendee. And with good reason. His days are filled with all the work you would expect from a hardworking leader of a successful contracting firm. Yet, somehow he manages to juggle all the presentations, employees' problems, staff questions, business planning, and, of course, the constant paperwork. This is not that unusual. What may be more unusual is Joe's attitude that while business is important, it must be put into perspective with the rest of one's life. "We work to live, we don't live to work," he says. "Your family is more important than your job, and you've got to take care of yourself and your family. I also think you have a responsibility to your community, and then your job hits in there somewhere."

While many may think they have this attitude as well, Joseph lives what he speaks, getting everything done. This does not mean McCaleb takes his responsibilities lightly. Quite the contrary. His professional life is important, especially when it comes to working hard. He's a man who keeps his eye on the proverbial business ball, and his reputation is not something he is willing to jeopardize. "The working hard part will come easily, and I think you have to be on your guard on the ethics part," he says. "It's easy to be led down the path in the other direction, and it's a real challenge to maintain your personal integrity, but we need to do that."

This father of eight is a definite believer in balance. His children, ranging from ages 3 to 22, see to it that he maintains that balance. His wife of more than 20 years further helps him keep his perspective. "My wife and children and church come first," he says. "Not that I slack off from my work, but [my family] is the reason I am here." He knows how convenient it is for some to bury themselves in their work at the expense of their life. "It's much easier than dealing with emotions at home," he says. "It's an easy cop-out for many people to become workaholics in order to avoid the real responsibilities of life."

But McCaleb knows where his responsibilities lie, with his family, with his church, and with his work. He is quick to remind himself: "When I'm dead and gone in 30 years, very few people will remember the buildings I built, but my grandchildren will remember me. I think that's the last impact we are going to have on the world—what we do with our children."

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photography by Mike Eller





## Adapting to Change

Ask Kathleen M. Rakoci, president of Russell A.C., Inc., and current president of the Arizona Builders' Alliance, what she considers having the most impact on her right now, she will answer with one word: change. She will explain how people in her generation (the Baby Boomer generation) are more susceptible to change and must therefore not be afraid of change. She also makes us aware that in business and life today, change is going to happen on a daily basis, not just once a year. "Keeping an open mind to change is something that is vital to managers," she says. To help her with her own changes, Kate read Gail Sheehy's book *New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time* and found it to be full of good advice to people who are now living years and even decades longer than ever before.

"It gives examples of what people have done when they finally realize they are going to have to do something after their first life," she says. The book, she says, points out "that you still have a chance to do all the things that you wanted to do that maybe you didn't get a chance to do for one reason or another."

And Kate has experienced a change or two. The one-time elementary school teacher now presides over a \$14 million, 100-employee company. She believes you can do anything you put your mind to, and if you take it one step at a time—and if you keep your goal in mind—you can attain what you are after.

She credits her decade-long experience as a second-grade teacher as being invaluable for her business success. "It really prepares you," she says. "Adults are a lot like kids, and while we are all basically the same, kids are more honest and say what they think." Her years of teaching, she says, have taught her to read people better, to be more astute about how they feel about things and, most of all, how to be a better communicator.



## Three of a Kind

Back in 1989, John Molnar, his wife Jill and their friend Bob Hinkley incorporated Sun Country Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc., a business they started with high hopes of making them successful. At the time, they were breaking some rules. Spouses working together in harmony all day long is a tough thing to achieve. And rules like friends in partnerships tend to divorce after a time. Such has not been the case for this dynamic trio. They have created their vision and moved steadily forward to make it a concrete reality.

"We get along very well," says John Molnar. Jill is the controller in charge of the office, John handles layout, fabrication, sheet metal and installation, and Bob's expertise lies in estimating. "We complement each other and stay out of each other's way."

John credits the success of the business to their relationship with one another and to their ability to work together on a common dream with the same goals. He especially credits his success to his "outstanding" relationship with his wife. "We enjoy working with each other," he says. "She's unique, one of kind."

John admits that running Sun Country has taught him a great deal about dealing with people in fair and equitable ways, while still getting the work done. "Starting a company, you have to deal with a lot of personalities, a lot of likes and dislikes of people, how to put the right people together and how to find good quality people," he says. That education has made it all worthwhile for him. "It's been very rewarding and very fun. We are very happy with the way things have worked out."

Overall, John says he would like Sun Country to be remembered as a good, honest, hardworking contracting firm giving customers a quality job. His company has survived and thrived with the credo: "Work hard, and a lot of times, your dreams and plans will come true."

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