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Welcome to *The Lehigh Way*.

This issue of *The Lehigh Way* focuses on enduring relationships: one among two business associates and friends that dates back 65 years, a Lehigh-client relationship of over 20 years and four Lehigh Family members saying goodbye after a combined 104 years.

My dad Earl and George Panepinto met in 1956. The more-than-six-decades-long relationship built on a handshake helped pave the way for many successful projects and collaborations and a commitment to family and community that continues today.

Rich Products is a worldwide leader in the food industry, and their business model carried over into recent campus renovation plans as the company began to welcome back remote employees after the pandemic. The company's creative vision helped fuel the "Rich Re-Imagine" project which was completed to facilitate innovative and user-friendly meeting rooms with state-of-the-art workstations that help make workdays in the office easier, while complementing collaboration and inspiration for Rich employees and their teams.

Our feature story illustrates one of the cogs on our Lehigh Flywheel that drives the business. We "Celebrated our Successes" and recognized the achievements of four employees at a retirement party this past September. The four brought more than a century of combined service to Lehigh, which was recognized at the celebratory event attended by family, current and past Lehigh employees and industry partners. We wish our retirees the best in their new life adventures.

Our "Ask the Expert" segment features a Q&A with our new director of safety, Matt Stoklosa who reviews some of the key tenets of the Lehigh Safety program and shares his ideas for improving an already strong program. Committing to Safety is a Lehigh Core Value, and Matt relates some important activities to make sure everyone gets home safely every day. He also has some tips that readers can implement at home for personal safety.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Please let me know if you have ideas for future stories or more impactful content.

Sincerely,

David E. Knauss

President

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*A Six-Decade
Friendship Built
On a Handshake*

by Doug Eberhardt

Lehigh Construction Group, Inc. and Pinto Construction Services have collaborated on projects for almost 40 years, but the relationship began long before then.

Earl Knauss and George Panepinto met in 1956 while Earl was working for International Chimney Corporation and George worked at Pinto Trucking Services.

Earl, 91, and George, 82, have remained friends for more than 65 years and recently got together to reminisce on some of their favorite jobs, to talk about customers and challenges they faced and to share some of the values that helped inspire their sons to run their own successful construction companies.

In 1960, the owner of International Chimney Corporation retired, a new ICC was formed and three new offshoot businesses were spawned: Porter-Knauss Construction, Taylor International and Furnco. Earl Knauss and his boss at ICC, Woody Porter, started Porter Knauss and began serving former ICC clients on their first day in business. Earl and Woody never missed a paycheck!

George Panepinto was only 16-years-old when he began to work at Pinto Trucking Services for his Uncle Charles “Charlie Pinto” Panepinto. George didn’t quite have his driver’s license yet, just a learner’s permit. George was the tire repairman for Charlie’s fleet of trucks. In the event of an emergency road call, Charlie would provide his cherished “Erie County courtesy card” to George in case he needed to leave the premises for a road call and was pulled over. In 1972, Charlie retired, and George started Pinto Equipment Rental. During this time, George also began raising his family, including son Jim and his six siblings who became important contributors to the Pinto business effort.

From their initial meeting, the Earl and George business relationship was “built on a handshake,” and their shared values and work ethic would grow two prosperous companies and eventually inspire the next generation of leadership.

As the men met to review their families, lives and careers, their mutual respect

was overwhelming. They smiled like schoolboys reminiscing about the many successful projects completed together. Both men’s memories were sharp and the amount of detail they shared was incredible. Earl shared photos of one of their jobs and was quick to point out that they might be the only job photos ever taken as getting the work done always took precedence over “marketing.” George agreed.

Earl was highly appreciative of George, and his team and the two were able to recall many specific large foundation jobs both companies worked on over the years at the American Brass, DuPont, Bethlehem Steel and General Motors plants.

While Porter Knauss was the general contractor, Pinto Equipment Rental specialized in excavation and eventually evolved into demolition. George worked with Earl as a subcontractor with each of the men

proud of the fact that they had completed all their deals with only a handshake — which worked well for both parties during their entire business relationship. While the scope of their jobs was being estimated and worked out, each man stood by their obligations and commitments — another value that would find the way into their son’s companies. Both men stressed the importance of being fair to the other as an integral part of their mutual success.

George was proud of the fact that Pinto’s reputation enabled his company to attract good help stating that “most of the success was based of the loyalty and quality of the people” they attracted. Earl agreed saying “same kind of companies, same kind of people.”

Citing an example of the loyalty of his people, George talked about his 85-year-old cherished secretary “Rose,” who



worked closely with him for more than 50 years. Earl remembered her fondly as well. It seems as George returned to the office one day, he spotted Rose in his private office with her feet up on his desk. She was unaware of his presence and was praying the rosary. He overheard her say, "Dear God, please bless George who is on a dangerous wrecking job today." George, overcome and humbled, quietly put his paperwork on her desk and left for the shop.

While George worked with other general contractors and treated everyone fairly, Porter Knauss was a trusted partner, and he spoke of advantages that might materialize during the job that could be shared to facilitate working together to ensure the best outcome for the customer while benefiting both parties and encouraging collaboration and long-term relationships.

Another favorite anecdote the men shared was when the city of Buffalo instituted the requirement that general contractors secure a license to work in the city. Earl went down to the License Bureau to present his qualifications to the Contractors Review Board. Who was sitting there chairing the hearing ... George Panepinto. George laughingly added, "Can you imagine that, I started out working for Earl and had now been given the task of OKing his license." George turned to the board and said, "He's the best in my book. I move we approve without further delay."

Both Earl and George are still humbled by their successes in business and in life. They both feel that surrounding themselves with good and ethical people was critical to long-term success, and both stressed loyalty and trust as most important in their own success. When Dave and Tom Glomb (who worked for Earl as a superintendent) started Lehigh in 1984, the lessons, work experience and values imparted by Earl helped guide the new business owners as they established their own customer relationships.

Pinto Construction Services, Inc.
President Jim Panepinto has also grown



his company using values learned from his father over many years. George recounted a recent conversation with his sister during which she said, "I never remember Dad and Mom preaching to us what to do. They never told us what to do, we just did what they did." Those same values have been passed along from George to Jim and his siblings. Jim, now president of his company, oversees operations, while his dad, on any given day, can be found sitting on a piece of heavy equipment demonstrating to veteran and novice operators the techniques he has honed over the years.

The loyalty and trust passed down from Earl and George have also been an important part of the relationship between Dave and Jim. While they had grown up in the businesses together, each has carved out his own successful niche in the construction industry.

After a fire destroyed the former Tops warehouse on Dingens Street in Buffalo, Jim purchased the site with the intention of cleaning it up for redevelopment. Lehigh helped to market the property and made several attempts to relocate clients and prospects to the site. Eventually Jim opted to build a warehouse on spec and engaged Lehigh to manage the construction and to work closely with his crews. The successful delivery of the project allowed Jim to fully lease the 80,000-square-foot building, which will lead to the construction of a second warehouse on the site in 2023.

While both Earl and George enjoyed talking about the past, their eyes lit up when they talked about their futures, what they still have to offer and how their lives have meaning through service to others.

Earl is still hard at work overseeing a vegetable distribution operation that delivers unsold produce from Eden Farmers to pantries and soup kitchens all over WNY. He is active in his church and is a lifelong Rotarian. Earl and Dave have also supported Amy Betros and St. Luke's Mission of Mercy for more than 25 years.

George feels service is a fundamental part of his makeup, not only in his business, but should be reflected in his service to society. He has been involved with the St. Jude Center on Ellicott and Carlton streets in Buffalo that provides pastoral care and support in the medical corridor's hospitals, the Family Justice Center, Grand Island dealing with domestic violence and the Response to Love Center on the east side of Buffalo, feeding the hungry. George is extremely proud of his son Jim's efforts with St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute and his spear-heading of several campus development projects, along with facility improvements at the Kevin Guest house in the medical corridor that provides hospital support to out of town patients and families.

These two humble men who have given so much to their families and businesses are treasures to be cherished, and still have so much to give.



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RICH PRODUCTS, RE-IMAGINED

by Paige Holmes

When COVID-19 affected the world in 2020, Rich Products was not immune to the workplace changes the pandemic caused. The global, family-owned food company closed its corporate offices that year, and most associates worked fully remote. After 2020, when lockdowns began to end and COVID restrictions were loosened, Rich's began thinking about bringing their associates back to the office. But for their headquarters in Buffalo, New York, Rich's didn't want to have their associates return to the same office they had left months prior.

At the end of 2021, Rich's and Lehigh began work on a second-floor west renovation for Rich's Buffalo headquarters. The company has always prioritized a hybrid work model, even before COVID, and they wanted to keep that emphasis at the forefront of their renovation plan.

"We closed our corporate offices in 2020 ... but Rich's was well-positioned to work remotely," said Scott Petersen, the corporate facilities manager for Rich's. "Prior to the pandemic, we implemented a flexible work policy and deployed technology and resources to support hybrid work. This made for a

relatively seamless transition. The goal of our office renovation was to create a cutting-edge destination equipped to support hybrid work that would become a place our associates want to be."

Petersen has worked at Rich Products for a decade, and he's



familiar with the values that have made the family-owned food company so successful.

“While we believe in the power of working from anywhere and support flexibility as a company, we know that there is irreplaceable value and positive energy that comes with being together, in person,” Petersen said.

“Specifically, we believe the office provides significant value by improving our ability to increase speed and execution for customers, and build trust more quickly throughout the organization,” he added, stating that it takes three to five times longer to build trust in a virtual-only environment.

Petersen also said bringing associates back into the office would help Rich’s “engage in higher energy exchanges and more effectively manage complex projects, build deeper and broader relationships and develop and mentor our associates and continue to evolve our culture.”

Rich Products shared their vision with Lehigh Construction Group, whom they had partnered with for renovation work in the past. Joe Migliore, a project manager and estimator with Lehigh, worked with Rich’s on their renovation.

“They were definitely due for a refresh,” Migliore said. “They hoped this would draw people back to the office and support a new way of working.”

This continued focus on hybrid work influenced the renovation, including a new office layout.

“You have people coming in three days a week instead of five, and the office is now nomadic, which gives people a variety of different places to work, driving collaboration and creativity,” Migliore said.

John Rupp, a project manager with Lehigh who also worked on the Rich’s renovation, revealed how much thought went into the redesigned office layout.

“If associates feel like they’re taking one thing away, like a permanent desk, then you have to give something back,” Rupp said. “These desks for these workstations were nicer than the standard workstation. They all had height-adjustable desks, so you could stand or sit. They all had dual monitors. They all had docking stations, so it was very simple to just walk up to a desk and plug in and start working.

“The other thing that Rich’s wanted to make sure was that it was simple. They found that if somebody tries something the first time, and it isn’t very user-friendly, they don’t try it again.”

In addition to upgraded individual workstations, the office layout was changed to further the building’s collaborative function.

“They needed a place for people to land once in a while to get some work done in between meetings, but the main focus was more collaboration space and different types of collaboration space,” Rupp said. “There were some more traditional conference rooms that had video conferencing, but a lot of the collaboration areas had movable desks and chairs,

so you can change the configuration of the space depending on what type of meeting it is.”

While increased hybrid functionality was a main focus of the renovation, upgrades didn’t stop there. Brand-new office furniture from Prentice Office Environments outfitted the new space, and colors were utilized to make the building as unique as it is practical.

The Rich Products renovated office in Buffalo includes 18 different paint colors and 17 different carpet colors throughout the building.

“The theme that the designers came up with was a rainbow of rooms,” Rupp said. “It’s the core of the building. The colors change.” One end of the building starts at the beginning of the rainbow. As you travel through the building, the colors gradually change until you reach the end of the rainbow at the other end of the building.

While the interior of the building is bold, colorful and newly upgraded, the support systems were renovated as well. Specific renovations included new HVAC, plumbing, electrical and sprinkler systems. It was a full renovation designed to get Rich’s associates back into the office part-time, and Rich’s and Lehigh made sure it was a space that would boost the creativity and collaboration of those working in the redesigned office for years to come, well after the pandemic that sparked these changes in the first place.

“Our redesign integrated purposeful elements like bold colors and contemporary design to inspire creativity, cohesive meeting spaces to fuel collaboration and premium amenities to enhance the associate experience,” Petersen said. “Everything is powered by best-in-class technology that creates a consistent, engaging meeting experience, whether you’re in the room or remote.

“Part of what makes Rich’s unique is our collaborative culture. This new office design empowers our associates, creating the right environment and providing the necessary tools to continually deliver for our customers.”



Honoring Lehigh Legends

For nearly 40 years, Lehigh has strived to create a family atmosphere — more than just a place to work. The “Lehigh Family” has been built upon a foundation of shared values, caring and a consistent purpose. As a result, more than 30 percent of the employees are members of the 20+ Club, representing over 20 years of service. In September 2022, **Josie Stockweather (35 years), Jack Bouquin (32 years), Bill Baker (30 years) and Harold Knittel (7 years)** said farewell to the company at a retirement party that embodied the Lehigh Family. While it was bittersweet for the retirees to say goodbye to their lifelong careers in construction, the party was a true celebration of the many accomplishments each of these individuals made at Lehigh.

The party highlighted the impact each retiree had on the company and the many relationships they formed along the way. The party wasn't just open to Lehigh employees — family members, subcontractors and clients joined the celebration. The party was planned to create an event that would spotlight each retiree and their individual impacts. One of the main displays of appreciation included “achievement boards.”

“Success to me was always the friendships you made, the bridges you built. And so, to me, it wasn't just about the work, the projects you did. ...Over the years, I just enjoyed all of the people I got to know.”

— Harold Knittel

These achievement boards were a walk down memory lane for the retirees. Each retiree received their own board, which featured photos and memorabilia including projects and accomplishments from each individual's time at the company. Everyone had the opportunity to look back on their career through visual representations of their achievements. It was the perfect way for Lehigh to create a personalized “thank you” for each retiree. For Bill Baker, this was his favorite memory from the party. His board featured more than 30 years' worth of highlights. “I couldn't believe how many projects I actually did,” he remarked, regarding the nearly 100 projects that made it onto his board.

Yet, the night wasn't only about commemorating career accomplishments. In true Lehigh fashion, it was also a night for celebrating the many relationships that have been formed by each of the retirees. Many subcontractors and clients took the time out of their schedules to attend the event simply because these retirees impacted their lives. The turnout was proof of Lehigh's mission of celebrating family values.

The Retirees

Josie Stockweather

Josie spent the last 35-plus years wearing many different hats at Lehigh. While she didn't work directly in the field, she did work directly with Dave Knauss and Tom Glomb, as well as all Lehigh employees in multiple ways — as an office and HR manager, through safety, health and wellness, travel agent and just a “go to” person whenever someone needed anything.

During retirement, Josie plans to just enjoy being able to do the things she likes to do and travel with her husband, Dave, visiting family and friends as well as different areas of the country.

Bill Baker

As a superintendent, Bill was responsible for day-to-day work in progress and managing contractors.

He said during retirement, he plans to spend time with his family, friends and grandchildren, travel and “do a whole lot of whatever I want.”

Jack Bouquin

Jack began his journey at Lehigh as site superintendent, running large jobs in the field. From there, he went on to wear several hats with different roles throughout his career, before eventually ending his time at Lehigh as a superintendent once again.

During retirement, Jack plans on spending more time with his family, traveling, and spending time in the woods, fields and streams. With a large property that requires a lot of maintenance, Jack also plans to dedicate his new free time to work around his property.

Harold Knittel

Harold spent the last seven years of his career as a Lehigh project manager. Throughout this time, Harold managed many projects and also leveraged his years of experience to “mentor” subcontractors.

During retirement, or what Harold calls “his next journey,” he plans to relax by the pool, practice guitar and spend time with his granddaughter.

“I had a great career with Lehigh and enjoyed all 30 years. They were always there for me, just like family.”

— Bill Baker



“It was exciting to know the company cared enough to take an interest to show their appreciation to the four of us for all our hard work and dedication over the years,” said Harold Knittel. He was both surprised and touched at the turnout of the party. It meant the world to him that so many former clients and subcontractors attended the celebration to send him off onto his next journey. The turnout was truly a testament of the impact Harold had in his seven years with the company. He joked that he’s definitely not a wallflower and spent the evening catching up with old friends, whom he’ll greatly miss. “It was a very open and free atmosphere,” he remarked.

“The party made me realize and appreciate how many people I’ve connected with through the years — subcontractors or workers,” said Jack Bouquin. Since he spent years as a site superintendent and also did a stint in the office, Jack made too many connections to count. It wasn’t unusual to interact with 75 to 100 people on a single project – and Jack completed many. “Lehigh’s mission is all about treating clients fairly, making sure they get what they expect out of the job, as well as trying to limit any disruption.” Yet, his hard work and dedication to each project did not go unnoticed. Many attended the party to show Jack how much they appreciated the care he took with each and every project he led.

“The biggest accomplishment was the total 32-plus years of service to the company and making it through that to retirement.”

— Jack Bouquin



“To me, Lehigh’s mission is all about being there for others — keeping people safe, being responsible, working as a team, doing whatever it takes to keep our clients happy — in my personal life I try to do the same things.”

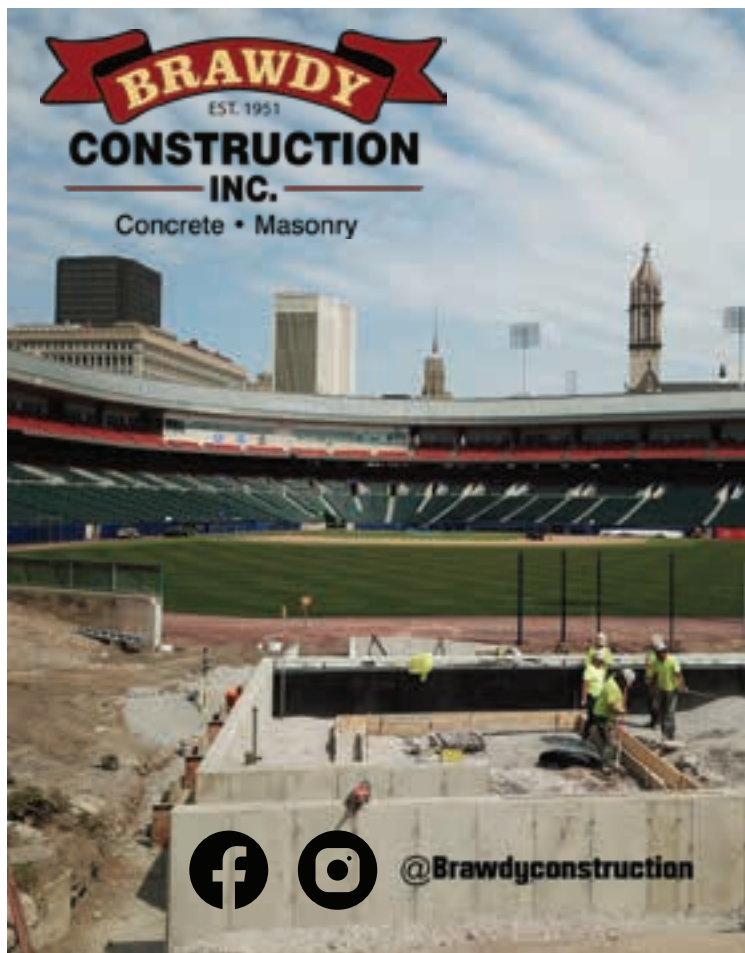
— Josie Stockweather

As former human resources and administrative manager, it felt different for Josie Stockweather to be on the other side of the retirement party. “It was a little overwhelming walking into the party to celebrate retirement and being one of the guests rather than the one planning the event. There were so many wonderful things done to make the party special and memorable. It was great to have both current and former employees as well as so many other people I have worked with through the years,” said Josie. She didn’t have just one single memory from the party that stood out because the entire evening truly captured the relationships she’s built throughout her time at Lehigh. She

was someone who employees could always count on.

While Bill loved reminiscing on his favorite memories through his achievement board, another highlight of the party included catching up with former employees and other more established members of the newly dubbed “Lehigh Retirement Club.” While he’ll miss all of the activity and intensity of big construction projects, Bill is looking forward to a more peaceful retirement and being able to choose when he’ll pick up his tools.

We wish Josie, Bill, Jack and Harold all the best in retirement and we are grateful to always have them as members of the Lehigh Family.



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Ask the Expert:

Matt Stoklosa

Director of Safety, Lehigh
Construction Group, Inc.



One of the Lehigh Core Values is “Committing to Safety.”



Lehigh recently hired Matt Stoklosa as our director of safety, and we reached out to him for his ideas on different safety topics.

The renewed focus on these items will benefit our employees, their families and our customers.

Q: You have a strong track record of overseeing safety activities at different organizations. What is the most important aspect of safety to you?

A: The most important aspect of safety for me would be both company and employee buy in. You can have all the rules and regulations you want at a company, but it means nothing if people don't utilize the tools they are given. Lehigh cares about safety starting at the top and working its way through the company, and it shows every day.

Q: Repetition and awareness help refresh employees' appreciation of pertinent topics. What is the value of weekly toolbox talks?

A: Toolbox talks are a good, quick reminder of things employees deal with every day. As people perform the same task over and over it can get repetitive and you can become complacent. With a toolbox talk, it might refresh someone's memory on how to do something in a safe manner to help with that complacency.

Q: Likewise, is consistent hands-on training an important aspect of any safety program?

A: Absolutely. I think the monthly hands-on training we do is

important. Also pairing newer employees with more veteran Lehigh employees is extremely beneficial. You can say something all you want but until it's presented in a real-life scenario you may not firmly grasp it. In the monthly trainings, showing videos and demonstrating different safety rules and regulations and explaining why we do things the way we do all help drive the point home.

Q: You have several training credentials. What are the different levels of OSHA training you currently hold?

A: I currently have my construction health and safety technician (CHST) credential. I also have my OSHA 10 and 30 as well as my OSHA 500 credential which allows me to teach both the OSHA 10 and 30 course. I am also certified to teach forklift driving and safety. I have completed many one-off trainings on OSHA topics including fall protection, excavation, PPE and others.

Q: Lehigh has been an OSHA Alliance partner for nearly 20 years. Is this beneficial?

A: Lehigh is one of the oldest OSHA Alliance members in the

country. Recently we were given an opportunity to become ambassadors in our OSHA Alliance. This is a fairly new level and once it is confirmed we will be part of a select few across the country. It goes to show how Lehigh really does commit to safety.

Q: What are some recent improvements or trends for improving safety for our field team?

A: We have recently introduced new gloves, which are cut-resistant and provide a thermal heat to keep hands warm in the cold months. We are also currently in the process of discussing new hardhats with MIPS (multidirectional impact protection system) technology. Our recent safety trends are going great and hopefully everyone keeps doing their part!

Q: Is there one thing readers can do at home to improve their own safety around the house?

A: I think just being aware that just because you aren't on a job site doesn't mean you are impervious to an injury. Whether that is climbing a ladder or using a table saw, just remember to practice what you would do at work. Use precautions and don't become complacent just because you are in your own home.

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