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MECHANICAL CONTRACTING

High octane profession

Cars, careers, ignition and tradition — there's a connection?

BY RACHEL RUHL

It's said there's a universal relationship connecting fathers, kids and cars — one that defies explanation.

Passion for the rumble of a muscle car's engine and the thrill of jammin' gears has rooted itself deeply in many a family tree, passed down between generations like Grandpa's ears or Mom's deep blue eyes.

For Harry Papazian and Mike Margarella, long-time friends and co-owners of Staten Island-based Mercury Mechanical, it couldn't be truer.

Harry owned a magnificent 25th anniversary Stingray; he's a Corvette man through and through. He shared his love for the car with his son, John. And when John turned 21, Harry helped him get the keys to a Corvette of his own.

Mike used to race muscle cars at the Englishtown track in New Jersey back in the day. His car of choice was a green 1970 Chevelle SS. His son, Joe, followed in his footsteps and now drives a Super Sport of his own — a jet black Camaro.

Brand loyalty is strong among families as youngsters remember the good times in Dad's souped-up Chevy, or summer drives in Grandpa's restored Nova. For many of us, memories pluck at heartstrings and become key ingredients when making a decision about what car to buy.

Often, the same can be said for all things mechanical. Both John and



Joe have chosen to pursue a career with Mercury Mechanical. Mike's eldest son, Michael, also joined the company.

Customer relationships are key

Mercury Mechanical is a building maintenance and service company that's created quite a niche. With 90 percent of their work in the commercial field, and a large portion of that in hydronic work, including steam systems, Mercury's focus is equipment start-up and commissioning.

They also perform extensive service work for a broad range of commercial and industrial facilities in the metropolitan New York and northern New Jersey areas. In round numbers, they service 1,000

facilities at this time.

Over the 10 years they've been in business, Harry and Mike have found the key ingredient to having plenty of work is in building and maintaining customer relationships.

"We haven't yet needed to create a website for our company because the people and manufacturers that we work with are not only loyal to us; they readily spread the word about what we do, as well," Papazian explained.

Manufacturers like Laars Heating Systems Company, Bradford White and Tekmar have discovered the rarity and usefulness of Mercury Mechanical's niche work.

"Mercury Mechanical is my number one resource for service work in the area," shared Douglas DeAngelis, Eastern-Atlantic sales manager at Laars. "I've known Harry for more than fifteen years. His company is outstanding to work with. They have all their people trained on the equipment and latest troubleshooting, and they always put the companies they represent first."

"We're proud to be able to work with a company like Laars," Papazian said. "We were a fan of their brand before we joined forces and now — working with their products every day — we see what kind of standard they hold themselves to and the quality of their products. We've even 'Laars-ed' out one of our own company rigs."



MECHANICAL CONTRACTING



Sharply-dressed van

"We bought a new Chevy Express van in 2014," Papazian said. "Douglas DeAngelis designed it, and it just looks real sharp. We wanted to promote the products that we're confident in, and the reaction on the streets has been very positive since the new wrap job."

Only the blind miss the messaging on this traveling billboard. The well-executed graphics convey confidence in product and technology; professional through and through.

"What makes us so different from other companies is that we can do it all," Margarella added. "Our customers and the management firms that hire us know that they only need to make one phone call to get the job done. From plumbing to gas connections, electronic controls and pumps, to sheet metal fabrication — we've got the guys who can do it all."

According to Papazian, the van puts on 40,000 miles a year. That's a lot of exposure to the public.

"We get phone calls from people who've seen the van out and about," said Harry's son, John, who typically drives the van. "People will find us on the jobsite and ask us about Laars products and our services. We've even been approached while fueling up. The van's proven to be a great marketing tool."

The back of the vehicle is stocked with virtually every imaginable part required for the servicing of Laars boilers — from controls and pumps to extra nuts and bolts.



"It's a top priority to make sure our vans are always stocked with anything we could possibly need on a service call," John said. "This way, the parts are on hand so we can get the job done quickly and efficiently."

Problem solvers

"98 percent of problems we get called on for Laars products are results of the way they were installed by the original technicians — not the products themselves," explained Victor Arroyo, Mercury

Mechanical supervising technician.

"For instance, the most common problems we encounter at commercial jobsites are insufficient gas pressure, not enough water flow, control wiring, venting or improper piping or pumping."

Recently, Harry and Arroyo — who has been in the industry for over 23 years — were called to Pennsylvania to start up a mechanical system in a rural home where the HVAC technicians weren't up to date with the latest Laars technology.

Papazian and Arroyo took the day to not only deliver and mount the

75 MBH Laars Mascot LX boiler, but, they also stuck around to help the local HVAC company pipe it properly, answering any questions they had along the way.

Sheet metal fab, too

Mercury Mechanical is comprised of 12 people, including Harry, Mike and their sons. Aside from service work, the company also does sheet metal fabrication.

"My grandfather did sheet metal work during WWII and he taught my father and uncle to continue it after the war. They showed me the ropes at a young age, and I taught my sons what they taught me," Margarella said. "When I first started learning from my father and uncle, the equipment was often venerable, old, but solid as battleship gear. Times have changed, though we've still got the best gear and technology manufacturers provide."

Now, companies like TJ Maxx and Michaels Arts & Crafts hire Mercury Mechanical for sheet metal fabrication work.

One stop shop

"What makes us so different from other companies is that we can do it all," Margarella added. "Our customers and the management firms that hire us know that they only need to make one phone call to get the job done. From plumbing to gas connections, electronic controls and pumps, to sheet metal fabrication — we've got the guys who can do it all."

Together, Harry and Mike share the hope that one day their sons will pass down the love of the trade — and Chevrolets — to their kids the way it was passed down to them. ●