

Joe Kormanik – K-Construction

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Omaha, Nebraska. It's time for the announcement of the National Dealer of the Year Award by Lester Buildings. And the winner is...not some big construction company in Denver or New York, but an entrepreneur and his family from rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Joe Kormanik is co-owner of K-Construction, a family construction business in Alta Vista, Kansas. Joe was raised at El Dorado. While in high school, he met his wife-to-be Carla. His future father-in-law became a construction superintendent in Iowa and Joe worked for him there.

In 1974, Joe began his career in the post-frame building industry as a crew member. He worked his way up over time to be a crew foreman, salesman, and then regional manager with different companies. As he advanced through the ranks, Joe and Carla lived and worked in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas.

In 1985, they moved back to Carla's home area at Alta Vista. Joe continued to erect buildings, and in 1991 their son Jason suggested they go into business for themselves. The business became known as K-Construction (with the letter K, as in Kormanik).

"I work for my wife," Joe said with a smile. "The money goes to her." Carla is the bookkeeper and their son helped manage the crew.

In 2002, Joe was approached by the Lester Building company to serve as a dealer. He gladly took this on. "Lester is one of the top manufacturers of post-frame buildings in the nation," Joe said. They continued to grow the business.

In 2004, tragedy struck when their son Jason was killed in a car accident. Their other son Ben stepped in and filled Jason's role and kept the company operating.

Today the business has grown to include Joe, Carla, and their son Ben plus eleven employees and a sub crew. Joe has a working relationship with several other subcontractors as well. The business includes construction of commercial, agricultural, and residential type structures.

"Back in the '90s, most of our business was farm," Joe said. "Nowadays we do houses and larger buildings and commercial projects too."

Recent projects include what might be called a mancave, with a shop connected to living quarters. One recent example was valued at more than a third-of-a-million dollars. Another they finished to look almost like a condominium inside. One recent project in Lawrence included a 26 foot tall observation tower and a spiral staircase. Wow.

"(When I got started,) I thought the problem would be: I don't have enough business," Joe said. "But instead, it's that I can't find enough qualified workers."

"We will do a turnkey project with a firm price," Joe said. "We try to incorporate everything so the customer has no surprises."

Joe and his family have built the business volume to about \$2.5 million in 2011. "I believe in a high degree of reliability and attention to detail," Joe said.

"A lot of our employees have been with us a long time, and we're fortunate to have them," Joe said. Many of the company's projects have earned the Award of

Excellence, and in 2007 K-Construction was named by Lester Buildings as its National Dealer of the Year.

Not bad for a company from the rural community of Alta Vista, population 434 people. Now, that's rural.

In fact, when a city councilman in Alta Vista stepped down, Joe was recruited to fill out the unexpired term. Joe didn't run for re-election but was written in again and elected to the City Council. He is also active in his church, serving on the Board of Deacons.

"We enjoy what we're doing and we hope to continue to expand," Joe said. "We currently have a draftsman, we've hired a mechanic, and we'd like to add another salesman."

For more information about this company, go to www.k-constructioninc.com.

It's time to leave Omaha, Nebraska, where we find the National Dealer of the Year Award has been presented to Joe Kormanik. We commend Joe and Carla, their son Ben and all those involved with K-Construction for making a difference with hard work and entrepreneurship. It's good to see that, in rural Kansas, business is building.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.