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Loyal and skilled employees are the basis to W.T. Kenney Co.'s continuing success

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It's often said that construction is a young man's occupation. This isn't necessarily true.

W.T. Kenney Co. was founded in 1939 by Walter Thomas Kenney in Arlington. Next year they celebrate their 75th anniversary. They are a 4th generation family owned and operated commercial painting firm serving New England.

My father, from his father always stressed that our biggest asset is our employees. They are our ambassadors of first impressions.

W.T. Kenney Co. strives to field the best trained, pro-active painters money can buy. They E-verify, perform background checks and drug tests for new hires. They believe in a probationary period for new hires to ensure their commitment to the company's mission statement and overall culture. Due to the company's culture of synergy they're able to successfully complete over 350 projects per year. They believe that a high standard of quality in the painting field can be achieved reliably, consistently and profitably. Quality is defined by an all-encompassing attitude of pride and commitment in everything they do. To achieve success, they must continue to deliver superior service to their clients on a daily basis.

We have been fortunate enough to employ some of the most talented craftsmen in the industry. Many of our employees grew up in families with multiple generations in the trades. Just like a singer or pro athlete, some individuals are gifted with inherent talent. These people are a rare find these days and the key to our success.

Long-term employment is our goal. Finding and training the staff is time consuming and expensive, so we offer competitive salaries, health, dental, 401K's and abundant overtime opportunities has helped us retain the best people in the field. We are very proud of their long standing, loyal employees include Tom Hayes, journeyman, Jerry Solomon, supervisor , and Dave Downie, journeyman.

TOM HAYES - 43-year employee. Tom comes from a long line of gifted painters. His father and two brothers have also worked with our firm. From our inception through the 1980s, we have done many steeples and swing stage work. Having no fear of heights, Tommy usually spent 6 months of the year painting prominent structures and steeples throughout New England.

Having been involved in this company for over 30 years, I have known many career painters. Without hesitation I feel Tom is probably the most gifted individual our company has ever employed.

JERRY SOLOMON - 50-year employee. In 1963 at the age of 20, Jerry got married, and began his life long career with the W.T. Kenney Company. This year he celebrates his golden wedding anniversary with his wife, Dotty.

In life very few things are as constant and reliable as Jerry. We have counted on him throughout the years to run some of our most challenging projects. During the summer months, Jerry is called upon to run multiple full dormitory repaints throughout New England. Whether it is a mansion in Beverly, Boston University president Silber's residence, or a pipe farm at Polaroid - Jerry always arrives early and leaves the job late. He's just that kind of guy.

I fondly remember the time one summer morning; I was around 17 years old, that I got lost on my way to the Perkins School for the Blind. Arriving 30 minutes late, Jerry informed me he "didn't give a rat's ass" whose kid I was and I better never be late again! I never was.

DAVE DOWNIE - 54-year employee. Originally from Canada, Dave moved to Arlington in the 1950's and began his apprenticeship with our firm. In those days paints were mixed by hand. Powder tints only came in the primary colors, and from there one had to tint paints by hand. Cutting the lead, adding linseed oil, turpentine and tints to achieve the desired color was a necessary skill I remember Dave picking up tints at the shop, preferring to make the colors or stains himself, up until the mid 1990s.

For many years the Bank of New England was one of our largest accounts. Dave was our "go-to-guy" for graining or restoring natural woodwork. His ability to match and field stain woodwork is a lost art.

To this day, "rookies" less than half his age cannot match Dave's speed or quality of workmanship. It's been fun over the years watching the latest "Johnny-come-lately's" jaw drop at how gifted he is. Dave still packs his own chute and sky dive's most weekends. He is truly an amazing man.

Tim Kenney is president of W.T. Kenney Co., Arlington, Mass.

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