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Diverse expertise, passion for building keep Bruce Keeton forging ahead

By BONNIE KUTCH

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With 30-plus years of executive experience under his construction belt, Bruce Keeton understands what it means to build from the ground up — especially when it comes to building a general contracting business in Southern California.

After serving as vice president of operations/construction for San Marcos-based Lusardi Construction for 13 years, Keeton formed Keeton Construction Co. Inc. in 1986 as a two-person show. Within the span of 17 years, he has established his company among the region's top contractors, having built premier facilities throughout Riverside and San Diego counties.

“Our experience and expertise encompass many project types, from industrial, institutional and commercial; to educational, medical, hotels, public works, retail, office and assisted-living facilities,” Keeton said. “Our diversity has always been our strength.”

With a conservative, controlled business plan and growing track record for performance and flexibility, Keeton Construction has become a major player in the region's commercial construction industry. Most recently, the company built the new \$10 million, 45,000-square-foot animal care facility for the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA in Mission Valley; the \$4.4 million, 46,000-square-foot Extended Stay America Hotel in Yorba Linda, Calif; and the new \$3.3 million Silvergate Retirement Residence in Fallbrook, Calif.

“When the construction industry underwent some recessionary periods in the late 1980s and early 1990s, we noticed that the firms that specialized in just one type of project seemed to suffer the most,” Keeton said.

“Even in the midst of the economy's more recent slump, our ability to handle a diverse range of projects has kept us going strong.”

Keeton points out the misconception that many shell contractors are either inexperienced in interior work or simply don't do it.

“In reality there are a number of general contractors that provide the full scope of construction services, from shell work to interiors,” he said. “Hiring a specialty contractor in addition to or instead of a general contractor is neither necessary nor cost-effective in some cases. Ideally, you want one contractor that can handle the entire job.”

Keeton cites the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA project as a recent example. The firm handled the entire project, from shell construction of the one story metal-framed and stucco exterior, to interior construction of the adoption gallery, veterinary medical center, auditorium, conference rooms, learning center and administrative offices.

“This is just one project for which we were given the opportunity to demonstrate our diverse range of capabilities outside the scope of just shell work,” Keeton said.

“Unfortunately, some general contractors lose bids because it is assumed they can only handle a portion of the work.”

Keeton Construction’s portfolio of notable projects also includes the \$22 million, 410,000-square-foot manufacturing and distribution facility for The Scotts Co. in Temecula; the \$4.5 million, 90,000-square-foot Temecula Corporate Centre; a 134,000-square-foot distribution warehouse for Milgard Manufacturing, also in Temecula; the 50,000-square-foot Golden Triangle Medical Center in Murrieta; the \$3.6 million Carlsbad Corporate Center; and the \$9.2 million facility for the Vallecitos Water District, winner of the 1998 Orchid Award.

Maintaining a strong presence in both San Diego and Riverside counties has proven to be very valuable to the company. Since 1999, Keeton Construction has more than doubled its gross annual revenues, from \$20 million to \$40 million; and increased its number of employees, from 18 to 30 in its San Diego and Temecula offices.

As Keeton has been entrenched in the same industry for more than three decades, one might wonder: Does he ever get bored?

“Not a chance,” Keeton said with a smile. “This industry is always evolving and taking interesting turns that keep us not only busy but also excited and passionate about what we do. There is no time to get bored. Besides, doing what you love is never boring.”

Bruce Keeton is president of Keeton Construction, a full-service general contracting firm with offices in Temecula and San Diego. For more information, visit www.keetonconstruction.com or phone (951) 296-6400.