



It's been said that behind every great man is a great woman. This is the underlying sentiment by incoming Framing Contractors Association President Tony Barras, president of T. Barras Framing.

A Southern California native, Barras credits much of his past business success and strategy for survival in the current economy to his high school sweetheart turned wife, Lisa.

Barras affectionately noted that Lisa has been more than just his personal cheerleader but has exuded the energy and sincerity of a squad of cheerleaders.

"Lisa has been an incredible motivator for me and an asset to the company overall," said Barras.

The man poised to pilot the association during the next two years took the pinball approach to landing a career in construction. As a youth, Barras half-heartedly daydreamed of making his surfing hobby his life's work. This changed after he came into contact with a particular woodshop teacher in high school.

"Mr. Seifert really took me under his wing and mentored me. He offered me extra credit in a nighttime cabinetmaking class, and I jumped on the opportunity," said Barras. "At graduation time, a local cabinetmaker approached my instructor for qualified labor. Mr. Seifert recommended me."

Barras spent the next two years on the cabinetmaker's employment roster and completed much of the wood siding for the South Coast Plaza and the South Coast Village, dubbed Orange County's equivalent of Rodeo Drive. It was the work with the siding that sparked Barras' initial interest in framing.

Shortly thereafter, Barras joined a crew of piece workers, some he'd known from high school, and beefed up his resume to include experience on numerous Carl's Jr. restaurants and apartment buildings. It wasn't long before Barras' desire to learn about framing from a global perspective – such as how window and door locations are decided and how to cut stairs – landed him on a layout crew. Barras also educated himself on roof cuts and floor joists bringing his Framing 101 education full circle.

A couple key factors inspired Barras to relocate to Las Vegas.

"Work really came to a standstill during the winter months in California and it was financially trying to budget for 12 months on a 9-month work schedule," Barras said. "Also my [then] girlfriend Lisa owned two clothing stores in Huntington Beach and Seal Beach. When the first Gulf War got underway, the shoppers' traffic came to a halt."

So Barras and Lisa made a few trips to Las Vegas under the guise of fun, but Barras was intent on seeking out gainful employment during the daytime hours.

Although Barras had yet to secure a full-time gig, he and Lisa nevertheless arrived in the desert in 1991.

"I would show up to sites inquiring about work and each foreman would ask me the same question, 'Do you have a crew?' After admitting I didn't and getting turned away, I eventually got smart and said yes, I had a crew. I would show up to work the next day and get started doing all of the work myself. It usually took me about three or four days, but I managed to get the job done without a crew," laughed Barras.

Barras proceeded to work over his first year as a Las Vegas resident for 11 different companies as a piece worker. His last employment leap that year led him to the doorstep of an established General Contractor Jack Breslin of Breslin Builders.

“Instantly, I knew this was the company for me. Jack possessed top-notch integrity and offered only the finest quality workmanship and value to his clients, still does,” said Barras.

After a year with Breslin Builders, Barras was so esteemed by management that the entire framing division was turned over to his care. Barras spent the following nine years in this capacity with Breslin Builders until Jack encouraged Barras to acquire his own license, his own framing company.

Today, neither Barras nor his wife would trade life in Las Vegas. The Barrases have found numerous ways to give back to the community that has offered them a home. Lisa is a Court Appointed Special Advocate and regular volunteer for the Child Haven. Barras has built a Las Vegas Rescue Mission and a chapel for Salvation Army in collaboration with his industry contacts.

As a couple they enjoy time away on the golf course or boating at Lake Mead. In 1999, Barras and his father earned their charter (up to 50 feet) sailing credentials after sailing a 54-foot 1929 schooner from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas.

Barras recognizes the years ahead are volatile ones for those employed in the construction industry. As a result he is currently working on becoming LEED certified. Barras also recognizes that you seem to work the hardest when you are the least busy.

“I don’t know what the future holds for our industry. I know my company is taking it day-to-day. I firmly believe we need some confidence builders such as seeing the Echelon back under construction. I think it will have a domino effect. For now, I get up every day and go to work and hope the phone rings,” said Barras. “My tenure as president is sure to be an enlightening one for all involved.”