Roofing Metal Heating Associates (RMHA) - Trade News Issue September, 2006

In Memoriam – Joe Karis

by Charles McGarvey
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From:rsis5353@aol.com

To everyone,

For those interested in the RMHA's history, I will continue forwarding past issues of the RMHA Trade News.

I have attached the September 2006 issue. I know we have new names attached to our mailing list who may not know about the history of the RMHA, so I hope you find the information interesting

However, there is a story behind this issue. Last week, I stopped by Mike Donnelly's office to drop off some information.

Mike is part of a six-generation family of roofers and roofing contractors. If you go into Mike's office, he has many pictures on his walls and desk of past family members working as roofers. I saw a picture of a young boy holding a pitch dipper standing next to a pitch pot. There was no name under the picture, so I just assumed it was a family member who worked as a roofer as a young boy.

So, I asked Mike, "Who was it"? He laughed and told me it was Joe Karis working as a young boy. For those on our mailing list who don't know who Joe was, it would be impossible for me to explain.

Over the weekend, I was trying to figure out if I should send out more pictures or written articles to those on our mailing lists, but decided it's been a while since I sent out an old issue of our Trade News, so I went to my stack of old issues of the Trade News, and without even looking, I randomly grabbed one dated September, 2006. I started copying the issue to send out and had to stop when I reached Page 4. On this Page was the picture I had just seen of Joe Karis in Mike's office as a young boy.

Joe passed away last July 2, 2025, nine days short of his 99th birthday. After the last page of the attached Trade News, I included an article I wrote that was published in the Trade News under the title "In Memoriam - Joe Karis".

A coincidence?? We have all had them. I once heard a definition that a coincidence is God's private way of saying "hello"; in this case, maybe it was Joe.

Regards,
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ATTENTION MEMBERS!
YEAR 2006
General Membership Meetings

Wednesday - SEPT. 27th
NOV. 15th

All meetings held at:
Kelly's Seafood Restaurant
9362 Old Bustleton Ave., Philadelphia

Dinner served promptly at 7:00 p.m.

Joe Karis Celebrates his 80th Birthday

One of our most loyal & dedicated members, Joe Karis, celebrated his 80th birthday in July. We extend our best wishes and thank him for his many, many years of service to this association.

Here is the delightful thank you note that we received from Joe.....

Dear Phila. Roofers Assoc. & all of our Members: Thank you for the cheerful birthday card and the generous gift. As I am very frugal with Association money, it is too much! But, thank you all. It will be well used by Mrs. Karis and myself.

The "Fountain of Youth" is all in the mind. Think young, work young, and you to will be able to climb a 60 foot ladder at 80 years young.

Love you all,
Joe Karis

Joe Karis at age 11 — Learning the trade while working with his dad. As he likes to say..."the picture that sold a 1000 roof jobs."

The year was 1980, when I was told by a Business Agent from Roofer's Local 30-30B that there was a roofing contractor association he thought I would be interested in joining. He gave me the information, and I arrived at the old Woodbine Inn in Pennsauken, N.J., to attend my first meeting of the Roofing, Metal, and Heating Associates (RMHA).

At that time, it was common for over fifty roofing contractors and associates to attend monthly meetings between September and May. I walked in, not knowing anyone, and sat down beside someone who looked about my age. I introduced myself and told him this was my first meeting, and I didn't know anyone. He laughed and said, "I just started attending the meetings, and I still don't know anyone". His name was Jimmy McCullough, of McCullough Roofing, who later became a president of the RMHA.

After dinner, the President of the Association stood up and spoke words that I had never heard before. He was a genuinely positive speaker, speaking about the pride of being involved in the roofing industry and how everyone at the meeting was a credit to the profession. His words were so optimistic about being part of the roofing industry that I knew I wanted to be part of this association.

Shortly after his talk, he even went around and sold 50-50 chances. I bought several, and much to my surprise, I won a roll of Type IV fiberglass ply sheet. However, by 1980, I was heavily involved with single ply systems, so I gave the roll to the new person I had just met, Jimmy McCullough.

Wow, I had just listened to this speaker talking about how great it was to be part of the roofing industry, and he even sold me a winning 50-50 ticket. I couldn't believe that there was an organization and people within the roofing industry who shared my sentiments about being part of the roofing industry.

Who was the person talking and selling the 50-50 chances? His name was Joe Karis, of Karis Roofing, President of the RMHA. Next to Joe during his talk was his Vice President, Paul Rys, of Rys Roofing; Joe Spitzer, Executive Secretary; and several directors: Bob Becker, of Reliable Roofing; Mike Donnelly, of John P. Donnelly Roofing; Gene Fleming, of Fleming Roofing; Dick Fone, of Fone Roofing; Roy Leary, of Leary Roofing; Joe Lockman,of Baron Roofing; John Murphy, of Murphy Roofing; and Fred Wallace, of Wallace Roofing. Hopefully, with my 45-year-old memory of attending my first meeting, I didn't mix up or forget anyone's name.

Sadly, Mike Donnelly is the only surviving Officer of the RMHA from my first association meeting in 1980.

I later met Joe, and over time, developed a relationship and subcontracted several single-ply reroofing projects. I once told Joe about a financial investment I had made in a different industry. He immediately told me,*" Charlie, you're meant to be in the roofing industry, and that is where you should keep your money. Get your money out of there as fast as you can because every time I ever invested in anything outside the roofing industry, I've lost it".* These were words of wisdom. I still remind myself that you only learn by losing, and I never forgot Joe's words.

I still recall a wall on the side of a small garage along Rowland Ave. in the northeast, featuring the advertisement, *"Karis Roofing, we put your grandma's roof on."*

Yes, our association has lost another giant within the history of the RMHA. Furthermore, I wonder if I would have ever joined the association if it wasn't for the positive words he spoke at the first meeting I ever attended. If anyone has read any of my articles published within the RMHA Trade News that discuss pride in being part of the roofing industry or the benefits of RMHA membership, those written words are nothing more than the verbal words spoken by Joe Karis in 1980 at my first association meeting.

To the Karis family, I know I speak for the entire RMHA; our prayers are with you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charlie McGarvey (RSIS)