

business, LE Schwartz & Son ushered keep things where they need to be. he usually begins in roofing, learning in its fifth generation in 2004 when I see the growth happening and we'll each area and works his way through Michael Kruger joined his father Steve go where the times take us. I'll keep the ranks. Training normally starts as and grandfather Melvin in the offices he the trend running," he says. a summer job in high school and has wandered through since he was a boy. He is the inimitable bridge between direct descendants of LE Schwartz the past and the future, what was and what is to be. Seated with these three once their education is complete. a longtime business leader in Macon, men, you can see that Michael has Melvin, Steve, and Michael all followed shares some of what has worked during great respect for each of his elders and their business strategies, yet it is clear he is developing his own style. Michael comments about his future with an easy smile. "There's so much to learn other employees' respect. "Each family serve the customers, or your heritage and I'm trying to take it all in, but member has to prove himself to that allowed you to get here. We I'm not worried that things won't be other employees of the company," care about our community, which has

The "trend" thus far has been for continues through college.

A family-owned and operated this company and this family not to family member enters the company,

Exactly, what is the secret to to employ within the organization LE Schwartz & Son's longevity? Steve, the same pattern before and after his tenure: "Caring about all aspects graduation from The University of [of the company], whether it be Georgia. Melvin explains the conventhe customers that are your life's blood, tional wisdom for earning the your employees that allow you to okay because I care too much about Melvin says. In other words, as each provided us with a lot of things over the

most important thing," Steve explains.

their synagogue, Sha'Arey Israel, at which the entire Kruger bunch are active members. Steve now serves as Chairman of MEDC. It is humorously every organization in Macon, but you will never hear that from him, as he is extremely humble regarding his community responsibilities.

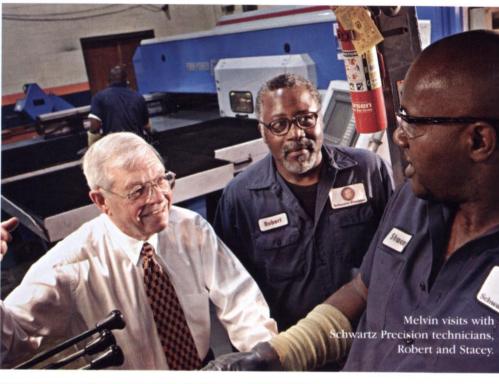
years, so I guess I would say that is the advice to up and coming family companies. "Every family person needs It is evident how much loyalty the to go where they fit. They need to sense. We all have to adapt in order to Kruger family has for Macon by their complement one another," he says. civic involvement. Steve and Melvin Melvin adds: "Communication is have both served as president of critical. If family members don't like the business, they should talk through that and realize that it might not always work out."

Moreover, a company and its leaders reported that Melvin has been a have to know how to roll with the member of and/or chaired just about times, so to speak. "One of the major challenges you go through generationally, whether it's a family business or not, is the business environment changes. Michael brings computer skills, Steve, who joined his father at LE which were limited in my time, and Schwartz in 1978, offers valuable weren't there at all when Dad was

coming through the business so that has kind of evolved in a general business move forward in a positive manner,"

Positive evolution is a perfect coin phrase for LE Schwartz & Son's almost continuous expansion since 1910. What began as a humble enterprise at the dawn of the 20th century saw a growth spurt during World War II. Then, the company stumbled into prosperity again in 1953 after a devastating tornado ripped through Warner Robins, creating a tremendous amount of roofing and sheet metal work during subsequent rebuilding. Business has been expand-





ing ever since.



through the first decade of the 21st century, its employees are proud to boast a company responsible for some of the most visible roofing and sheet metal projects in the Southeast. Among their many accolades, RSI Magazine named LE Schwartz & Son "National Roofing Contractor of the Year" in 1987; in 1994, the company was named "Georgia Family Business of the Year" by Kennesaw State College and the Atlanta Business Chronicle. The National Roofing Contractor's Association also has presented the company with the Gold Circle Award for workmanship. Most recently, the LE Schwartz & Son subsidiary, Schwartz Precision Manufacturing,

As LE Schwartz & Son navigates

Assurance certification. Regarding their quest for excellence, Melvin comments, "We're not a company that has a philosophy of being the biggest. We want to be the best. I think we've got the people to make us grow and prosper."

received

their aerospace Quality

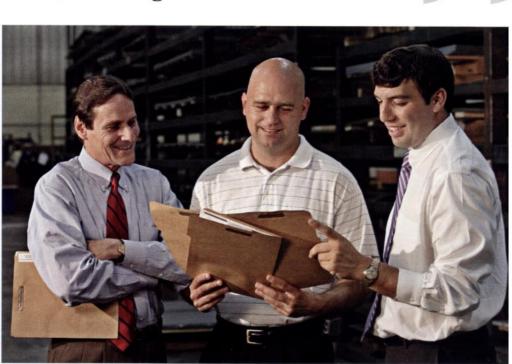
As Michael prepares to move to the helm of his family's dynasty someday, what counsel does each of his relatives wish to pass on to him? "It takes all aspects...you need to work within all parameters that allow other people to come with you as opposed to you pulling them," his father says. Grandfather Melvin wisely notes, "If there's anything we really understand, it's that we rise or fall based on each other. We deal with people with integrity. I'm not worried about Michael's values system. As long as he stays on the same path, I have every confidence that he'll be successful. I can't ask for anymore than that."

When asked what LE Schwartz might think of the business that bears his name, Melvin reflects for a moment. "I don't imagine in his wildest thoughts that my grandfather would've envisioned what he started would be what it is today. Life was a big struggle when he was coming along and he never got to participate in and see the growth that has occurred over the years. But we've never deviated from the philosophy that he had as a person, both as an individual and in a business sense."

Steve adds, "I like to think my greatgrandfather is looking down and smiling." Kristen Soles Photography by Ken Krakow

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Melvin Kruger



Above: Bob Schorr and Tom Brewer consult with Micheal as he continues to learn the business from his family and co-workers. Below: Steve (and all the family) acknowledge that their corporate success is due in great part to committed staff memebers like Karen Cross.

