

Gus Vratsinas

Some would call the life of Gus Vratsinas the realization of an American dream. It begins with the chronicle of his father, the late John P. Vratsinas. As a resident of pre-WWI Greece, John Vratsinas had a vision of immigrating to America, where he could make a life for himself and start a family. In 1912 he set out for the famed “Golden Shores” of America and arrived at Ellis Island. He settled in Arkansas and became a naturalized citizen. As his family grew, John ensured their survival and prosperity. He was guided by his unfailing vision that would soon become synonymous with the Vratsinas family name.

Today, Gus Vratsinas admirably embodies all that John sought for his family. A proud union of tradition, patriotism, charity, dedication and above all, vision, have been John’s legacy to Gus. These qualities have served Gus well.

Gus’s first fulfillment of his legacy is evident in his commitment to tradition. Gus’s commitment to his family is at the top of his priority list. Similarly, Gus is a pillar of his Greek Orthodox Church community. The traditions of his heritage are woven into the fabric of Gus’s life as a tapestry that embraces both his Greek roots and his American upbringing.

This brings us to Gus’s next defining character trait, his patriotism. Gus joined the Army ROTC while at the University of Arkansas, where he simultaneously completed both an undergraduate degree and a masters of science degree in civil engineering. He did a tour of duty in South Korea and he completed his US Army duties at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania and then served in the US Reserves.

Anyone who knows Gus Vratsinas will attest to his abiding sense of charity. This charitable nature is there in his affable smile, his warm handshake and his eagerness to greet and talk with friends wherever he finds them. He is widely known and appreciated for his record of activity and support within the community. For example, Gus has provided strong support for the Easter Seals Arkansas, the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Fifty for the Future, United Way of Pulaski County, Visiting Nurses Association, American Red Cross and St. Vincent Development Foundation.

Gus has not forgotten his educational heritage either. He served on the University of Arkansas Campaign for the Twenty-First Century that raised over a billion dollars, part of which was the result of Gus and his wife establishing two honors civil engineering scholarships at the university.

When addressing the Vratsinas trait of dedication, one needs to look no further than Gus’s outstanding record of service with his profession as a general contractor. Beginning in the industry with Pickens-Bond/Kelley Nelson Construction Companies while in graduate school, he continued to work with these companies after his active military duty. He became president of the Kelley-Nelson Company from 1983-1986.

Gus currently serves as the chairman and chief executive officer of Vratsinas Construction Company (VCC) of Little Rock, Arkansas. In 1987 Gus co-founded this company with Sam Alley and Ed Demoss. Gus has been instrumental in the emergence of VCC as one of the premier retail general contractors in America today. The company is licensed or registered in all fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. VCC enjoys continued business relationships with America's leading retail developers.

Combining his years of service with the US Army, Kelly-Nelson and VCC, Gus has had 35 years of management and professional engineering experience. He has been a professional engineer in Arkansas since 1972 and has also been a registered land surveyor since 1968. His involvement with the industry regulatory groups speaks to his continued dedication to quality in his profession. This includes his tenure with the Little Rock Wastewater Utility Commission from 1977-1989, where he served as chairman from 1984-1986.

He has been equally instrumental as a member of the Arkansas Section, American Society of Civil Engineers, serving as president in 1972. He was president of the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers from 1983-1984 and was awarded "Engineer of the Year" by the same organization in 1985. Gus is a member of the Arkansas Engineering Foundation and has been its chairman the past 10 years. In 2000 Gus enjoyed a very distinguished and meaningful award in the engineering industry by being inducted into the University of Arkansas Engineering Hall of Fame. This honor specifically speaks to Gus's dedication to excellence within the field of engineering.

But, without a doubt, the most outstanding legacy of all has been his vision. Gus Vratsinas is a name many Arkansas have come to associate with progress, development, growth and success. The "Vratsinas Vision" galvanized his father's dreams of a new life in America and continues as a driving force behind Gus's continued influence in the construction industry in Arkansas.

Vision is a matter of necessity for everyone concerned with business development. Not only does Gus have a vision for his construction company, but he also has a vision for Little Rock and for Arkansas. Three organizations charged with business development that have benefited from Gus's vision include the Greater Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission and the Arkansas Economic Development Foundation.

When Gus was a young boy he watched from his home near the corner of Markham & Cedar Streets in Little Rock the construction of the medical center. It was then that he decided that he wanted to be a builder when he grew up. That was his dream and his vision. You have to only look around the skyline of Little Rock to but three of the many construction projects built under his direction, the Stephens Building, the now Metropolitan Tower and the now Peabody Hotel, to see that he achieved his boyhood dream and vision to his future.