If he didn’t honestly believe that learning is a lifelong process and that one should practice what one preaches, Jim Rose wouldn’t have gone back to college at age 53 to pick up an advanced degree in organizational management.

But James J. Rose, 57-year-old Executive Secretary of the Contracting Plasterers’ Association of Southern California, did go back to Florida Atlantic University, in Boca Raton, Fla., for an MBA. Now Jim—and the contractors in his group—are the better for it.

For Jim it’s a matter of enhanced skills in running an organization, and for the contractors the advantage rests in having their interests better represented. As for representing wall and ceiling contractors, Jim has been doing that since 1959 when he terminated his own career as a plastering contractor to head the 76-year-old Southern California contracting association.

A native of Berkley, Mass., and son of the late Joseph D., a New England truck farmer, and Zona Peel Rose, who still lives in Berkley, Jim finished high school in Taunton, Mass., and then headed for Los Angeles where he received his political science degree from UCLA in 1942.

A week after graduating, Jim married the former Norma Burk, of Phoenix, Ariz., and worked as a lumber handler while awaiting his Army induction. Serving in the South Pacific from 1942-1946, Jim participated in the infantry landings in Hollandia and in the Philippines’ Leyte invasion.

With the war’s end and discharge, he opted for the construction industry. Joining his uncle as a plastering contractor, he went after residential business, later joining with a friend, Bill Kastoff, to assume the plastering portion of the uncle’s business.

Three years later, Jim bought out Kastoff, continuing with his uncle who earlier had joined a three-way partnership because of the latter’s ability to obtain building materials in the post-war period. In 1953, Jim and his uncle, M. A. Peel, went their separate ways; Jim into residential construction and the uncle into commercial work.

Jim finally concluded his contracting business in 1959 when he took the association job with the CPSC.

Jim and Norma are the parents of five children: Dr. James, Jr., Spanish Fork, Utah; Marlene, Kathy Sorg, Norman, and Jonathan.

In addition to his association duties Jim is a Bishop in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a secretary of the Southern California Society of Association Executives, a direct-
Southern California Association Executive Jim Rose Keeps Learning to Represent Better Wall and Ceiling Contractor Interests

Whether at his desk or in the field, Southern California's Jim Rose keeps up a fast pace for the benefit of his contractor members.

Riverside is looking for a 10 percent decline in residential starts in the first half of this year, and then the drop to accelerate in the second half. This drop should be balanced out by the probable 10 percent jump in commercial building.

DIMENSIONS: A rather pessimistic future is predicted for so-called "single service" contractors. How do you view the potential for the contractor who wants to remain with one specialty?

ROSE: I'm not as pessimistic as most people. In commercial work you almost have to be diversified today. Builders want a contractor to assume complete systems or packages.

But in residential, I believe the market will continue quite favorably for the single service contractor—and it will certainly hold for remodeling work.

DIMENSIONS: Looking at some different markets, how does the de-mountable business look here, especially in view of the tendency to construct open commercial buildings for partitioning and finishing to be done later by the tenant?

ROSE: We've had this method here for several years in shopping centers and office construction. The specialty contractor in this work has a different mode of operation, but it's a good market and a growing one.

DIMENSIONS: Judging from your comments, you don't belong necessarily to the "no-growth" crowd, do you?

ROSE: No. The potential is good. We're holding well in the residential markets and just beginning the commercial phase which will probably run two to three years.

And right now is the time to nail down work for the future, when times are good.

DIMENSIONS: As an association executive for contractors, Jim, what do you see as their biggest problem right now?

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ROSE: It has to be the information factor. Contractors must know their own bag of tools and then understand how to market them. A few contractors do know how to present options to design professionals and these are the options that provide a desired effect at a better cost. These contractors are winners.

Additionally, a contractor must be aware and present his options to decision makers at a time when the design can still be tilted. This is particularly true in terms of sound attenuation, insulation, energy conservation, fire ratings and the like.

DIMENSIONS: Are you putting emphasis on the business attitude or management approach vs. the technical expertise focus?

ROSE: Yes, I suppose I am. Every good wall and ceiling contractor has a solid grounding in technical requirements. But it doesn’t stop there, and a contractor who quits learning is dead. This business isn’t just nuts and bolts but is management, too.

Specialty contractors in today’s environment must look at the extra responsibility they carry and be effective managers who look ahead, plan, and then carry out their plans.

DIMENSIONS: It has been said, though, that “. . . the best laid plans of mice and men . . .” etc., etc.?

ROSE: It has been said also that there is still a place for planning. You can hope that tomorrow will bring some work and that’s Las Vegas odds. To advance your company you must look at what is new to do, where you want to be in terms of manpower, developing leaders, succession, delegation . . . you simply must look ahead for tomorrow.

DIMENSIONS: But how does a contractor make a dent in what is occurring? What steps can he take to control his company’s present and future, to shape his company’s destiny?

ROSE: When you sit back in your office and wait for a job to come in over the transom, you’re being a passive businessman. When you go after the market and begin the tough job of selling yourself and your company, you’re being an aggressive businessman.

That means that wall and ceiling contractors increasingly must get involved early and have a hand in what’s being designed and then bid. They must become more familiar with different systems and be able to go out and sell them and this payoff can result only from increased contacts between contractors and designers.

DIMENSIONS: Waiting for a bid opportunity to develop and then figuring the job isn’t an entirely outmoded method for doing business, is it?

ROSE: Not by any means. Some work simply has to be approached
that way. By the same token, too many contractors see their businesses in blinders and consequently miss expansion opportunities. When you are working for a cause — and not business opportunity—you could be missing some good bets.

**DIMENSIONS: For example?**

**ROSE:** A contractor should be willing to experiment and try new products and systems, to submit alternative bids. This gives him working experience with various systems and when he does open the door of the decision maker he can provide what the designer wants—good, sound technical and cost information.

Designers are starving for information on design options and they welcome the experience and knowledge of contractors who know what they are talking about. But the contractor must be able to say and give figures . . . when he can do that he can truly sell and put a price value on his designs.

**DIMENSIONS: Turning to other areas, Jim, do you feel that the trend is toward more non-union penetration of work opportunities in Southern California?**

**ROSE:** Non-union presence in traditionally union type work is just beginning here and is growing. The shift isn't so much money here as it is working rules and practices. As an example, the transfer of men to

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ROSE: (Continued from page 19)
other areas create tremendous dif-
ficulties which are especially hard
on smaller contractors.

DIMENSIONS: How would some
of the traditional responses apply,
responses such as a crafts board,
wide area bargaining, and perhaps
multi-employer bargaining? Could
these approaches be used effectively
to restore the balance?

ROSE: Restore what balance?
It's a free country and the
company—regardless of its labor
relations status—with the best offer
will probably get the work.

As for craft boards, I think
they'd be too late now. The unions
have developed an awareness of
what they've done to themselves
and there is a tapering off on union
demands.

Wide area bargaining may help,
but it sometimes loses the under-
standing of a problem which is
unique to a certain area. Los
Angeles has entirely different prob-
lems from what we here call some
of the cow country areas.

I don't see multi-employer bar-
gaining as a immediate problem,
but we are working towards it
somewhat. Anyway, employers
meet—as do unions—to seek
common goals.

DIMENSIONS: As an association
executive who views the commonal-
ity of contractor problems, where do
you see value in a national organiza-
tion such as iaWCC/GDCI?

ROSE: You must have the na-
tional exposure to be effective. A
contractor in Southern California
or in any other region or section of
the country doesn't work in a vac-
uum. Everything is interconnected
and it's the contractor who takes
advantage of this realization who
has a jump on his competitors.

Only an organization like
iaWCC/GDCI has the national in-
formation services which are so
valuable... can provide a true in-
terchange of ideas from other parts
of the country... set up neces-
sary contacts between contractors,
 suppliers, technical people, and the
like.

DIMENSIONS: Where do you see
developments coming, say, in the
next five years?

ROSE: Aside from the rather
obvious effect of energy and fuels,
I would have to say the systems
approach, that is, an increasing
trend in diversification.

DIMENSIONS: More learning
then, is that the point?

ROSE: It's always the point.
That's really the reason why at age
53 I went back to school for my
MBA in organizational manage-
ment. Even now, I devote one
week of my time each year at the
Institute for Organizational Man-
agement which is sponsored by the
U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

There's always something more
you can learn about anything, isn't
there? □