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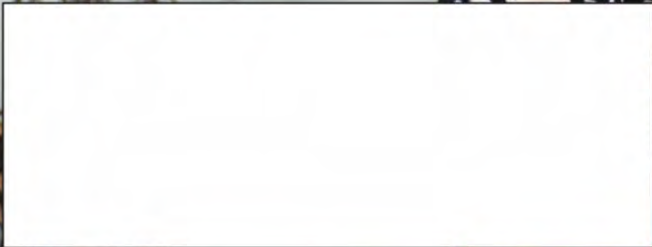
JBC Associates, Inc.
President,
**Janet
Cunningham**
Chasing Pavements

**To Tweet or Not
to Tweet?**

Make Twitter Work
for Your Business

Let's Make a Deal!

Best Internet Sites
for Savings



Pre-Sort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
List Masters





JBC Associates Founder and President Janet B. Cunningham at her office in King of Prussia, PA.
Photography by Front Room Images. Hair and makeup by Nitocris.

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Chasing Pavements with JBC's Janet Cunningham

By Scott Cullen

If you look closely you'll find Janet Cunningham's fingerprints, or at least her company's, JBC Associates, all across the Philadelphia region and beyond. The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, the International Terminal at Philadelphia International Airport, the Pennsylvania Judicial Center in Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission's new All Electronic Interchange at Milepost 320, the new stadium and athletic fields at Lincoln University and most major roadway improvement projects in the Philadelphia area are all construction projects in which JBC has played a management role.

JBC Associates, founded by Cunningham in 1988, specializes in professional construction management and is a certified Disadvantaged/Woman Business Enterprise with various local, state, and federal agencies. It's also one of the Philadelphia area's Top 100 Fastest Growing Privately Held Companies.

Cunningham's résumé is impressive—with more than 30 years focused on contract administration, project management, project controls and dispute resolution. Over the years she's been involved in projects ranging from \$1 million to over \$2.5 billion in construction value. These projects encompass highways, bridges, transit, correctional facilities, schools, airports, and government buildings. You name it, Cunningham and her company can manage it.

Her day usually begins with her reading and responding to e-mails, putting out fires, and addressing personnel issues. As the day progresses it's not unusual to find her reviewing contracts, preparing proposals, vis-

iting project sites, attending progress meetings, and performing all those other essential tasks that go with the territory, particularly when you're the founder and president.

The most challenging part of her job is the mundane—keeping up with the administrative paperwork and constantly changing regulations. “That seems to be increasing year after year,” she laments. “I don't get too much time to do the fun stuff anymore.”

That's an exaggeration, because as a licensed engineer overseeing a full load of projects, there's still plenty going on that would fit squarely under the heading of fun, especially when JBC could have 20 to 30 projects going on at any one time.

By the time Cunningham leaves the office for the evening, she's been involved in a range of tasks and activities from the routine to the rewarding.

In this day and age, especially with new technologies that tether us to the workplace no matter where we are, work doesn't end when Cunningham leaves the office. As much as she'd like, it's virtually impossible to distance herself from business obligations after hours. “It used to be easier before smart phones,” she laughs.

Civil engineer has been the ideal career choice for someone who's always enjoyed building and creating things. “I get a lot of personal satisfaction from being involved in projects that people and clients will be using for decades,” says Cunningham.

Indeed, she has a knack for working with owners, designers and contractors to ensure that projects are completed on time, on budget, and of

All photos courtesy Front Room Images



“I particularly enjoy visiting construction sites and interacting with the various tradespeople. You meet an interesting cross section of people from all aspects of life.”

the highest quality.

Women's Work?

The construction project management field may not sound like women's work, but throw away that misconception when speaking with Cunningham. Being a woman in that industry is not an issue.

"The challenges were much greater in the early years of the firm," she acknowledges. "Business today, including engineering and construction, is more accepting of women. Although you still have to continually prove yourself." Cunningham's interest in engineering goes back to an 8th grade research report she wrote on great feats in engineering. "That was the first time I can say I had an interest in building things," she recalls.

She also enjoyed playing with her brother's erector sets as a child so those engineering roots likely stretch much further back than 8th grade. She liked sewing, too. "It's similar in that you're creating something," says Cunningham. "I was also good in math and always interested in how things worked. Plus my father was an engineer."

It's a big leap from playing with erector sets to becoming a civil engineer and running one's own construction management company. How'd that happen?

"It's not anything I had thought about before," explains Cunningham. "When I graduated from college I didn't enter the world saying 'I'm going to own my own business some day.' I recognized an opportunity and acted on it."

Forging Her Way

That opportunity knocked not long after she had left the small private construction firm she was working for after its owners had a falling out. "I took a hiatus to figure out what I wanted to do with the rest of my career," she recalls. After much encouragement from my peers I decided to start my own construction management firm."

But success didn't happen overnight.

"When I started the firm I was told that it would take five years for the business to become established," states Cunningham. "It was almost five years to the month when I said to myself 'this business is going to make it.'"

Depending on your perspective, five years of building a business is either a long, hard road, or a blink of an eye, and many times during those first five years Cunningham contemplated getting a 'real job.'

"I'd be sitting in my office asking myself 'why am I doing this?' she remembers. "Then we got our first large contract and it's been upward growth ever since."

With the growing pains a thing of the past, Cunningham says the best thing about owning her own company is that she's in control of her own destiny.

The Projects Roll In

Meanwhile, the projects keep rolling in. A recent project she's particularly proud of is the new four-way all electronic interchange on the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Malvern at Milepost 320. "It was the first prime contract we did for the Turnpike and it was very successful," she says.

"The project was completed on time and on budget, and has received many awards and recognitions."

The awards are icing on the cake, but Cunningham isn't doing this for the awards. Other satisfying projects include the School of the Future in Philadelphia, International Terminal A at the Philadelphia International Airport, and the Terminal B/C renovation project. No question, some of the projects she's completed over the years have been challenging. But that's okay with her.

"Many of the projects that are the most challenging are the ones you get the most satisfaction from," she says.

Meanwhile, the construction management beat goes on, with the majority of projects of late transportation-related. PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Turnpike are two of her firm's largest clients, but when scanning JBC's roster the diversity is evident, which keeps things interesting for Cunningham.

"We work on buildings, schools, airports, correctional facilities, transit projects, roadways, bridges, but while the types of projects that we are involved in are diverse, the services we provide having to do with quality, time, and project costs, are more specialized" notes Cunningham. "We're not builders or contractors; we provide owner's representation services. We're the eyes and ears for the owners on a project to be sure it gets done on time and on budget in accordance with the contract documents."

What gets Cunningham excited about coming to work every day and being those eyes and ears?

"You assume I do get excited about coming to work," she laughs. "The challenges are what gets me excited and every day is different in the engineering and construction industry. I particularly enjoy visiting construction sites and interacting with the various tradespeople. You meet an interesting cross section of people from all aspects of life."

When not working, you'll find Cunningham hanging with her family, or occasionally pursuing her hobby, photography, a hobby she hopes someday she'll have more time to focus on. Vacations usually involve skiing, the beach, or golf, as well as what she describes as adventure-type vacations. She's also the mother of two teenage boys. The oldest is a high school junior who has expressed an interest in pursuing an engineering career.

How does she feel about that?

"I think it's great," she says. "Engineering is a great profession. It's a good major to study in college because of the way it teaches you to think."

These days, Cunningham is feeling good about the business and where it's likely headed over the next 12 months. "Toward the end of last year the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania passed a transportation funding bill dedicating \$2.3 billion for the next 10 years towards transportation infrastructure. That's good for our firm and the transportation industry. Once we see some of that funding move into design and construction we can expect to continue to grow at the rate we've been experiencing over the past 25 years."

With the interview over, it's time for Cunningham to get back down to business. The clock is ticking. JBC has a proposal due tomorrow and one on Friday for a construction management project.

It's just another day in the office for Janet Cunningham. And that's the way she likes it. **MW**



Janet Cunningham on Janet Cunningham

Three adjectives that best describe her:

Logical, Tenacious, Dependable

Expression that drives her crazy every time she hears it:

"For all intents and purposes"

Song she turns up really loud when driving alone in her car:

Sweet Home Alabama by Lynyrd Skynyrd

Last book she read that she really enjoyed:

The Hunger Games series by Suzanne Collins

Favorite vacation destination: Adventure vacations; most recently Costa Rica.

Favorite food: Lobster tail with lots of butter

Favorite movie: The Big Chill

One thing that she's good at that her peers in the industry or employees would be surprised to know: Skee ball.

If she could switch places for a day with any historical figure or celebrity who would that be: Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge

NEWLY-CONSTRUCTED ALL ELECTRONIC INTERCHANGE AT EXIT 320 ON THE PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE, FOR WHICH JBC ASSOCIATES WERE PROJECT MANAGERS.