



# MARK III AT 40

## 40 STORIES IN 40 DAYS

### Day 16: Ed Mette Profile

If anyone knows the depths of Mark III's history (more than Mark or Tim) it's Ed Mette. Lovingly known to some as the "Grand Poobah," Ed has been with Mark and Tim from the beginning and has some great insight into what makes Mark III so successful.

**1. How did you start with Mark III?** "I've known Tim O'Brien since 1st grade and we went to school together all the way through to Sac State. I got a call from his brother Mark asking if I would meet him at the Raven Club on April 8, 1979 to discuss a business opportunity. I was an accounting student at Sac State and was working for another company at the time, doing the books, and I was bored. Mark asked if I would start at his new company Mark III and two weeks later I joined. It's been 37 years."

**2. What were those first few years like?** "When I started we worked out of the space downstairs (now known as the gym) and there were 4 desks for 6 people. We would have to rotate and share. Mark III offered me an exciting opportunity where I never got bored."

"I remember we never had time to do the billing, so we would spend one night a month and work all night just on the bills. John Galliani would bring us pizza and beer."

Ed started as the Accounting/Book Keeper and soon took over the Plumbing Division (for 10 years). Eventually he ran the Underground division, until he eventually ran the Fire Sprinkler division and finally, he became the Real Estate Construction Manager (which is his current position).

**3. What keeps you at Mark III?** "The challenges are exciting and it's never the same. Everyday for the past 37 years, everyday is something new."

**4. What are your biggest project successes?** "I designed the 10-story Senator Hotel in the 1980s and it was really complex and exciting. A tie for second place would be Libby's Cannery and the California State Lottery building."

**5. What advice would you give a new Mark III employee?** "The new ownership here is really solid and they have the same determination as Mark and Tim. Give Mark III a chance because the family-like camaraderie here won't let you down."

**6. Tell us something about you that is non-work related?**

Ed has a wife named Barbara and five sons, in addition to five grandkids.





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### Day 17: CHP Towers Project Profile (2009)

One of Mark III's most unique jobs, from a logistical standpoint, is the CHP Towers that took a significant amount of time and energy from the team. The timing was around 2009 and the project, contracted by the California Department of Forestry and also the California Highway Patrol, Mark III was hired to construct 13 radio towers throughout California. Over the course of two years, three teams of electricians and plumbers were sent to multiple mountain range locations, from Susanville to Ventura, and San Luis Obispo to Yosemite.

Mark III bid on the project as a prime and held the contract, hiring subcontractors to help with demolition and actual tower construction. Our electricians, plumbers, and concrete workers were then brought in to wire and lay pipe. Despite the time away from home, the logistics of trekking through mountain ranges with trucks and trying to arrange for the equipment delivery was very daunting.



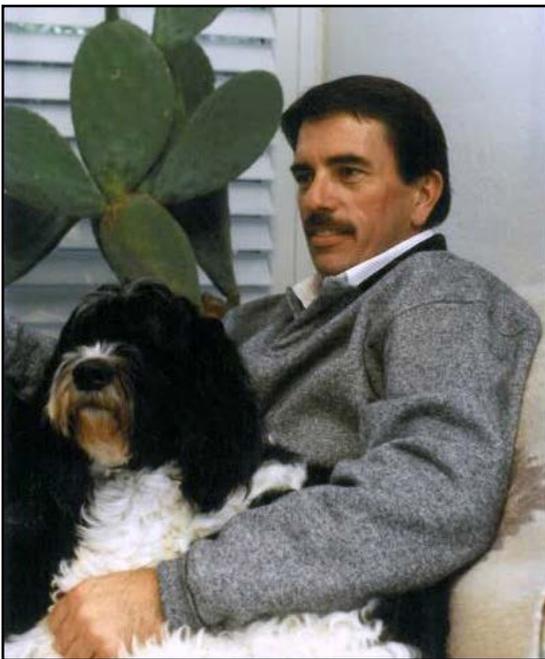
We spoke with Danny O'Brien about the project, as he was the Superintendent for the concrete and plumbing teams. Though this wasn't his favorite project, due to the time away from home and the complex nature of the job, he uses it as a great learning example for future projects. Danny remembers having a motor home in Susanville, but having to drive 2.5 hours each way to the project site through the mountains, with all of the equipment. The amount of dedication that it took for these teams to complete this \$6 million dollar project is immense and we owe them a lot of credit.



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### Day 18: Remembering Gerry O'Brien



**Gerry and his dog Carl**

Gerry O'Brien was the middle brother of Mark and Tim. He was a visionary, straight shooter, student and businessman. Gerry loved to learn and was extremely intelligent. While in college, he changed both majors and schools 3 times, but still graduated with honors from UC Davis with a degree in Psychology in just 4 years.

A few years after graduation, Gerry joined his brothers at Mark III. The first project Gerry took on was managing the new construction of 32 houses over by the old fairgrounds. With his degree in Psychology, he had the talent to read and motivate the crews to be the best employees they could be. Not only did Gerry manage the crews well but he had the ability to see problems from every side.

Challenging Mark and Tim was not a foreign concept for Gerry; he questioned most pre-planning decisions to make sure that all angles and possible issues were thought out.

Gerry spearheaded Mark III's expansion into Texas in the 1980s. He spent 12 years in El Paso building and managing projects and all of the success can be attributed to the dedication Gerry put forth. Mark and Tim thought that if Gerry had advice for a new Mark III employee it'd be "do it right the first time and do what you enjoy."

#### **Memorable story about Gerry:**

After the 32 homes were built, Gerry was tasked to oversee a warehouse in Stockton, CA. A few days into the project, Gerry and Mark went out to see how it was going. The crew on the job was completely new and when they drove up to the jobsite, the site was in shambles. Mark jumped out of the car and started getting his hands dirty. While pouring concrete, Mark looked up and saw Gerry standing off in the distance and couldn't help but become furious. After a long day of work, Mark gets back in the car with Gerry and asks Gerry "Why didn't you jump in and help me!?" The visionary that Gerry was responded with, "Are you going to come back here tomorrow and the next day? I stood back to see who would step up to the challenge and be able to run the job." Gerry passed away in January 1991 but he made a lifelong impact on his family, friends and Mark III Construction.

## Day 19: Almond Growers Project Profile (1978)



In 1978, two years after Mark III started, Mark and Tim caught their first “lucky break”. Mark III found themselves in the middle of a dispute between the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Mark signed an agreement with IBEW to utilize the electricians while they were on strike.

During this time, Mark’s last employer Wismer Becker approached him about assisting with the Almond Growers processing plant. They were awarded the Almond Growers processing plant but were unable to complete the electrical side due to the strike. The almond plant needed a lot of work completed before the harvest and the Owners were not going to take no for an answer.

The technology needed was way beyond the scope of what the Mark III team had done before and it took a lot of time, effort and trial and error to get the job done. However, the bigger issue was to overcome the obstacles that the IBEW was throwing Mark III’s way. They were not pleased to see us working during the strike. But Mark III saw an opportunity to take advantage. “Regardless of the obstacles we faced, we delivered on our word and rose to the occasion,” said Mark.

### **A couple of interesting stories which were frustrating at the time but somewhat comical to look back on:**

1. Tim was warned not to bring his El Camino in to the jobsite. It didn’t have a Mark III sign on it, so it was technically not allowed. However, Mark III’s only truck at the time was in for service. He was told to park across the street in the employee parking lot and carry the material to the job site. Not an easy task!

2. There was a tight timeline on this project, so when Mark was asked to test the conveyor belt for the first time, he warned the owner’s project manager that it wasn’t ready. They weren’t interested in the details and said they wanted to see it anyways. So Mark pushed the start button and watched as an entire pallet of almonds fell from the third floor straight down to the first floor, in the elevator shaft. Needless to say, the first test didn’t go so well.



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### Day 20: Mark III Developers '06-'09

Some Mark III newcomers might be surprised to hear that Mark III has had it's hand in real estate development for over 30 years. Starting in the mid-80s with Gerry O'Brien running the show, Mark III had a small team of developers who began purchasing land in Stockton, Tracy, Fresno and El Paso, Texas. We didn't want to compete with Buzz Oates or Pantone Developers who had the majority of Sacramento, but we found a lot of success in following in their path. For the first 15 years, the real estate side of the company "stayed in the shadows" behind the construction side, but as the years went on, things started to shift.

Around the year 2000, Mark III had an amicable split from one of it's partners, Buzz Oates, and started putting more and more focus on the development side of the company and expanding into Rancho Cordova, Rocklin and Elk Grove. The goal was to become a "vertical construction" company with a full service, in-house team. This meant that after a plot of land was purchased we were able to then have the Mark III architect design it, along with a design-build team, work with the Mark III generals to frame the building and pour the concrete and then get Mark III subcontractors to wire the electricity and lay the plumbing pipes. It was a well-oiled machine!

By 2005, Mark, Tim and Jennifer O'Brien realized that 75% of all billing was coming from the real estate profit and made the decision to put the focus on the developers' side. In 2006, the company's legal name changed to Mark III Developer's and Mike O'Brien was hired on to help manage the marketing efforts and make the transition as smooth as possible. It was a wildly successful venture, with a total of 11,000,000 SF of land developed in the Sacramento area (this includes a combination of buildings constructed with the intent to sell and also build-to-suit for clients such as BLT, Airgas and Financial Pacific.)



Offices at Sunset - Rocklin, CA



Mercantile Warehouses - Rancho Cordova, CA

However, around 2008-2009, soon after the real estate slump, Mark III started to feel the crunch from the economic decline. It was time to make a decision on whether or not to restructure the company and go back to its historical knowledge/expertise or to stay the course and try to ride it out. The ultimate decision, decided by Mark, Tim, Jennifer, Mike and Dan was to go back to our roots and once again invest our time and energy into construction. "Having a history of construction helped us weather the recession because we knew the importance of value engineering and how we could limit our overhead," said Jennifer.

Real estate at the time took a back seat, as they became asset managers (managing the properties Mark III still owned), versus developers. This has ramped back up somewhat since then, but nothing like it was 10 years ago. The name change went into effect on January 4, 2010 when Mark III Construction, Inc took off.