



## PERSPECTIVE BY KERRY SMITH

# The Opportunity of a Lifetime

Sometimes dreams are born from storms. Literally.

My journey with this longstanding, beloved and respected industry publication began in 2015 as a contributing writer. Having just sold a business journal I'd launched and grown for 13 years, I received a call from then-CNR editor Peter Downs who was searching for a freelance writer who specialized in construction coverage. I jumped at the opportunity, having long been fascinated - and delightfully distracted by - any dirt digging, tower crane moving, concrete placing and rebar tying anywhere.

My freelance reporting for CNR continued for about a year when Peter Downs prepared to step down. He and then-CNR publisher and owner Mike Chollet asked to meet me on a cold January evening in the midst of what later turned out to be one of St. Louis' most severe ice storms on record.

As I drove from Edwardsville, Illinois to the Souldard district of St. Louis to meet these two gentlemen face to face for the very first time, I feared I was being summoned due to an error I'd made in a story, a source who didn't take kindly to me or some other potential blunder. Such was not the case. Sitting at a table in a nearly vacant St. Louis Bread Co. location, just after they treated me

to supper, Mike and Peter launched into the purpose of our visit: To offer me the chance to work as editor of St. Louis Construction News and Review Magazine. I said yes (one of the best decisions I've ever made) and marveled at the serendipitous nature of the opportunity given to me that wintry evening. I also slid my car slowly across downtown St. Louis to the nearest available hotel, soon realizing that there would be no driving across icy river bridges and interstates back to Edwardsville that night.

Serving as editor of a small-staffed publication quickly morphed into also serving as the writing staff, each year writing 30 long-version project and issue stories for St. Louis CNR's print edition and 52 weekly e-newsletter pieces. A few years later, my role expanded once again when I was asked to also take on a portion of the advertising sales. When Covid hit, I was incredibly thankful to count CNR as my largest client, my others temporarily waning.

Fast forward to just a few months ago, when Mike Chollet once again phoned me with an opportunity I couldn't pass up: Acquiring St. Louis CNR Magazine and taking the reins of a family-owned business that began on the streets of St. Louis nearly 55

years ago. Little could I have known at that time - in 1969 when CNR took root and I was five years old, living in a Milwaukee suburb - that one day I'd have the honor and privilege of owning this publication. It's truly a dream come true. And just as it has always been, I can't get enough of construction. I still pull my car over (even if I'm off the clock and far away on vacation!) to watch tilt-up concrete panels hoisted into position, steel beams lifted into place, bridge spans and decks being rehabilitated and hundreds of prefabricated restroom pods magically dropped from above into a healthcare facility. Construction is in my veins, I guess you could say.

After serving in a number of diverse journalistic roles and covering an array of topics for more than 30 years, construction remains my hands-down favorite kind of story to tell. I look forward to continuing to learn from each of you and telling the story of the projects you build, the people you hire and the issues you face - anywhere in the St. Louis region and across the U.S. - for many years to come.

Welcome to CNR 2.0. Let's continue this journey together.

Kerry Smith  
President & CEO

Construction  
News and Review  
Magazine

Your  
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DREAM  
COME TRUE