



New to Burns & McDonnell, Architect Is No Stranger to Engineering

Pat Edwards lives for bold adventures. Whether it's flying airplanes or presenting in front of a Fortune 500 board, Edwards just can't seem to pass up an opportunity for excitement.

On the surface, becoming regional manager of Burns & McDonnell's Phoenix office might not seem consistent with Edwards' other adrenaline-loaded activities, but to him, it's his favorite hand.

RAISING PHOENIX

PAT EDWARDS PLAYS TO WIN

"I have always been impressed with Burns & McDonnell's quality and culture," Edwards says. "Coming here is like divine intervention. Burns & McDonnell is the perfect fit for me, and I hope I am the same." Since he joined Burns & McDonnell in March, Edwards' energy and optimism for his group's growth has become contagious.

"He brings a high level of enthusiasm and excitement to the office," says Paul Fischer, Burns & McDonnell senior vice president of regional operations. "He is passionate about making our clients and employees successful, and has the leadership to facilitate growth."

Being the only architect in an office full of engineers is a bit ironic to Edwards. He entered college at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with the intent of becoming an engineer himself, but his artistic influences pulled him in another direction.

"I loved engineering, but I was passionate about architecture," Edwards says. "I just felt it fit my personality better." He soon switched fields and went on to receive bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture from UNL.

Life Imitating Art

Shortly after starting work for Leo A. Daly, an Omaha-based architecture and engineering firm, Edwards was transferred to the firm's Honolulu office, where he started a CADD department and worked on aviation, hospitality and entertainment venues, including casinos.

Working in those industries fed Edwards' two passions — cards and flying.

Edwards has been playing a weekly card game for the past 18 years. He learned to play the game growing up with his five brothers on the family's farm in Ord, Neb.

"It was cold. We used to play cards to see who would have to go out and do chores in the morning," Edwards says. "You either got good or you got frost bite ... and I still have all my toes."

His love of flying didn't come quite as easily. Although Edwards logged more than a quarter of a million international airline miles each year, he had a deep fear of getting on planes.

"I was a white knuckle flyer — scared to death," he says.

When he moved with Daly to Phoenix in 1993, his wife bought him an introductory flying lesson that changed him forever.

"Ten minutes after takeoff, I was hooked and have been flying ever since, though I don't get up near as much as I used to," he says.

Lasting Impressions

Aviation projects have had a deep impact on Edwards' career as well. His work on the design of a new airport in Mindanao in the south Philippines was especially rewarding.

"We flew into an abandoned World War II landing strip on a small plane, and flew out of a new airport on an A320," Edwards recalls.

"As I looked below, I could see the economic impact that project was going to have on an impoverished area. When you build an airport where one didn't exist before, you know you've worked on something special."

Allan Seaman, director of construction for US Airways, has worked with Edwards on numerous projects for the airline. Seaman says Edwards is the kind of guy you want to work with. "He's a very fair, honest person who knows his stuff," Seaman says. "He was able to bridge the gap between the architects and the owners' representative."

Edwards' achievements earned him recognition in 2003 by the *Phoenix Business Journal* as one of their top 40 under the age of 40 business leaders.

A New Role

Since joining Burns & McDonnell, Edwards has learned a lot about the company culture from his mentor, Renita Mollman, a Burns & McDonnell vice president and the general manager of the company's Southern California region. Mollman is looking forward to teaming with Edwards.

"Pat's a great addition to the company and the office down there," she says. "He is strategically looking at growing the practices and how he and I can work together approaching opportunities as a region."

Although Edwards' office primarily serves energy clients and is a center for excellence on solar-related business, his background opens the door for additional work in the aviation and facilities industry.

In his 23-year career, Edwards has seen much success as an architect. Now he is embracing his new role as Phoenix office manager.

"I'm just a simple farm boy who happens to be an architect in a big city," Edwards says. "I've made my living out of doing what I love to do best — relating to people."

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