

Facilitator — February/March 2011



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CRFP Spotlight

Dave Turner

What restaurant companies have you worked for prior to your current position?

My first restaurant job was in 1970, at the Navy Exchange snack bar in Lakehurst, N.J. Thankfully I was promoted from dishwasher to short order cook after three weeks.

I started my career with Darden in 1980 with E.H. Thompson, a restaurant food equipment subsidiary of General Mills Restaurants Inc., as a food equipment installer. In 1982 the corporate side of E. H. Thompson was merged into SigmaCon, the construction division for GMRI. In October 1983, I accepted a position at Red Lobster Facilities, where I have been ever since. Until the advent of Seasons 52, LongHorn Steakhouse and The Capital Grille, I had worked in every concept that General Mills, GMRI and Darden have had over the years (Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Bahama Breeze, China Coast, York Steakhouse, Hannahan, Darryl's, Casa Gallardo and The Good Earth).

After spending so much time in restaurants, do you cook? If so, what is your best dish?

I enjoy grilling, but my favorite cooking is on an open campfire. I have always enjoyed the challenge of open-fire cooking. My most requested dish is deep fried French toast cooked in a cast iron Dutch oven.

What was your first car?

A 1953 Chevy Belair; had to push it and pop the clutch the day I brought it home. I wish I still had it!

What is your all-time favorite movie?

"We Were Soldiers." I believe this is the best depiction of the effects of war on the soldiers, their families and those involved that has ever been done.

What is the most challenging situation you've ever faced in a facility or on the job? How did you handle it?

Catastrophic events are tough; whether caused by Mother Nature or a system failure, they are always challenging. As a facilities manager, my worst involved the folks who arrive with lights and sirens and pull hoses off the truck. The event started in the electrical room due to improper storage of aerosol containers around contactors.

After the initial assessment, we felt that the restaurant would be closed for at least five days. But after working around the clock replacing all electrical panels and rewiring all circuits into the kitchen, we reopened for dinner on the third day. I was lucky, as I happened to have a base of good vendors who knew their capabilities. The electrician was a long-term vendor who I trusted, and I had a good assessment of the damage before I even arrived at the site. It is vitally important to have a base of good contractors and to know their capabilities. You have to be confident and in control throughout the recovery. Think all the way through to the end and have a plan before you even start.

If you weren't a restaurant facility professional, what you would be?

A paramedic. My formal education is in emergency medicine. Back in the day, I was a certified paramedic in the state of Florida and the captain of rescue in a volunteer fire department.

What was your very first job?

I guess I would have been called a customer service rep. When I was 9 years old, I spent two summers baiting hooks, cleaning fish and packing the catch on ice, at a pay-by-the-pound trout farm in Johnson, Ark. All for \$7 a week plus tips. It was rough getting paid to have fun and be a kid!

What is the best advice you ever received?

My grandfather gave me a copy of the "Man in the Glass" when I was 12.

If you get what you want in your struggle for self, And the world makes you king for a day, Just go to a mirror and look at yourself, And see what that man has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or wife, Whose judgment you have to pass, The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people may think you a straight-shooting chum
And call you a wonderful guy, But the man in the glass says you're
only a bum If you can't look him straight in the eye.

He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest,
For he's with you clear up to the end, And you've passed your most
dangerous, difficult test If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world, down the pathway to life,
And get pats on your back as you pass. But your final reward will
be heartaches and tears If you've cheated the man in the glass.

To what would you attribute your success in achieving your CRFP?

Over the years, I have been blessed to have great mentors, knowledgeable peers and countless vendors who were experts in their respective profession. They have all contributed to my success more than they will ever know.

Would you recommend attaining a CRFP to other colleagues? Why?

Most definitely. Aside from the personal satisfaction, it will give you more creditability with everyone you interact with on a daily basis. Many of today's jobs are very compartmentalized. A good facilities manager needs a thorough knowledge of many different systems and applications.

What has been the most significant change in the restaurant industry, and how has it affected your job?

The computer. The history and information that is at your fingertips, for the buildings, grounds and equipment that you maintain, is invaluable. From repair cost, blueprints, contact info to contract administration, resources, etc.; we are light years ahead of where we were 30 years ago.

What do you do for fun in your spare time?

I love the outdoors! I enjoy hiking, hunting, canoeing and camping, but most of all I enjoy spoiling the grandbabies. I get a lot of pleasure in sharing my outdoor skills with the grandbabies.

What's the one thing most people would be surprised to learn about you?

That I was the caretaker/manager of an Arabian Horse Farm in the 70s. I was responsible for the care, training and breeding of a 21 horse herd of Arabs.

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