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People in H&S: John C. McCarthy

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This past November 1 marked the latest of several recent expansion moves for the Haskins & Sells office in Boston, and all concerned know it is only temporary. When the small business group shifted to larger quarters on the thirty-fifth floor of 28 State Street, the change brought some relief, for a time, to the busy office five floors below. Yet even with the increased elbow room, our Boston colleagues are keeping a watchful eye on the big foundation taking shape just across the street to the east. Good weather, labor harmony and luck permitting, H&S Boston will move into the new forty-story building to rise above that foundation in the summer of 1977.

No one will be happier to have increased space in which to operate the widespread practice centering on the old Hub of New England than John C. McCarthy, Boston partner in charge. Jay, as everyone calls him, is accustomed to moving and he is at home with the action and growth that go with upward mobility.

Some of the partners in the Firm who saw Jay at the September partners meeting may have wondered about the replica of an admiral's hat, decorated with gilt "scrambled eggs" and labeled "BOSTON PIC," that Jay wore with a smile during a recreation break on the golf course. The hat was a gag present that the Boston office staff gave him at their 1975 summer outing. It marked the start of Jay's third year in charge of the office, following Del Edens' transfer to Executive Office to assume responsibility for the Firm's SEC work.

Jay McCarthy's moves with the Firm have brought him from coast to coast, west to east. He was born and schooled in Seattle where his accountant father was employed as treasurer of the Washington Athletic Club. "My parents always called me J.C. and my brother D.J. I have been called Jay ever since I was a boy. I graduated from school in Seattle in 1943, taking the college preparatory course. Although I really hadn't made any plans, I was good in math in school and was thinking perhaps of studying engineering.

"With the war, labor was in short supply, so I worked at the club while still in school, and I got the chance to

see how it was run. One day my Dad asked me if I had ever thought about studying accounting in college. I asked him how much college-trained accountants earned. He said that a CPA could make \$200 a month. I thought that was pretty good, and in those days it was. Later the same day a woman in the state accounting office asked me what I planned to do, and I told her I thought I'd go into accounting and become a CPA.

"'Oh, fine,' she said. 'CPAs can earn \$350 a month!' So I got a raise of \$150 a month in one day!"

Jay's father explained to him that tax specialists were much in demand and that if he were to study accounting, then work with a CPA firm for a few years, become a CPA and specialize in taxes, he could then go out on his own.

"That's what I planned—back then," Jay recalls with a laugh, "so here I am!" His gesture sweeps across his corner office toward the window and out toward Boston Harbor and Logan International Airport beyond.

Jay got in one year of study at the University of Washington before he joined Uncle Sam as an aviation cadet in September 1944. Following thirteen months' service as pilot trainee, Jay got back to the university and graduated in 1948. He joined the West Coast firm of McLaren, Goode, West & Company in its Seattle office, starting work there on the same day as Bob Steele, now administrative partner in the New York practice office of H&S. The merger of the McLaren firm with H&S took place in 1952.

"Now I suppose I am about as much of a generalist as you could find," Jay says, recalling the way his goal of becoming a tax specialist receded in favor of the many interests of a general practice. "Before the merger I did a good deal of small business work, which included taxes, and I also did auditing. Then in the mid-fifties I was one of a group of H&S managers selected to take EDP training when the Firm went into electronic data processing services for MAS clients, but the pressure of client business precluded my actually starting on it. I was also asked to take on recruiting duties in the Seattle office. I took right to personnel

work and enjoyed it. When Bob Steele left Seattle to go to Executive Office I was the manager responsible for recruiting."

In the spring of 1960, just after Jay and his wife Fran had contracted to buy a new house to accommodate their growing family of two boys and a little girl, he received a challenge: What would he think of transferring to Philadelphia? Jay had been a Seattle boy all of his thirty-four years, but he did not hesitate at all. If the Firm thought he was right for the move, he was ready.

Two years later, in Philadelphia, Jay became a partner—in a group that numbered only eight nationally. He was told at the time that he was the youngest partner in Haskins & Sells and that in fact he had been the youngest manager (then called principal) when promoted five years earlier.

Building on his interest in personnel work, Jay devoted much of his attention during his eight years in Philadelphia to developing the personnel system of the office. And it was doubtless his success in this field that led to his being asked in 1968 to transfer to the San Juan office, where he became partner in charge in 1969, remaining until 1972.

In Boston more than three years now, Jay and Fran have found a new home. Their two grown sons, J.C., Jr. and Dan, are both working on the Pacific Coast. Their elder daughter, Maureen, is a freshman at Wheaton College in Massachusetts. Only ten-year-old Julianne remains at home. On most days Jay rides the train from Kendall Green, near Weston, to North Station, then has a ten-minute walk to the office. Returning, he usually catches the 5:30 or the 6:05 train home. Boston, unlike most American cities, offers good commuter rail service.

In the office Jay has gained a reputation for careful, thorough administration. As one partner put it to *H&S Reports*: "Jay is very much concerned with our hours, with reports of who is doing what. He wants to analyze what we are all doing so that we can decide the best way to spend management time and energy." At the same time, Jay is far from an all-work-and-no-play type. He has encouraged an expanded

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program of office activities that ranges from an office golf league in the summer, through softball and seats at the Red Sox home games, to an annual summer outing, a dinner-dance in the winter, and even an office party for children just before Christmas, complete with presents and a Santa Claus. ("It's a madhouse, and it's fun," he said.)

An unusual and imaginative Boston office innovation this year, though still provisional until it can be seen how well the idea works, is staggering the office work hours over the four seasons. The workday starts at 8:30 throughout the year. In the winter, the accounting busy season, the office is open until 5:30 p.m.; in spring until 5:00 p.m.; when the work load is lightest and Daylight Saving Time is in effect, the office will close at 4:00 p.m.; in the fall it will close at 4:30.

"Of course, it is my responsibility to follow Firm procedures, but I also believe in being innovative and adjusting to people's needs," Jay says about

his staggered-hours plan. "Maybe some will not care for the change. We'll see how it works out. At this stage it is an experiment."

Jay has not hesitated to make other moves. He consolidated some work in the Providence suboffice that formerly was performed by Boston office personnel. That change, together with a sound local merger, doubled the number of people in Providence. This gave the suboffice the additional muscle it required for more efficient servicing of clients and expanded practice development activities.

The Boston PIC is keen on suggesting additional services to clients and on demonstrating to prospective clients what Haskins & Sells can do for them.

"I believe that we don't market our work enough to our clients," is his comment. "We should take a careful look at each of our clients, find out what they need and see how we can serve them. And with a client who may be new to us, I relish the chance to show what we can do for him. I believe

that if we demonstrate the quality of our work to a client and genuinely help him, most of the time he will want us to continue."

It is no accident that a partner in charge who thinks in this positive way would want to add emphasis to the MAS work of the office, and Jay has put director Frank Devonald in charge of management advisory services. Likewise, he has put Boston area small business services in the hands of Gerry O'Neil, and he has assigned partner Neil Driscoll to practice development, with particular emphasis on the industrial cities north of Boston in the Merrimack River Valley. "I am by nature a delegator," Jay remarks.

What more natural step for an office head with an interest in other people developed through his years in a professional services organization than to be concerned with intraoffice communication? Jay characterizes himself as "a tremendous booster of newsletters." In fact, he was largely responsible for starting or reviving newsletters in all four offices that have been his working bases—Seattle, Philadelphia, San Juan and Boston. "An office newsletter should be simple, frequent and regular," he says, adding that communication among the office members is one of the essentials to building up a team spirit. And along the same line, Jay enjoys writing notes to people, giving them a pat on the back, a word of recognition. "I do like to keep in touch with people, but I'm afraid I don't do it as much as I would like."

To reach him on a fine summer evening after five o'clock, it's not a bad idea to try the Brae Burn Country Club in Newton. Jay plays a serious, controlled game of golf and maintains one of the low handicaps among partners in the Firm. His hand, in the office or on the putting green, is steady. He keeps in shape and looks it. In truth, golf is Jay's primary recreational outlet.

There is no indication, however, that he requires the open air and space of the golf course to work out frustrations. Jay McCarthy gives every evidence of enjoying his game as he enjoys his work, and being thoroughly on top of both. ○



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