

# 8A STRICTLY BUSINESS

## Charlotte company gets international gig

SPECIAL TO THE POST

Charlotte-based All-Stars Communications has crossed the border into Mexico to become a satellite uplink truck company with international experience.

Harris Broadcast in Florence, Ky., approached All-Stars founder and managing general partner Ken Koontz three months ago about sending his new, state-of-the-art satellite uplink television production truck to Mexico to cover that country's national elections. Televisa, a Mexican network, had ordered some satellite equipment from Harris, but it would not be ready in time for the July 6 voting.

"We built the All-Stars truck

and knew about the strong and positive reputation Ken had built for the company," says Joe Mack, Sales Manager for Harris Broadcast.

Koontz says he was initially very skeptical because of the horror stories he was told about Mexico and possible threats to the safety and well-being of his operator.

"I heard everything from how armed banditos would commandeer and take the truck; graffiti would be marked all over it; we would never get back across the border into the U.S. and that all our electronic equipment would be confiscated or ruined by the jolting from travel on poorly maintained roads," he said.

"But none of it was true," says

truck operator Levi Bisbee, "except the part about rough roads. Our equipment was fine afterwards, but some roads were rather bumpy."

Televisa is considered the largest and most influential television network in Mexico. Bisbee, who communicated with his Mexican news crew through an interpreter, said it was a smooth operation from start to finish. At one stretch of their coverage from Mexico City, Bisbee was transmitting reports to the rest of the country for 22 consecutive hours, most of it live from the start of voting.

Bisbee said Mexico was the most rewarding and challenging uplink assignment of his 13-year career as a satellite truck opera-

tor. In addition to the language barrier, Bisbee had never done transmissions on the Mexican satellites.

"I never doubted Levi's ability to use our sophisticated electronic equipment to locate the right satellites and then manage to get clear signals for broadcast," says Koontz.

"Televisa said they were very happy with the job All-Stars did and they would not hesitate to use them again," says Mack.

Koontz flew Bisbee and a second operator assistant to San Antonio, Texas, and hired a professional to drive the truck the 1,250 miles from Charlotte to San Antonio to meet them. From there, Bisbee drove the remaining 950 miles to Mexico City.



PHOTO/KEN KOONTZ

Charlotte-based All-Stars Communications helped cover the Mexican elections.

## Magic for Gotham?



FILE PHOTO

A Magic Theater complex like this one in Atlanta is planned for New York, although negotiations to located one in Harlem broke down. "We could not agree on the economics, but it has not diluted our interest and commitment to Harlem," said Ken Lombard, president of Magic Johnson Enterprises. The 3,000-seat theater complex was to have been located at 125th Street in Harlem.

## Theatre site hits snag in Harlem

By Frank Eltman  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — A new site is being sought for a Magic Johnson theater complex in Harlem after talks broke down with a developer at one location on 125th Street, an associate of the basketball great said.

"We could not agree on the economics, but it has not diluted our interest and commitment to Harlem," Ken Lombard, president of Magic Johnson Enterprises, said last week in a phone interview from Los Angeles.

The 3,000-seat theater complex was to have been

located at 125th Street, between Second and Third avenues. Lombard said talks failed with developer Robert Seavey on establishing a "base rent."

Seavey did not return a call seeking comment.

"What has taken place in Harlem takes place a lot in tenant-developer negotiations," Lombard said. He declined to discuss financial details because he still must negotiate with another developer.

"We've got a number of locations we're still looking at," Lombard said. "Harlem has always been in our plans and continues to be. We just

have to find the right location."

Magic Johnson theaters are currently operating in Los Angeles and Atlanta and a complex in Houston is under construction. Lombard said plans include theaters in Cleveland in the southern California city of Carson, and he is negotiating for locations in Detroit and Chicago.

Lombard was more optimistic about the prospects for a multi-theater complex in Jamaica, Queens. "We're a lot closer to consummating a deal with the Jamaica project," he said.

Developer Joseph Mattone, of the Mattone Group Ltd.,

said he expects an October ground-breaking for a three-story, 240,000-square-foot building. Retail shops would be located on the first two levels, with Johnson's 13-screen theater with 3,300 seats on the third floor.

"They've promised to give us a very strong preliminary indication..." Mattone said about talks with Johnson's organization. "We've given them every opportunity to make this thing work."

The \$75 million complex would be built on what is now a parking lot at Parsons Boulevard and Archer Avenue, near the Long Island Rail Road's Jamaica station.

## How to increase investments without too much risk

CHARLES ROSS

### Your Personal Finance



Mutual funds can help increase your wealth without a lot of worry. But taking a little risk can be a thrill to many investors who enjoy picking individual stocks. The compro-

mise is to build a solid portfolio of mostly funds, with a small amount of individual stocks. You should limit your individual stock holdings to 10 percent of your overall portfolio, and no more than 20 percent of the equity portion. By limiting your direct stocks, you lower the chances that a couple of bad choices will crack your nest egg.

You should invest in not more than five different companies, and good leads can come from anywhere, friends, a stockbroker or the news media.

### Barriers to your mortgage

Mortgage rates are low, so why haven't you bought a home or refinanced your present one? Many consumers feel they cannot come up with enough cash for the down payment. But, many banks will accept down payments as low as 5 percent or less.

With a lower down payment, you increase the size of the loan, so you'll need more income to meet a common lending guideline: all your monthly

debt payments cannot exceed 36 percent of your gross monthly income. However lenders are easing their standards, and through the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), which now has no income cap, your debt-to-income ratio can be approved up to 40 percent.

### Up-front fees

Up-front fees, points, mortgage insurance — are they dis-

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### Money Management

## Entrepreneurs are trained to succeed at business deals

By Amanda Danchi

SPECIAL TO THE POST

Entrepreneurs aren't born. They're trained for success. The N.C. Association of CPAs says that while, in general successful entrepreneurs tend to be creative individuals who are adept at problem solving, there are other characteristics that can be learned. From tile vantage point of CPAs, who consult with thousands of companies on running their businesses, here are the 10 key traits of tile successful entrepreneur:

1) Goal-driven. Staying focused on a clear goal — and keeping employees focused on that goal — is often one of the most difficult tasks of the entrepreneur. In fact, one of the most important lessons business owners learn early on is that their company can't be all things to all people. The more focused the company is on producing what it makes best, the more likely it will succeed.

2) Customer-focused. Without customers, you can't build a business. The successful entrepreneur spends time understanding the interests and buying trends of potential customers and views tile company's products or services through tile consumer's eyes.

3) Team-oriented. Most successful entrepreneurs recognize that they can't build or run their business alone. Delegating responsibilities to teams of employees or even outside consultants will not only allow the company to focus on its core competencies, but also will improve the efficiency of its operations and provide avenues for creative ideas to filter their way up to management.

4) Skills-oriented. Each member of the team must have demonstrable skills that can contribute to the company's overall performance. The astute entrepreneur makes sure that his team possesses a diverse skill base — one that complements his or her own skills and can create synergism in a team environment. And tile entrepreneur is committed to employees' maintaining their skills by providing ongoing educational opportunities.

5) Techno-knowledgeable. Virtually every aspect of a business, from manufacturing to financial management to marketing, requires tech-

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## NASCAR team speeds by gender and ethnic barriers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LEXINGTON, N.C. — As the preponderance of family bloodlines in stock car racing attests, breaking into the NASCAR community can be a difficult road to travel.

For Kathy Thompson, it was triple tough.

"I was a woman, I was a Yankee, and I was Italian," says Thompson, a Greensboro resident for the past 30 years. "I had three strikes against me.

"It's just like anything else, though. You gain acceptance by proving yourself. The majority of people I've dealt with in NASCAR are class acts. If I was just standing around starry-eyed and gawking, it might have been different, but I went to work learning this business."

Thompson, the owner of Four Seasons Marketing, got into the sport 12 years ago, handling the relationship between Richard Petty and Pepsi.

Now she's breaking ground as president of racing operations for Washington Erving MotorSports, the new team jointly owned by former NFL star Joe Washington, former NBA star Julius Erving, Thompson and Raleigh businessman Fields Jackson.

While other women, particularly the wives of some drivers, have been involved in the business

aspects of racing, Thompson is the first female to hold such a lofty official title. It's an intriguing pairing — a female president and the first significant minority-owned NASCAR team since driver Wendell Scott owned his own team a quarter-century ago.

"We're very interested to see how this team does," says NASCAR spokesman Kevin Triplett. "It could give us a boost in opening up different markets."

Thompson and Washington were in Lexington recently looking over the site they plan to use to launch their team next season.

"I can't believe I'm here doing this," says Washington. "We first started talking about putting a team together in November. Now, everything is starting to fall into place."

"Before I got involved with it, I thought it was a redneck sport. I thought it was tacky," Thompson says. "But when you get to the track and see those CEOs of big companies going crazy in their luxury boxes, you realize, this sport is bigger than you think."

A decade of involvement with the sport was more than enough to hook Thompson. She knew Washington, who owns his own marketing firm in the Baltimore area, and decided to approach him about starting a NASCAR team.