



## Mike Murphy

Mike Murphy, executive vice-president of rigging company J.R. Clancy, has been in the rigging business for over 30 years. In addition to his many day-to-day tasks, he is also Clancy's International Standards Organization (ISO) 9001 management representative, making him responsible for the development and implementation of Clancy's quality management program. *LSA* recently spoke to him about Clancy's continuing evolution.

**Lighting & Sound America:** How did you get started in the industry?

**Mike Murphy:** I grew up in Syracuse and visited my first J.R. Clancy project when I was eight-years-old, with my neighbor who was designer and installer with the company. After that visit, where I saw a fire curtain being installed, I knew that I someday wanted to be involved in construction work. I started in the rigging industry when I was 18 in Minneapolis, and worked for the same neighbor that had worked for J.R. Clancy—who now owned Theatrical Rigging Systems. It was a small company, and I was fortunate to be able to work selling, fabricating, and installing stage rigging and boxed theatrical supplies and lighting. I eventually became president of SECOA. My family lived in Syracuse, and, in the '90s, I would stop in and see Bob Theis and Jack Suesse at Clancy. Whenever I saw Bob, he would ask when I was moving back home. In 1997, after numerous conversations with Bob and Jack, my wife and I decided to move our family to Syracuse, where we are today.

**LSA:** J.R. Clancy is a company with an interesting history. Can you tell us a little about it?

**MM:** The company was founded by John R. Clancy in 1885 as a result of his experience working as a stagehand at the Grand Opera in Syracuse. A touring production from England paid a visit to the city, and found that some rigging equipment it needed simply did not exist in the U.S. John Clancy developed and fabricated his own version of the gear. By 1910, Clancy's business had grown to the point where he built the first single-story manufacturing plant in Syracuse, a radical idea at the time. The company developed the first motorized rigging systems in the 1960s, offering position control and motor synchronization for stage sets. The following decade, the company built its current facility, and saw the fabrication and installation of the industry's first wire tension grid, which greatly increased lighting flexibility for stage productions. The company developed the second generation of package hoists in 2004—that's our PowerLift line of automated hoists, with the SceneControl 500 automated control system. We just completed work in

two of the most sophisticated concert halls in the world: Segerstrom Hall in the Orange County Performing Arts Center in California, and the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami, Florida. Today, Clancy operates from a 40,000-sq.-ft. facility, and along with a fully equipped fabrication shop, it houses a unique indoor test tower.

**LSA:** What is ISO 9001, and why did Clancy decide to pursue it?

**MM:** Bob Theis, J.R. Clancy's CEO and president, and I wanted to set up an operating framework that emphasized total quality for our customers. After attending a Malcolm Baldrige Award conference and listening to companies that achieved this national recognition, we knew that using the International Quality Standard (ISO 9001:2000) that stressed complete customer satisfaction was the way to go. It took us nearly 18 months of intense planning and implementation to get certified, but it was worth every minute of it!

**LSA:** Why is that?

**MM:** Although ISO started in Europe around 1947, it wasn't until 2000 that it was changed to focus on one's customers. By focus, I mean everything we do, from sales to shipment, is done with achieving complete customer satisfaction. Now, when we make a mistake—and we do—there's a framework for acknowledging the mistake, analyzing what went wrong, and making corrections to our process to ensure it doesn't happen again. The theme of ISO is continuous improvement, and the beneficiaries are our partners. We challenge ourselves daily to find better ways to do things, and not just to say, "That's the way we've always done it." When you've been in business nearly 125 years, you have to be very aggressive in not becoming complacent.

**LSA:** Is ISO expensive to maintain?

**MM:** Yes, but the payback is not just measured in dollars and cents, it's in having a very focused mission [Make Our Partners Successful] that all Clancy associates work toward. After seven years, it's become our culture. ☺