

A Family Business 100 Years Of Kalikow

An Interview with Peter S. Kalikow, President,
and Kathryn H. Kalikow, Principal, HJ Kalikow & Co.



Joseph Kalikow, HJ Kalikow & Co. founder (left); Harold, Joseph's son (center); and Peter, son and grandson of Harold and Joseph respectively (right)

EDITORS' NOTE Vince Lombardi once said, "Leaders aren't born, they're made." Well, a quick visit to the imposing wood paneled conference room at the HJ Kalikow & Co. (hjkalikow.com) headquarters at 101 Park Avenue in Manhattan might cast some doubt on this oft-used adage. On one wall of the well-appointed conference room sits the portraits of three generations of leaders of the Kalikow company – Joseph, its founder; Harold, Joseph's son; and Peter, son and grandson of Harold and Joseph respectively. Kathryn H. Kalikow, the next generational leader of the company, sits with her father, Peter, as we discuss a company that is celebrating its centennial this year. It does seem as though in the case of the Kalikow family, leaders are indeed born, with each one bringing their own unique vision to advance the firm.

Vince Lombardi, a coach who sought excellence on and off the field, would find in the Kalikow family a model team whose integrity, work ethic and success have defined multi-generational leadership in the real estate industry.

This is the 100th anniversary of the Kalikow company. Will you discuss the history of the company?

Peter: Well, for that you have to go back to my grandfather, Joe Kalikow. Joe was really a born leader. At the age of 17, he traveled

from the small village of Timkovichi in the Minsk region of Russia (which is today Belarus). He traveled from there to Liverpool where he



Joe Kalikow

then boarded a ship and arrived in Maine in January 1900. Joseph Kulakovsy (family name later changed to Kalikow) settled on the Lower East Side of New York.

Like many immigrants, Joe began work in the garment industry and then earned enough money to buy his own clothing manufacturing business. World War I generated a demand for military uniforms which Joe's company met through hard work, attention to details, and production efficiencies. He leveraged those successes by investing in real estate.

So, he went from manufacturing clothes to investing in real estate?

Peter: Well, it was much more than that. In 1925, he founded the Kalikow Construction Company and that became his full-time occupation and obsession. He completed his first project at 1312 West 6th Street, a four-story apartment building in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. He recognized that a growing population demanded more than simply single-family homes.

By the early 1930s, Joe had developed more than seven apartment buildings. This success enabled him to move him and his family to a large home in Borough Park, Brooklyn.

When do Joseph's sons enter the equation?

Peter: In the 1930s, Joe's oldest son, Harold, my dad, entered the business and began to play

a prominent role. During that time, the Kalikow company purchased large tracts of empty farmland in Queens – in particular, Forest Hills. In the early 1940s, the company developed three luxury apartment buildings in Forest Hills (Mayflower, Normandy and Lafayette).



The Lafayette

In September 1940, Harold married Juliet Citrin. My mom, Juliet, played an important role in advising my dad in his business, so it is very fitting that his granddaughter, Kathryn Harold Kalikow, will lead the company into the next generation.

In the early 1940s, the government mandated that the Kalikow company build housing for workers at defense plants, and they did this for a bit. They then opened a packaging facility to continue helping the war effort. Then, in 1943, my dad was drafted into the Marines, and my grandfather stepped in to help run the company.



Harold Kalikow in uniform with Juliet

So, WWII essentially stopped the real estate business for a bit?

Peter: Yes, but after the war, there was a tremendous need for affordable housing for veterans, and the Kalikow company still had those large Queens land tracts on which to build. The apartment buildings, Hyde Park and Cromwell, were completed in Forest Hills in 1951. The Kalikow company, now including Joe's two other sons, Nathan and Richard, worked to complete developments

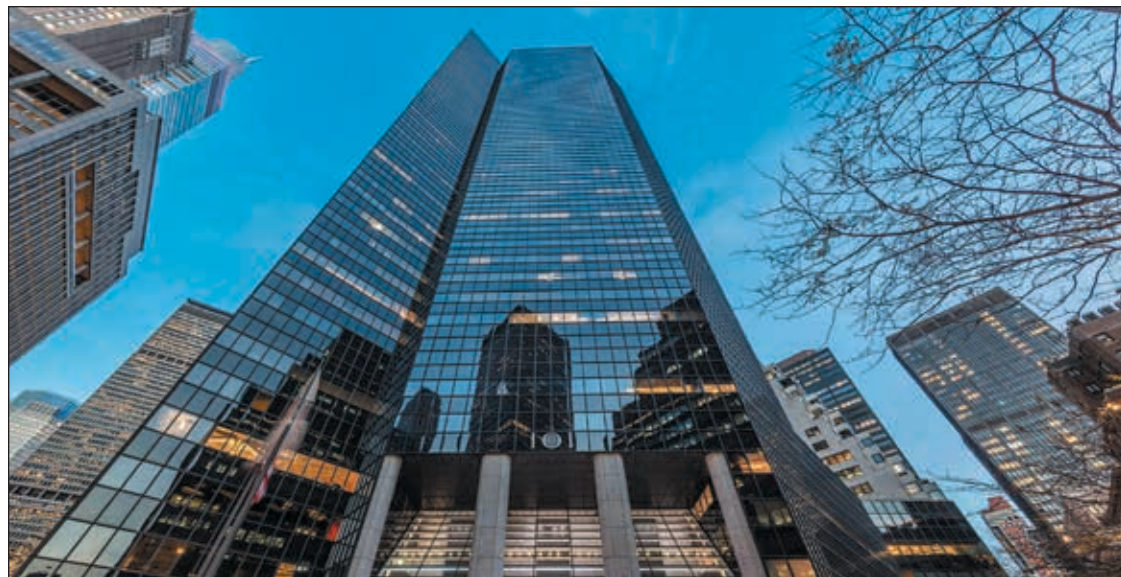
in the Jamaica, Briarwood, Kew Gardens, and Flushing sections of Queens. This included over 15 apartment buildings in these areas.



Peter and Harold Kalikow

How did the business become HJ Kalikow & Co.?

Peter: A very good question. Well, I joined the business after my graduation from Hofstra University in 1965. After several years at the company, I started to develop the urge to expand the business beyond the low-rise Queens and Brooklyn apartment buildings the company was constructing. I really wanted to expand into the high-rise Manhattan apartment market. So, I ultimately convinced my father to split from his brothers (businesswise) and start to focus on my dream. So, the firm became H (Harold) J Kalikow & Co. Again, I really have to credit my mom with this move. She really had faith in me.



101 Park Avenue



1001 Fifth Avenue drawing

So, you made the move into the big time – Manhattan?

Peter: Well, I guess you can say so. From there, in the 1970s, HJ Kalikow & Co. went on to develop many high-rise apartment buildings, mainly on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, including the Corniche on East 87th Street, East Winds on East 80th Street, Camargue on East 83rd Street, Concorde on East 65th Street, Ascot on Park Avenue South, and Chequers on West 62nd Street. In the late 1970s, I built the apartment I live in today at 1001 Fifth Avenue, since converted to a co-op.

Then, the biggest move of the company's history happened. I wanted to build a large commercial office building. It was a daunting task, but I thought at the ripe old age of 35, I



The Kalikows at 101 Park Avenue (above left); 195 Broadway (above right); The Hotel Millennium Downtown New York (below)



was ready – and my father supported me. 101 Park Avenue was born.

Do you think it is the mark of a leader to embark on difficult tasks in the face of adversity?

Peter: Well, you've got it right there. Difficult doesn't begin to describe it. We built 101 Park Avenue in the early 1980s when interest rates were a staggering 21 percent. Construction was difficult and I was on that site seven days a week making sure the trades were all there, that materials and supplies were getting there, and just motivating people to get the job done. So, I guess this is leadership of sorts.

101 Park Avenue is a 1.3 million square foot commercial office property with a blue-chip roster of tenants. It has won several architectural awards and is considered one of the real trophy buildings in Manhattan. Did this give you a real sense of accomplishment and pride?

Peter: Absolutely! It was my crowning achievement having been able to start, complete, and fully rent the property in record time. I had a lot of help, but at the end of the day, it was my "you know what" on the line, and the name of HJ Kalikow. I have to tell you that one of the things that gave me immense joy was seeing the look on my father's face when his brothers and others came to this beautiful building and witnessed first-hand what we had accomplished. Do leaders brag? Well, I guess sometimes when it is earned.

Before we get into your other impressive life accomplishments and Kathryn's entry into the business, any other real estate areas you would like to mention?

Peter: Well, there are some others, but I'll just mention two of which I am proud. They are 195 Broadway and the Millenium Hotel. 195 Broadway was opened in 1918 as the world headquarters for AT&T. It is a magnificent

building noteworthy for its classic Ionic and Doric columns and its Greek ornamentation. As a history buff, I really was into the historical significance of the property. So, I purchased it from AT&T in 1984 and spent time and money modernizing its interior spaces while maintaining the landmark features of the building. It was very successful for me. On the land that came with the purchase, in the early 1990s, I was able to build the beautiful Millenium Hotel. It was my first and only hotel, and built to last. In fact, even though it was directly across the street from Ground Zero, it experienced relatively little damage during that horrific attack. However, at the end of the day, I really did not see the downtown office market as the real future of the City, so I sold the properties and invested funds back into 101 Park Avenue and other real estate opportunities. Today's market has proven me right.

Father and Son Observe Convention



Harold J. Kalikow, Kings Point, was an interested observer with his son, Peter, during the recently held Democratic State Convention at the 71st Armory in New York City. Mr. Kalikow, who is chairman of the board of Kalikow Construction Corporation, Forest Hills, briefed his son on the dramatic byplay which resulted in the nomination of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy for the U. S. Senate.



Peter Kalikow giving a speech for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (above); a young Peter Kalikow with his first Ferrari (below)

Let's move from real estate to some other topics, including public service, philanthropy, cars and, of course, the company's next leader, Kathryn. Why did you commit such a large part of your life to public service?

Peter: The Kalikows were always interested in and involved in politics and public service. My dad was very involved in city, state, and national politics. He would take me to all kinds of political events, including political conventions and campaigns. And so, at an early age, I really got to appreciate how important the political process and public service is to our country. And that is why, when called upon, I did get involved in public service. I have served on a number of state and federal boards, but my most prominent by far was Chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. It was a tough job for sure, but I think I made a real difference leading an organization of 65,000 men and women providing public transit service to the people of our region.

Today, as Chair of the Grand Central Partnership, one of the largest business improvement districts (BID) in the nation, I take pride in ensuring the safety, cleanliness, and quality of life the BID delivers.

The Kalikow name is heavily associated with philanthropy. You are a long-time trustee of NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, founding member of the Museum of Jewish Heritage, member of the Hofstra University Board, and benefactor of the Kalikow School of Government, just to name a few. How did this come about?

Peter: Well, Joe Kalikow started it all off. In 1921, the Kalikow family founded an organization called Kalikow Family Circle in Borough Park which donated to local Jewish organizations. Harold had similar



involvements. I simply expanded upon this philanthropy and am fortunate to be able to do it. The three you mentioned are such important parts of my life. NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital helps countless people who receive the best healthcare in the world. The Kalikow School of Government at Hofstra educates the next generation of leaders. And the Museum of Jewish Heritage helps make sure that people never forget the tragedy of the Holocaust and, particularly in these times, help people understand that antisemitism still exists. One of the most important things I've been able to do at the Museum is create

the Peter & Mary Kalikow Jewish Genealogy Research Center, where people can trace their Jewish roots.

You are one of the foremost Ferrari collectors in the world. How did this come about?

Peter: I fell in love with Ferraris from a very young age, and my mom would indulge me by buying car magazines for me. Later on, they let me buy my first Ferrari. Since then, other than my family, this is my love, and with Kathryn helping run the business, I can devote even more time to it.

Let's get to the next generation of Kalikow company leadership. How do you see it, Kathryn?

Kathryn: I'm very excited to follow in the footsteps of my great-grandfather, grandfather, and father. It is a bit daunting to be the fourth generation Kalikow entrusted with the stewardship of the family business, but with the support of my father and his colleagues, I am ready for the challenge. I've learned a lot from my father about leadership. The Kalikows have established themselves as builders of quality properties, always ensuring top shelf product and excellent service. I go back to something said about my great-grandfather, Joe Kalikow, in a

1917 piece written about him. It said, "Honesty and fair dealing characterized Mr. Kalikow's business life and brought him success in the line of his work. 'Never make a promise that you know you cannot fulfill.'"

How do you see the transition between your father and you?

Kathryn: While I never witnessed it personally, I've heard many stories about the transition between my grandfather and father. The relationship and transition were really based upon mutual respect and support. Harold helped guide his son and relinquished more control when he was comfortable with my



Kathryn, Peter, and Nick Kalikow at 101 Park Avenue (above); Kathryn Kalikow's portrait added to the wall of leaders of HJ Kalikow & Co. (below)

dad's ability to do things on his own. I think the ultimate proof of this was my father's desire to get into the commercial property business and Harold's support of this.

I believe leaders are always learning. So, as far as my role is concerned, every day I learn more about this wonderful business than I knew the day before, and I am encouraged to make my views known about things. I participate in all facets of the business, whether it be lease negotiations, financings, or new project development. I think my real value-added is my perspective on the younger working people and what they want in both commercial and residential properties. One example that comes to mind is a recent lease deal I did with 5 Iron Golf. When first approached with the concept, my father was somewhat skeptical about how 5 Iron Golf would

fit into a world class commercial office building. But, once we figured out how to create a separate entrance and elevator to its space, I was able to convince my father that this type of amenity – golf simulators, sports bar, event space – would be embraced by existing and prospective tenants and a real draw to 101 Park Avenue. And, in fact, it has been a resounding success.

I will also say that my brother, Nicholas, while having his own movie and graphic novel production company in Los Angeles, is very involved in the strategic direction of the company. We speak constantly, and I truly value his advice.

And so, as I further develop my leadership skills, my job is to really learn as much as I can, lean on the wonderful people who have worked with my father for many years, and look to the future. This means always ensuring the

crown jewel of the business, 101 Park Avenue, remains one of the trophy properties in New York City. This means taking the long view – investing back into the property, making sure we do things like achieving Gold LEED status, and ensuring top-level service to our tenants. Also, as I watch the other elements of our business – residential, real estate portfolio investments, etc. – I am opportunistic in looking out for other opportunities that build value.



Do you ever think you'll buy a newspaper like your dad did?

Kathryn: Well, I'll let him take that one.

Peter: Owning the *New York Post* was an incredible experience, but I'm not sure that I would do it again, and probably would not advise Kathryn to do it either.

Kathryn: I will say this, though. I am following several of the Kalikow traditions in public service and philanthropy. I serve on the board of the Real Estate Board of New York, the Citizens Budget Committee, and the Grand Central Partnership. Also, I love dogs and have become involved in the American Kennel Club and its charitable arm. ●

