

# Larry Simonel, Sales Consultant

## C&T Design and Equipment Co., Indianapolis

By Lisa White, Contributing Editor

**L**arry Simonel has been in the foodservice industry most of his life. Growing up, his mother worked as a restaurant manager and he began working in and around foodservice operations at 12 years old.

“I actually like to tell people my first foodservice job was as a waiter at the Last Supper,” Simonel jokes.

After graduating from Michigan State University with a degree in hotel and restaurant management, Simonel immediately began what became a lifetime career. His background includes working as a restaurant manager and becoming part of a food and beverage management consulting firm prior to joining Indianapolis’ C&T Design and Equipment Co, where he was one of the dealer’s first designers and has served in sales since 1972.

Simonel specializes in independently owned facilities and has a diverse client base that includes restaurants, bars and retirement centers.

**FE&S: How has the industry changed for the better since you first got started?**

**LS:** The speed of things has changed considerably due to the increased use of computers. In the past it would take close to a month to put a project together, due in part to the fact that you had to mail out pricing requests. Today, we are lucky to have two days to complete a project estimate. The access to knowledge also is fantastically better. Information is available faster and easier on the Internet.

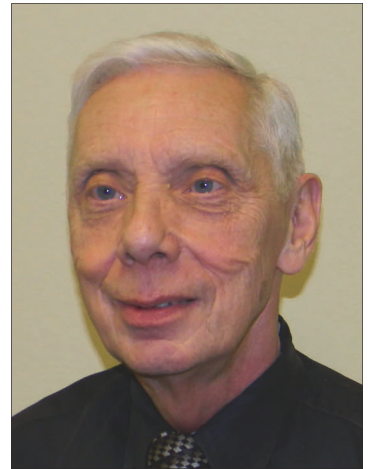
**FE&S: By your own admission, you have only missed 2 NRA shows in 56 years. What keeps you coming back?**

**LS:** I also have only missed two NAFEM Shows during that time period. End users go to the NRA, so it’s important to see what they see as well as take the opportunity to network with them.

**FE&S: How do today’s customers differ from 30 or 40 years ago?**

**LS:** Today’s operators are not as quality minded as in the past. Many people put value in the wrong place when working on a

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project. They will find inexpensive equipment on the Internet, but don’t know the value of it. When building a restaurant, what is put into the kitchen, dining room and bar is of the utmost importance. People will sacrifice quality to take the cost out of the project rather than look at other factors involved. This shows that their priorities sometimes are skewed.

**FE&S: How do you accommodate the different needs of your diverse client base?**

**LS:** We do a lot of design work as well as sell equipment, so the goal is to try and design with a “form follows function” attitude. I know the function, since I’ve been around long enough to know what different clients need.

**FE&S: If I were just getting started in this industry, what advice would you give me?**

**LS:** I’d recommend that you work in a few different back of house areas, like a dish room, bar or cook line, at different types of facilities. Learning the business this way helps you become better educated on how things work.

**FE&S: What is the most important attribute of a DSR?**

**LS:** A love for the industry is imperative. I know people who work in this industry that are not interested in food. I like the industry and the creativity of designing operations.

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