

# “THE DUCT-FREE ZONE”

By Gerry Wagner, Vice President HVAC Technical Training  
Tradewinds Climate Systems



**You are either a good technician or a good businessperson, but it's hard to be both:** this has been a common perception in all the trades for a century or more. Is it urban legend, an old wives' tale or is it accurate?

Well, my experience says it's generally an accurate adage ... but does it have to be? My career has been a bit of a hodge-podge of positions in the HVAC trade including, manufacturer, manufacturer's representative, contractor and now, factory trainer. I have been very fortunate throughout to have mentors who helped me navigate each transition ... people who not only affected my career but my life.

Looking back now that I get closer to the finish line of my career, I wonder if I had dedicated myself to one position ... to one singular aspect of the trade, would I have been better off?

Hindsight is 20/20 as they say ... I wish there had been a book 40 years ago that would have helped me chart a steadier and straighter course for my career. A book written by a proven business heavyweight who had endured transitions, obstacles and self-doubt throughout their own journey.

If such a book existed 40 years ago, it unfortunately never found its way into my hands, but I recently found such a book published in 2020 ... its titled, Drive and the author is Kelley Earnhardt Miller. If the author's name sounds familiar, yes, she is the daughter of the NASCAR legend, Dale Earnhardt. I want to make this clear right now ... this book has little to do with NASCAR or Dale Earnhardt.

You do not need to be a NASCAR fan or know anything about the Earnhardt family to appreciate this book and its message. Kelley Earnhardt Miller lays out a formula ... a formula that can be adapted to any industry and one that can be tweaked to any person, male or female, academic or student of hard-knocks, young or, in my case, old.

A chapter that had particular relevance for me is Chapter 11: *Manage Your Emotions*. It has taken me years, many years to learn to sleep on something that on initial review has upset me. My primal reaction is to react immediately and react in a BIG way ... I will tell you this has not served me well both professionally and personally. The honest truth is, I'm still learning to wait before I react and even now, sometimes it takes everything I got to spend some time thinking how best to react ... and often that is to not react at all.

I never wanted to be a boss, supervising and evaluating others. In my contracting life, as much as I wanted my business to grow to its fullest potential, the fact is I could never trust someone else to do the job the way I would do it so that stunted the company's growth to say the least.

At the pinnacle of my contracting business, I was working 12 – 18 hour days, 7 days a week. Chapter 12 of Kelley's book is titled, *Balance Your Work with Your Life*. Looking back, I made a lot of money working that hard but at what cost? Was it fair to my wife, our daughter ... to myself? A dear friend at the time said to me, “you are going to be the richest man in the cemetery.” I survived but not without a physical cost ... I always tell young people who attend my GREE mini split training events that they made a wise choice in choosing a trade but they best have an end game because the likelihood of you doing HVAC installs and service work into your sixties is slim ... very slim.

Chapter 16 is titled, *Be Your Best Self*. One thing I have had right, almost from the beginning is that I believe we can have fun and be productive at the same time. I will admit, in my days of drinking, I may have had a little too much fun. Even a full life is short when you look at it retrospectively ... why not have some fun along the way? I always think of the great college basketball coach, Jimmy Valvano and his words in one of the last speeches of his life ... “*We should*

*do this every day of our lives. Number one is laugh. You should laugh every day. Number two is think. You should spend some time in thought. Number three is, you should have your emotions moved to tears, could be happiness or joy. But think about it. If you laugh, you think, and you cry, that's a full day. That's a heck of a day. You do that seven days a week, you're going to have something special.*”

So, can you be a good technician and a good businessperson at the same time? I'm not going to say it's easy but it is possible when you open yourself up to insight, guidance and advice from valued mentors and even from what on the surface seems like an unlikely source of help, the daughter of a NASCAR legend.

Do yourself a favor and get the book, Drive by Kelley Earnhardt Miller. I assure you won't be disappointed and you just might create a course for your own career that brings you everything you want in a way that doesn't sacrifice your health, both mental and physical, and that of your loved ones.

Hey, I want to give a quick shout-out to the winner of the 2021 GREE TOP GUN Training Competition, Joao Guerra of Ultimate Comfort, Inc in Raleigh, NC. I will be meeting Joao at the East Coast Metal Distributors location in Raleigh, NC (Joao's local GREE distributor) soon to award the grand prize of a complete GREE Sapphire 12K mini split along with a trophy naming Joao as the...

2021 GREE TOP GUN TROUBLESHOOTER!  
CONGRATULATIONS Joao!

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Gerry Wagner is the Vice President of HVAC Technical Training for Tradewinds Climate Systems. He has 41 years in the HVACR industry working in manufacturing, contracting and now training. You can contact Gerry by email: gwagner@twclimate.com and also please visit our website: www.twclimate.com

## JB Industries Announces the NEW ACCELERATOR VL-200 Rapid Evacuation Kit

Aurora, Illinois (June 2021) – JB Industries, a premier manufacturer of American-made HVAC/R tools and equipment, announces their new ACCELERATOR VL-200 Rapid Evacuation Kit. JB's engineers designed the tools in this kit to pair with a JB vacuum pump allowing technicians to remove restrictive valve cores and perform HVAC/R system evacuations up to 20X faster in commercial and residential applications.

The new kit includes the following items:

- Two 48" long, 1/2" diameter evacuation hoses with 3/8" x 1/4" SAE female swivel hose connections
- An award-winning A32525SV vacuum-rated Valve Core Removal Tool with Slide Valve Side Port
- A vacuum-rated Valve Core Removal Tool A32525N
- Two Y-FORCE dual, high-speed coupler connectors for 3/8" and 1/2" connections
- JB branded drawstring bag

“In our new ACCELERATOR VL-200 Kit, we've hand-picked the best tools needed for any

tech to perform a faster evacuation when on a job site. Our award-winning Valve Core Removal Tool with Slide Valve Side Port and standard Valve Core Removal Tool allows the removal of restrictive cores with ease. The Slide Valve Side Port opens and closes to protect an easily attached micron gauge. This allows a contractor to charge the system without damaging the vacuum gauge.” said Dave Madden, Director of Manufacturing & Engineering at JB Industries.



JB's 1/2" diameter vacuum-certified hoses won't collapse and/or permeate. The new Y-FORCE coupler has dual, high-speed connectors for each hose hook-up and is designed for a rapid evacuation. JB valve core tools are rated to 20 microns and open up over 90% of the internal diameter of an access port.

The ACCELERATOR VL-200 Kit is sold in a newly designed box and includes a convenient JB branded drawstring bag. The new drawstring bag has shoulder straps for hands-free carrying. The bag is rugged enough to store all of the kit's tools in one convenient location for easy access in any work vehicle.

## Scott Crane Joins Malco Products, SBC as Chief Operating Officer



Scott Crane

ANNANDALE, MN. (June 22, 2021) — Malco Products, SBC, announced that Scott Crane has joined the company as Chief Operating Officer.

Crane has more than 30 years of operations, financial and business leadership experience at a variety of organizations, including startups and Fortune 50 companies, both private and public.

Prior to joining Malco, Crane served as the Chief Financial Officer at DeZURIK, Inc., and has held various leadership positions at Edeniq, Koch Industries, Inc., and The Dow Chemical Co.

“We are pleased to bring Scott's leadership and operations expertise to the Malco team,” said Rich Benninghoff, President of Malco Products. “His approach to strategy and its execution will be invaluable to the organization as we expand the company's capabilities during this period of growth.”

“I look forward to joining the team of employees at Malco,” Crane said. “I grew up in a Midwestern manufacturing family, and have spent my career helping U.S.-based manufacturing companies grow and keep their operations moving smoothly and efficiently. I am excited to bring that experience to Malco.”

Crane holds a Master's in Business Administration degree in Finance & International Business from the University of Michigan – Ross School of Business, as well as a Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from North Dakota State University.