

The Purest Man by Andrea Gros

December 2011



I have changed my life for the better... everything I have worked for to become a design-build architect and interior designer changed the day I received a phone call to become the architect/designer for a new client in Fountain Valley, CA. His name is John Calicchio. He had started a new car business in a large 37,000 Sq. Ft. building on 2-acres that needed remodel work and city permits & approvals.

I initially spoke with "John" the owner of Euromasters Classic Cars through phone calls and email correspondence in order to produce the work and outcome he needed to gain city approval. After many painstaking months of work with the city and coordination with John, over a year later he received the necessary approvals. I discovered over this period of time the most humble, honest and calm strength in a person that I can easily say I had never seen before. It was a breath of fresh air

to know a person that was so pure and caring of his passion and the people around him. I observed him interacting with his staff and customers on a regular basis and found that he always put their needs first and went out of his way to take care of them. This man would say what he meant and always followed through with what he said. This man is John Calicchio.

Knowing John affected me in such a way that I stopped what I was doing in the design field to work by his side and help in anyway I could to make his dream of Euromasters Classic Cars a reality. The next two years of my life we worked long hours, six days a week (sometimes seven) to make sure the staff and the customers where always taken care of. As time went on the staff and the returning customers started to feel like family. John's vision was to create an environment that felt like Disneyland when you walked through the doors. He had classic music playing from the 50's and 60's, the shop and showroom were always pristine in appearance, the facility offered the Porsche owner a full range of services from sales, service, parts, paint & body, upholstery, financing, insurance, vehicle detailing and meticulous vehicle restorations. There was always a great cup of coffee and donuts waiting for the customers on Saturday morning along with a smile from our leader who would always make sure he went above and beyond to serve them.

Some say "All good things must come to an end". I don't think they should if you are a good person and do "Good" for others before yourself and truly believe in your dreams. This unfortunately is not what happened to John who had invested all of his personal fortune and assets into Euromasters. All of the time he had been funding his dream, he never once took a paycheck. He had a watch-like working business that was getting continuous orders for vehicle restorations, while getting attention at the auto shows and high-end car magazines; all this while doubling his sales every year. All of this was humbling and beautiful to watch, until there were a few employees that had taken advantage of John and stole monies from his company. This left large debts John could not absorb, now having exhausted all of his assets building up the company. With the economy down-turn and John's personal funds exhausted, he looked to banks and private funding companies for assistance. All of the companies came back with the same answer, "We cannot loan money to a car dealership in this turned-down economy." I personally never took a paycheck and invested my life savings to help aid the business which was not enough to make a dent in what was stolen. Not willing to give up, John pursued every avenue available from investors, partners, hard-money lenders, calling upon close friends and family to keep the dream alive. I can safely say that he spent countless hours and many sleepless nights trying to obtain necessary working capital needed to keep the company going; all the while I was manning the front office and trying to keep the day-to-day business running.

John had exhausted every option trying to save the business. He lost every dime he had along with his building to foreclosure. His home also went into foreclosure which prevented him from obtaining any possible sort of financial assistance. He no longer could take care of his employees or the customers which had previously praised him for all of the wonderful things he did for them. Many of these people had turned against John when the business started to fail. Like Jesus to the cross, John was attacked and called out to be a thief and a liar; this was the hardest thing to watch. Here is a man that lived in the same town (Costa Mesa) since he was a small boy and had always been successful in his personal life and businesses, while always making others happy; this was evident when friends and family would visit. All of John's efforts over the past 40-plus years disintegrated within months. John was forced into bankruptcy and lost everything he had worked so hard to create. With nothing to his name and kicked down in the dirt, John was then arrested and accused by people that did not know him or did not know the truth of what happened to the business. He had to borrow money from his mother who is ill and blind to defend his life for crimes he did not commit.

Here's a fact to consider: John was arrested and accused of Money Laundering and Embezzlement from his own company. There were no shareholders, investors or lenders (other than his close friends and family). These charges stemmed from 9 people, 1 was an attorney, most of whom John never met, who accused John of stealing their deposits when the business was forced to close. John swiftly sent gift baskets and a warm letter to each of these people assuring them that he would personally pay them back when he got back up on his feet. After a forensic accounting by the District Attorney, it turned out that these charges brought forth by these people were false; it was finally proven that John personally never received a dime of this. These people *assumed* that John had personally stolen their money while in actuality the bookkeeper and I were scrambling to keep the business alive moving John's *and their* moneys from John's other business and personal bank accounts. This ultimately led to the suspicion of Money laundering. We never expected to close the business while we had more than five interested buyers for the business who after hearing about these untrue accusations immediately retracted their offers. They all had signed letters of intent, while one had a partnership contract signed by four officers.

Another fact: The total loss for all of these people was \$142k. In 2011, the business was headed for sales of 4-million dollars and I had personally booked over \$250,000 from our Special Events Center just for the 4th quarter 2011 alone. Because there were no longer funds available to make payroll and rent, the doors were ultimately closed in September of 2011 precluding the special events from ever taking place. Ironically, the proceeds from these events alone would have paid these 9 people in full. 9 out of 200 satisfied customer cars sold.

Finally, I truly believe in Karma and know that for all of the lies people have spread about John and all the deceitful things people have done to him, there will be a day when the sky will open up and shine upon him again. He has always been an honest, giving soul and put the care of others before his own. I hope this will bring peace to him again for always doing the right thing! This is the greatest man I have ever met, and I am fortunate to know him. All of the years of stress, heartache and tribulation must be a test from above to prove the true honesty, humility, pure greatness and hope that John Calicchio carries within him to this day. I wish everyone could have a person like John in their lives to show them that there are still good people in the world. John's a fighter and will never give up. I can't wait to see what he will do next...

Andrea Gros