

A black and white portrait of Gino Stefanutti, an older man with light hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark sweater over a light-colored, vertically striped collared shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

*Conversations
with, and about*

**GINO
STEFANUTTI**

The real secret of success is enthusiasm. You can do anything if you have enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is the yeast that makes your hope rise to the stars. Enthusiasm is the sparkle in your eyes; it is the swing in your gait, the grip of your hand; the irresistible surge of your will and your energy to execute your ideas. Enthusiasts are fighters. They have fortitude; they have staying qualities. Enthusiasm is at the bottom of all progress. With it there is accomplishment. Without it there are only alibis.

Walter P. Chrysler

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this book is Gino Stefanutti – founder of, and recently retired chairman of Stefanutti Stocks, one of South Africa’s top listed construction companies. Gino is a man who has inspired many of his friends, colleagues and associates, and I believe he still has the ability to inspire many who may read these pages, especially those not afraid of pursuing their dreams and the hard work it takes to make them a reality.

Gino’s attitude was that not much was impossible, and because he was passionate about what he did, his end game was not money – his financial success was just a by-product of doing what he loved, and doing it well. *“Money and status do not make a man. Respect is earned and not commanded and I take a dim view of people who define their success by their social standing and/or achievements - be aware that these alone can be short-lived and turn into a heap of ashes.”*

Most of his decisions were based on the potential for long-term growth rather than the opportunity to make a quick buck and walk away with a heavy pocket. He made a lot of personal sacrifices along the way, put his own assets on the line, invested his time and energies in the bigger picture, leading from the front whilst creating a sense of inclusivity across the ranks that resulted in an army of loyal colleagues, associates and friends.

He refers to ‘window and mirror’ maturity in leaders, whereby leaders will *“point out of the window to apportion credit to factors other than themselves...”* Or when things go wrong they will *“not blame circumstances or other people for set backs and failures - they will point at their reflection in the mirror and say: I am responsible”*. It is a refreshing approach, and to his credit, his style of leadership within his company certainly produced results.

Often society looks at success stories and assumes that they just happened over night, forgetting that the result we see more often than not started a long time ago. If we are curious enough, we start to engage in conversations on the matter, trying to establish what are the ingredients contributing to these success stories. Whether it is a financial, sporting, musical, scientific or philanthropic success story - the journey required to get there probably entailed much self-sacrifice, energy and dedication on the part of the 'successful ones'.

Gino's story begins in Italy, but this book is not a chronological account of his life. It focuses on key events and topics that kept coming up in conversations about and with him - and these form the basis of *Conversations, with and about Gino Stefanutti*.

Gino is a determined man who tackles whatever he does with enthusiasm. He has a remarkable zest for life, endless self-confidence, and a wicked sense of humour - all of which cannot but rub off on you when you are in his presence.

I hope you enjoy looking in on these conversations.

Chrissi Maria



Conversations with Gino

Gino tells his story – from a poor but happy youngster in Italy to heading up one of South Africa's top five construction groups. He recounts growing up, his experiences, his career highs and lows as well as sharing some of his opinions on today's South African construction climate.

Conversations about Gino

Snapshots of conversations about Gino with family, friends, colleagues, classmates, teachers... What legacy is he leaving behind? How do friends and colleagues perceive him? What do people see as the secrets to his success.



CHRISSIMARIA