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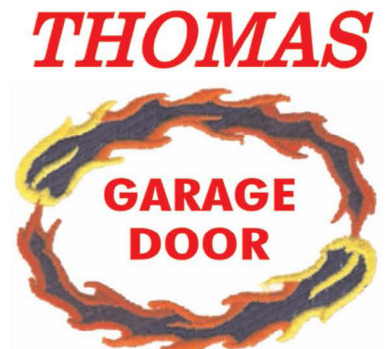
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Giselle Bernard
Publisher

The Metropolitan Builder will soon celebrate its seventh year in business, and it is still growing, I'm pleased to say. A lot has changed since I first launched the publication. Today, not only do I offer referred builders, interior designers and vendors the opportunity to have their companies profiled in the publication, but also I serve as a sales liaison between the builders and the vendors looking to grow their businesses.

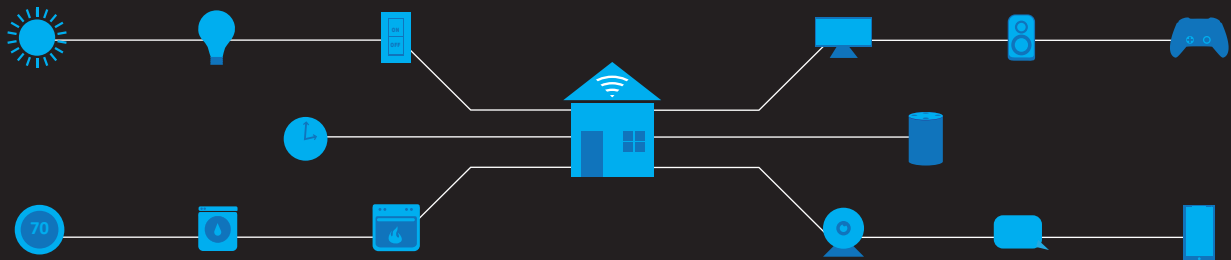
I strive to offer my customers new and unique opportunities. For example, two years ago I created sponsorships for the Front Cover and Dialogue with a Designer pieces that run in the magazine each month. Not only do the referred featured builders and interior designers receive publicity through the magazine, but also they receive beautiful sets of marketing material absolutely free, compliments of the companies that have picked up the sponsorships.



In addition, this year I've incorporated a category-exclusive networking opportunity for the suppliers and subcontractors who want to grow their books of builder business. If you are interested in finding out more about this opportunity, please contact me.

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Innovation, Creativity Distinguish Covington Custom Builders' Homes

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

After 23 years of building, Robert and Mina Covington, owners of Covington Custom Builders, still find it is a lot of fun to create houses. “We put a lot of heart and soul and thought into every project. We put time and effort into being unique and marketable,” Robert stated.

“We try to stay a little bit out in front of the market, on the cutting edge of putting interesting finishes in our spec homes,” he added. Right now they have four speculative houses in West University at or near completion that they’re very proud of and are listed in MLS.

Although the Covingtons work with interior designers, especially on pre-sold custom homes, they do most of the design work themselves on their spec homes. “We love to have people walk through our spec houses and say ‘Wow! This is great!’ We love to bring all of our creativity into a completed house.”

However, “if we put something in there and it’s not working, we redesign it. Right now [during this interview] we have six magazines and books open on the coffee table

looking at fixtures. We never stop looking for ideas.”

Of course they will build whatever a customer wants in a custom home. And they will work with whatever architect and interior designers their customer chooses, they emphasized.

They focus on the “high-end, typical tear-down areas” of Houston, such as West University, Southampton and Memorial Areas. “It’s very competitive in those areas of Houston because so many people want to build there. If you’re very well known in those areas, it helps a lot,” stated Robert.

“Because of the quantity of homes we have built in Houston over the last 20 years, we understand the market we build in very well,” he added. The market conditions in the area control the price range and size of their projects.

“Right now the market is really hot,” Robert noted. Consequently, Covington Builders is constructing mostly speculative homes. At other times, when the market is cool,



the company constructs pre-sold custom homes exclusively.

“Because we are in a hot market the land is very hard to get. We buy the land sometimes; other times the customer already has a lot.” The Covingtons work with many different realtors. In addition, Mina Covington is a realtor.

Although they build high-end custom and speculative homes, the Covingtons are cost-conscious, working with their customers to keep costs down: “Even on a big house, you can’t get everything you want,” according to Robert.

“Contractors get thrown a lot of curve balls in the high-end custom home market. It’s hard for customers to visualize the size and feel of a space when it’s two-dimensional on paper. The single most challenging thing of being a builder is trying to communicate what something is going to look like or feel like to match what the customer wants when it is built and becomes three-dimensional.”

He said they’ve had to redesign spaces from master closets to kitchens when they were near completion because the clients didn’t like the space. “We don’t punish clients who make changes. If you have ‘custom’ in your name, you should be willing to make changes for the customer,” Robert said.

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NAHB Publishes Salary Data for 39 Jobs across Industry

BuilderBooks, the publishing arm of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), recently released The Single-Family Builder Compensation Study, 2017 Edition. The study includes data collected on compensation and benefits for 39 common positions at single-family home building companies.

Results from this survey provide single-family builders with current information that can be used to benchmark their employees' level of compensation and benefits. The data was analyzed by region of the country, 2017 expected dollar volume, number of expected starts in 2017 and number of employees on payroll.

The findings are presented from two different perspectives: (1) Across all 39 positions, giving a broad view of the full-time positions that currently exist at single-family building companies, as well as a comparison of average total

compensation and benefits across positions; (2) in a detailed view of each position's average compensation and benefits.

"This publication offers valuable information to any home building company," said NAHB Chairman Randy Noel, a custom home builder from LaPlace, La. "It gives readers an inside look into the compensation and benefits offered at similarly sized companies and allows them to compare themselves to the average, or even to use these numbers as recruiting tools to showcase earning potential for prospective employees."

The Single-Family Builder Compensation Study, 2017 Edition is available for purchase (\$149.95 Retail/\$79.95 NAHB member, ISBN978-086718-766-3) at BuilderBooks.com or by calling 800-223-2665. The ebook is available at www.ebooks.builderbooks.com (\$89.99 Retail/\$55.99 for NAHB members).



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Dialogue with a Designer

Donna M. Jarnigan, ASID, RID

International Flooring knows that dreams, reality and inspiration make a house a home. It also knows that an interior designer or interior design firm often becomes an integral part of this process. As a National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA)-certified company, International Flooring takes great pride in working with some of the finest professionals in the Houston market, providing the best quality wood flooring and carpets available and superb customer service. International Flooring offers their clients a private showroom full of exotic wood floors not found in retail showrooms. This month International Flooring speaks with Donna M. Jarnigan, ASID, RID, Lacy-Boone Interiors

Donna has been in the Interior Design business for forty years and has experience in Commercial, Residential, Hospitality, Retail and Health Care Design. She is an active Professional Member of ASID, member of TAID, and is licensed by the State of Texas. In October 2012 Donna was the recipient of the ASID Medalist Award. This award is rarely given and awarded at the National level for a member that has dedicated the most time, energy, creativity and support of their ASID National and the local ASID Chapter. Donna was named on the 2013 Luxe Interiors Design Gold List and her work has been featured in numerous design publications.

Areas of specialization include Remodeling and New Construction. Donna believes that knowledge of your client and product is the critical key to creating a successful synergy between client and designer. The greatest

compliment Donna can receive is when her client's say "I love it, it is beyond my expectations!"

International Flooring: *What motivated you to go into the interior design field?*

Donna M. Jarnigan: From the time I was a small child, family members would ask my opinion about color, pattern style and furniture arrangement. In college I soon realized that my natural talents really were in interior design.

International Flooring: *How has the field of interior design changed since you graduated?*

Donna M. Jarnigan: In so many ways. Where do I begin? It has changed and evolved tremendously. We have moved 'way beyond thinking just about decor and finishes (which, of course, are part of what we do) to truly designing with the health, safety and welfare of our clients in mind. How one works, lives and uses the space is our starting point of design. Form and function are critical.

International Flooring: *How can an experienced interior designer help custom home builders or remodeling contractors with their building or remodeling projects?*

Donna M. Jarnigan: First, you need to meet the client and "get inside their head," so to speak, to truly understand their wants, needs and desires for the space. After we leave a project, that client has to live in that space, not us. Any project design should be done with the end user in mind. If the builder or remodeler doesn't have a client, then all my knowledge and experience should be used to make sure the

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design works for most prospective buyers.

International Flooring: What sets you apart from other designers?

Donna M. Jarnigan: I don't design so that my "style" is stamped on a project. I truly design with the client in mind. With my guidance the goal is to design something that truly reflects my client's style. Also, honesty and integrity are as important as the design.

International Flooring: What has been your most challenging project and why?

Donna M. Jarnigan: Every project has its issues, and no two are alike. That's part of the challenge of being a good designer. You must be a critical thinker as well as creative. I'd probably say that a hospital and medical professional building are among the most challenging. If you can satisfy a Board of Doctors, meet all the health, safety, fire and building codes and do a great design and décor, then you can probably do most anything.

International Flooring: How do you begin the materials selection process when working with builders' and remodelers' clients?

Donna M. Jarnigan: After my initial meeting with the clients, measurements and photos are taken, then the design finalized, I schedule "selection day." I take my clients to each of my "trade" showrooms and vendors, and I show them what I have in mind for their project. Each step of the way I am guiding them, making suggestions, helping them make cohesive selections' decisions. By the end of the day we have a design "board" of samples from cabinets to tile. We always take photos of our clients with their samples, and it becomes part of their project notebook.

International Flooring: What are some common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?

Donna M. Jarnigan: Not involving an interior designer before the project begins. An interior designer is important for space planning, lighting plans, cabinet design, paint and many other specifications. A designer thinks of all the needs in that space, and that input is critical.

International Flooring: Speaking about staying current, how do you keep yourself up to date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?

Donna M. Jarnigan: I take numerous CEUs [continuing education units] throughout the year, receive information from my professional organizations, webinars, magazines and peers. We are constantly learning.

International Flooring: What is your favorite design style?

Donna M. Jarnigan: I can do any style or look for my clients, from ultra-contemporary to very traditional, but

Continued on page 17

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Goodman, as an organization, is extremely focused on the residential new home and renovation market and we strive to develop products and programs that result in long-term relationships. Goodman[®] and Amana[®] brand systems feature outstanding limited warranties*, products with legendary performance, offering high-efficiency systems up to 18 SEER. Whether you build two or 200 plus homes per year Goodman has systems and builder programs that can help you grow your business. Builders can qualify for one of two builder programs when using Goodman or Amana brand HVAC systems. And one of the best things is that both Goodman and Amana brand products are proudly designed, engineered and assembled in the United States.



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How Smokey the Bear Would Manage Your Business

By Burk Moreland

Having lived in Colorado for a time and traveling to California frequently, I have seen the devastation and terror that wildfires cause. All it takes is a tiny spark to ignite thousands of acres, putting people, wildlife and beautiful places in danger.

Have you noticed that the news cameras always want to focus on the people on the front lines? They show planes and helicopters swooping in with water or other chemicals and firefighters getting up close and personal with the blaze.

Firefighters risk their lives multiple times per year to save everyone and everything they can. Firefighting is a very dangerous job, one I respect deeply; in fact, my father was a fireman.

But one often-forgotten component to firefighting is the group of people supporting those water planes and firefighters. For every person on the front lines, there are many more in the background doing tasks like building fire breaks and lines. They use heavy equipment to clear swaths of flammable materials in the fire's path so that there is nothing to burn when the fire gets there. It is a combined effort of extinguishing flames, along with preventing the flames from spreading. Both are essential to the success of the operation.

There are many similarities between building a typical business and fighting a fire. I see client after client spraying "water" all over their "fires." They are in the middle of the fight, dropping gallons and gallons of "water" all over their problems and issues. Just like with wildfires, as soon as they get one problem nearly snuffed out, another one erupts into a blaze behind them when they aren't looking. They become permanent firefighters fighting endless battles.

Sound familiar? Can you feel the heat all around you?

So, what can you do? Just like in fighting wildfires,



creating a plan that builds "fire breaks" into your operation along with firefighting allows you to gradually become more of a fire preventer than a fire fighter.

One example is to do spot checks on different parts of your operation. Sometimes just going out to the field and looking at what people are doing once in a while is all it takes.

Invest a day on the line, in a project or shadowing employees as they do their work. You may gain valuable insights into some struggles they are having that you can fix easily. Or you may find they are not

handling tasks the way you prefer. As an added benefit, you will get to know your people better and form a stronger bond with them.

The term "management by walking around" was coined many years ago and perfectly describes what I'm talking about. We get so involved in fighting the "giant blaze" that we don't stop every once in a while to be sure to clear some brush when there is nothing burning.

So, don't give up the fight. The fires must be dealt with. But never lose sight of the fact that the ONLY way you will ever get ahead of them is to start preventing some of the fires in the first place. As Smokey Bear says: Only YOU can prevent wildfires.

An accomplished Executive, Entrepreneur, Author, Speaker and Trainer, Burk Moreland gets results. If pushing your people and organization to new heights is a goal, then you need a rainmaker with decades of experience in the construction industry to drive you towards it. Burk will help you map out the course, attack the goals and most importantly, enjoy the ride. For more information regarding how he can help you, contact us today at burk@burkmoreland.com or 832-356-4585.



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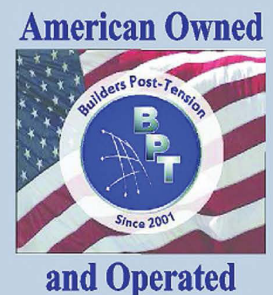
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“We will come back and tweak things for a while after they move in.” Although some clients expect next-day completion of the work, Robert said that isn’t always possible because of schedules in securing materials and tradesmen. “We always want to come back and take care of people. That commitment has helped us maintain our reputation.”

They steer their customers to vendors and products based on quality and price. “We work for our customers, and we want them to get the best deal possible. We work to give them what they want without overspending.”

Because both Robert and Mina are confessed people-pleasers, they like to make their clients happy. Holding a degree in psychology from Louisiana State University, Robert especially enjoys the sales elements of building. A pharmacist by training, Mina handles the office and customers’ selection process. Covington Builders also employs a field project manager.

Robert and Mina work together all day every day and then go home to their 4,500-sq.-ft. living quarters above their office, a space that they share with their three daughters. (Two attend the University of Alabama, and one is in high school.) While living in a commercial section of town is not typical of the way Houstonians live, it works for their family.

They learned to control their risks after the economic downturn of 2008 and multiple hurricanes and tropical storms in that same period. “I thought I had the world by the tail in 2007, but I’m no longer over-confident. I will never take my status for granted again. Back then I was mowing yards at my properties just to have something to do. After years of ups and downs, I cannot guarantee the market, but I’ve learned to put myself at the least risk possible,” Robert said.

“My advice to younger builders is to remember that a house

Continued from page 5

The Covingtons see themselves as partners with their customers in the building process for the five to seven houses they erect each year. “We’re very honest. We work hard. We give value for the money.” They said they try to make it a policy to take care of customers beyond what they expect. “People’s level of satisfaction is conditional, based on their expectations.” Robert noted.



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is the largest purchase most people ever make, and that it deserves to be treated as such. Building a custom home for a family is a privilege, so make sure to care for the project throughout each step.”

Despite having been through the ups and downs of the construction industry, Robert said he will always build houses. However, he may build fewer houses in the next few years and concentrate on houses where he and Mina can let their creativity and innovation continue to shine.

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Diamond Spas Make a Splash with Metal Tubs, Spas and Pools

If you want your new spa or pool to make a splash with your new home buyer, consider Diamond Spas, a Colorado-based company that ships all over the world. Contemporary elegance meets functionality.

Diamond Spas has catered to upscale residential, commercial and hospitality markets since 1996, selling to architects, naval architects, landscape architects, contractors, developers, interior designers and homeowners. Diamond Spas has the talent and expertise to accommodate unique designs and special requests, according to its co-founder and president, Stephanie Bennett. It is also a Best of Houzz design winner.

Its fabrication staff, with more than 35 years of experience, constructs all products of high quality stainless steel or copper because metal delivers superb spa durability and design flexibility, Bennett said. Additionally, the staff uses TIG welding to create precise, clean-flowing seams to enhance the designs and durability.

This custom metal fabrication company consists of two separate divisions: Pool and Spa and Kitchen and Bath and only works with stainless steel or copper.

The Pool and Spa Division offers spas, swimming pools, glass-walled pools and spas, swim spas, cold plunge pools and water features. Its stainless steel and copper spas and hot tubs start at \$30,000.

The company's engineering teams offers many design options. They can create multiple pool and spa seating



arrangements, waterfalls, varied-depth seating areas, cool-down areas, vanishing edges, acrylic/glass walls and panels, interior stairways, automatic safety covers, LED lighting and custom equipment packages – all engineered to accommodate the client's preferences.

Diamond Spas specializes in roof top pool and spa installations because metal is much lighter and durable than traditional pool and spa construction materials.

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Continued from page 14

For its residential and commercial clients who are looking for a luxurious, one-of-a-kind experience, Diamond Spas also designs and fabricates cold plunge therapy pools, which are gaining attention for their health benefits.

These pools, which have been around for thousands of years, are used in Chinese medicine for their therapeutic effects, noted Bennett. “Exposing your body to a heated environment and then immediately plunging into cold water, even for only 30 seconds or so, benefits the body in many ways, mainly by stimulating blood circulation,” she added. The average temperature of a cold plunge pool hovers between 50-55 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Kitchen and Bath Collection offers luxury custom indoor and outdoor bath fixtures, including Japanese baths, whirlpools, air- and micro-bubble systems, shower pans and sinks. Its products can transform the ordinary kitchen or bath into an extraordinary space, according to Bennett. Its award-winning luxury bathtubs are not only works of art, but also they conform to your body – making for the most relaxing bathing experience, she added.

Diamond Spas believes metal is the best construction material for custom-built products because it is

- fade-, crack- and blister-resistant;

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my favorite is eclectic. I live with a very collected look. I don't like matching but love to blend French, English and Oriental with a pinch of modern or contemporary.

International Flooring: *What fascinates you and how have you incorporated that into your designs?*

Donna M. Jarnigan: People, travel, ancient architecture, art and design of all types intrigue me. As I said, a good mix is my favorite style. However, I design with my client in mind.

International Flooring: *How would you characterize your personal style?*

Donna M. Jarnigan: Eclectic

International Flooring: *What would be your recommendation for "what to do first" in a decorating project when working with the builders and/or homeowners?*

Donna M. Jarnigan: I tell my clients to collect photos of rooms that have their favorite styles. That helps me get a real sense of what appeals to them, and that is a great starting point.

International Flooring: *Any last thoughts, comments?*

Donna M. Jarnigan: First, I want to thank you for this opportunity to share a few thoughts with you and your

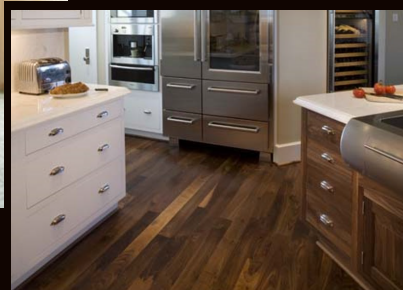


readers. Second, I highly recommend hiring an interior designer. An interior designer can help keep you from making costly mistakes and give you a beautiful, well-designed, functional home or office.

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A picture is worth a thousand words! The colors follow the island's curve and shape, creating a gorgeous look that perfectly suits the kitchen's decor. Photo by: K. Lloyd—owner

ThinkGlass Offers Versatility in Glass

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Based in Montreal, Canada, the company has distributed its products all over the world since 1999. It is considered to be the world's leader of modern art and decor in thermoformed glass.

The Technique

ThinkGlass ensures product quality and customer satisfaction by its innovative techniques and ultramodern custom manufacturing facilities, but it is the handmade finish applied to each piece that makes its products stand out.

It has the largest thermoformed glass manufacturing plant

in the world with 21 kilns, all specifically designed for its technology. These facilities give ThinkGlass the flexibility it needs to program and efficiently carry out all projects, whether they are large or small, simple or complex. ThinkGlass can create stunning glass pieces in any thickness and shape required.

The Artist

Master glassmaker Michel Mailhot is the creative soul behind ThinkGlass. He has experimented with thermoformed glass for nearly three decades now, making him the most experienced glass artisan in North America. Thanks to his technical know-how, craftsmanship and manufacturing skills, he quickly made a name for himself and has been at ThinkGlass's helm since the very beginning. No piece leaves the ThinkGlass plants without Michel and his team adding their special and handmade touch. Glass processing is not only about texture, it's an art. Michel Mailhot's artistic talent's created impressive work of art, architectural pieces

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The Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas has a glass chocolate fountain that oozes and circulates 1500 pounds of chocolate 24/7 that is the one of ThinkGlass's largest projects in the United States.



This impressive 101.6 mm (4")-thick thermoformed glass kitchen island countertop does not go unnoticed! The thickness of the glass adds character to this contemporary kitchen.



In a private residence in Massachusetts you can find a unique glass spiral that reflect the residence's interior design and architectural style. Designer: Debono Brothers

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Michel Mailhot designed and handmade this 220-foot-long piece inspired by the Canadian Rockies. It is on display at YYC Calgary International Airport in Canada.

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and one-of-a-kind additions to any project.

ThinkGlass's Work

All of their projects are one-of-a-kind and signed by the artist itself: "Michel Mailhot." He makes sure to add his own special touch to each piece of glass before it leaves the ThinkGlass manufacturing facilities.

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