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## Challenges Appeal to Pinnacle Builders of Texas' Owner

Pinnacle Builders of Texas | Houston, Texas



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**By Kathy Bowen Stolz**

Russell Dugan loves a challenge. In fact, nothing satisfies him more than doing something that others say can't be done. In his mind, nothing is impossible; impossible just takes longer.

He also likes making people's dreams come true.

Recently the owner of Pinnacle Builders of Texas achieved both as he started wrapping up the so-called "Swamp Castle" on South Braeswood in Meyerland, a project beset with trouble for two years.

First, Hurricane Harvey hit during the build; then, the original contractor, Mark Jeffrey of Jeffrey Harrington Homes, passed away from cancer. Without a contractor directly supervising the three-story build, things went awry, such as uneven floors and doors that wouldn't close. Nothing looked right. A dream home had become a nightmare for the owners.

Mike Robare of Robare Custom Homes, a friend and mentor to Russell Dugan, recommended to Mark's widow

Gail that Pinnacle Builders of Texas buy the company to complete projects. Dugan and his son Daniel (D.J.) Vinatieri then fixed all of those things that other contractors told the homeowners couldn't be fixed.

"Russell and his son D.J. are an incredible team. Russell is a visionary. He frequently figured ways to overcome obstacles or add improvements that delighted us. We are so thankful for them and consider them dear friends," said Frank and Jennifer Placencia, the homeowners.

According to Dugan, "It's very rewarding to have a great family like the Placencias smiling for the first time in a long time."

That sense of accomplishment is important to Dugan. "It gives me a lot of satisfaction to be able to build something and see the finished product."

He learned construction from the ground up, just as he taught his son D.J. In fact, Dugan still likes to swing a hammer. "My skill set is everything. If you can't get



your hands dirty, it’s hard to work in construction,” he opined. “Half of the guys out there don’t know how to read blueprints, let alone build to code. If you don’t know how to do the work yourself, how will you ever know if the work is done correctly?”

Russell doesn’t cut corners. “Perfect is good. I like perfect. I will have a team member or subcontractor tear it apart if it’s not right and do it again, and my son is worse than I am.”

Homeowner Jennifer Placencia agreed. “He is a perfectionist. There were times I was satisfied with the work the subcontractors did, but Russell insisted that it could be done better, and he made it happen.”

She added, “D.J. would work late into the night to make sure that our project was completed on time. There’s nothing he can’t do.”

Dugan declared, “My son will work 16, 18 hours a day, sometimes, just getting things right.”

After service in the United States Marine Corps, Russell returned to construction. Unfortunately he broke his back in four places in a job-site accident, leaving him paralyzed with no feeling in his legs. Despite being disabled for two-and-a-half years, he would not give up. He went to college, graduating with honors while earning a bachelor’s degree from John Carter Business School in California. He made a full recovery after surgery.

Those years of recovery made Dugan more insightful as a builder, he said. “I am mindful of how people will perambulate through a house, especially their access to a shower and through doors.”

During his 35+ years in construction industry, Dugan has built with most building mediums to create all types of projects – garages, home additions, flooded homes’ renovation, energy-efficient homes, speculative homes, log homes, structural insulated panel systems, multi-family homes and custom homes. Upcoming projects include a 22-

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unit condominium development and a church.

Pinnacle Builders of Texas typically handles 20 projects a year, including new construction and remodeling. It has 10 homes currently under construction with four ready to close. The square footage ranges from 1,500 to 28,000, with prices ranging from \$400,000 to \$3.2 million. It builds in communities throughout Greater Houston and the surrounding areas.

Dugan also co-owns Jeffrey Builders, the UBuildit franchise for Houston-Galleria, with Gail Casson, who now works with Dugan in the office, along with his wife Molly. Dugan notes that they are both “awesome.” Other employees are Patrick Harrington, an associate consultant for his team and the UBuildit clients, and long-time field man, Roger Davenport. “We have a great team. That’s something you can build on.”

Dugan is now stepping into the managing member role after naming Daniel the president in February. “He’s awesome, and the smartest young man I know. He learned construction from the ground up. He’s a real S.O.B. (Son of a Builder),” I don’t know of anyone who could out-work him; he is tenacious, a real leader,” Russell bragged.

However, Dugan said he tried to discourage Daniel from becoming a builder. Daniel received a scholarship to medical school after spending five years as a U.S. Army combat medic in Iraq. When he left the military, he decided he had seen enough blood. After working for some other

builders, Daniel came back to work for his dad “because he got tired of working for others who didn’t care about quality,” Russell said.

During the next five years Dugan plans to retire to fish or hit the road on his Harley-Davidson Heritage Softail with Molly behind him. “I’m putting the company in good hands.

“As patriarch, you take care of your family. If you don’t take care of them, you’re not doing your job.” The Dugans also have two daughters, Amanda and Ashley, and six grandchildren. “I want to leave a future for all of them.”



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