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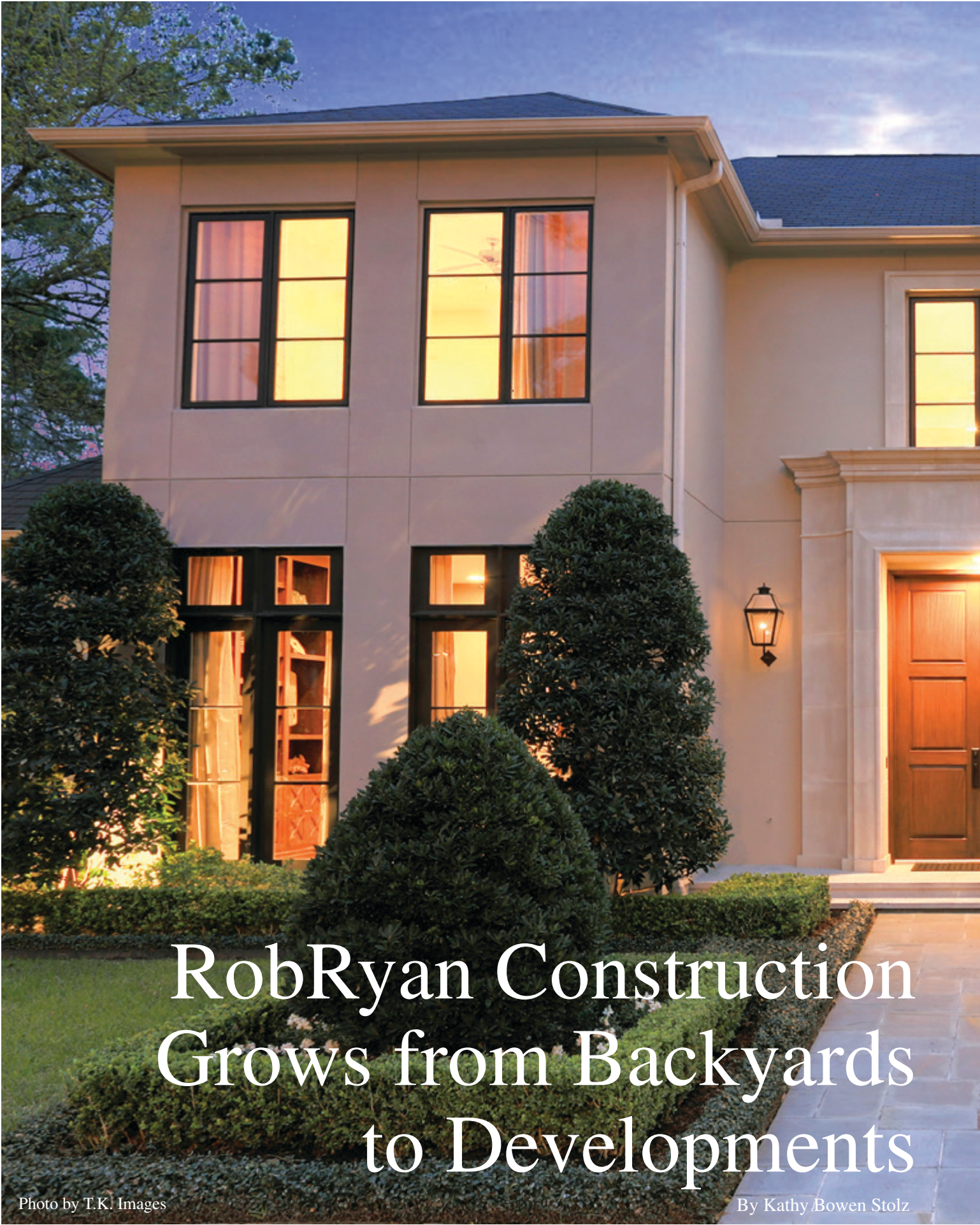
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RobRyan Construction Grows from Backyards to Developments

RobRyan Construction | Houston, Texas



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Photo by T.K. Images

By Kathy Bowen Stolz



After 14 years in construction, Ryan Harris, a partner in RobRyan Construction, sees his work all over the greater Houston area. “It’s cool to see your work. It’s very gratifying to see something you’ve built. You get a great sense of accomplishment.”

But as a young man, Harris expected to pursue a career in business or sales. Starting college at the Air Force Academy, he completed his degree at Houston Baptist University, majoring in economics. Awarded an athletic scholarship, sports were a focal point of his college years. As a senior he was very busy playing ball, going to school and working as the outside sales manager at American Wheel & Tire, expecting to continue working there. Then his uncle, who was like a brother to Ryan, died unexpectedly in an accident. The death made Ryan



“We put a lot of effort into the front end/design phase...”

Photo by Kathleen O. Ryan

reevaluate what he wanted to be doing. “I decided I had to do something I was passionate about.”

During summers and on weekends he had worked in construction and liked being outdoors. Immediately after graduating, he started Best Buildings, a company which focused on backyard amenities, such as basketball courts, swimming pools and small buildings. He met his partner of 14 years, Louis “Bob” Newsome, on a job site. Newsome worked for Continental Homes at one time and consequently had experience in large construction. They combined their first names to create the company’s name of RobRyan.

At customers’ requests, Best Buildings graduated to doing small interior projects, such as bathroom remodels. Within six months of partnering, the two were building their first house. Now RobRyan Construction is predominantly a custom home builder that will build 25 homes this year. Its projects range from \$400,000 to \$2 million and from 2,000 to 6,000 sq ft.

Its primary focus is completing a 26-home development in Oak Forest called Landon’s Place in honor of Harris’ son. One of its streets is Madeleine Leigh Lane in honor of Harris’ daughter. Landon’s



Photo by Kathleen O. Ryan

Place is physically half-way done, Ryan said. “It kind of grew without a plan as land became available. We even put in a street in this little enclave. I really am proud of this development, but I’m always most proud of what I’m doing at the time.”

Newsome usually oversees the office work while Harris oversees the field work, but each does a little of both. Harris said he uses his economics background to “count the pennies around here.” RobRyan Construction also employs two full-time superintendents and two office assistants and a “slew



Photo by Kathleen O. Ryan

of subcontractors,” some of whom RobRyan has used for more than 10 years.

In the past the company went all over Texas – Austin, Cleveland, and Galveston, to build. Now the partners are trying to be much more focused, building only in the Houston areas of The Heights, Oak Forest, Garden Oaks, Memorial, Spring Branch and Westview. Harris said the company’s productivity has increased by 30 percent by decreasing its travel time. “It was a good decision to stay more focused.”

Harris and Newsome have never advertised RobRyan Construction, relying only on referrals. “Right now things are really good for us. We have a full work load,” Harris commented. “Part of our character as owners is to treat people in a way that we would want to be treated. We respect that a home is the biggest purchase of someone’s life.

“We also think that we build a quality product, and we stand behind our work, which leads to referrals. As a builder we go above and beyond, honoring warranties even if they’re expired or we think the product should have lasted longer.” Harris considers it a testament that RobRyan has built multiple homes for multiple clients.

“We put a lot of effort into the front end/design phase. People will bring in parts of multiple building plans



Photo by Kathleen O. Ryan



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that they like. We try to meld things together. We're willing to spend a lot of time with the customers so they have a sense of comfort. Sometimes it's a month or two of back-and-forth meetings before the job starts." Harris said this attention to the customer's needs pays off because 98 percent of the potential clients build a house with RobRyan.

Ryan said he uses his economics knowledge to do a lot of market analysis when the company considers building spec homes. For example, the elementary school in Oak Forest attracts many families. He thinks about the needs of a family with elementary-age children and their price point. Then he matches those concepts to a building plan. "The very strong market allows us to build some custom specs." He often works with realtor Mel Reyna of the Reyna Group to analyze market needs.

The recent economic downturn did have an impact but did not slow down RobRyan Construction. "We went back to our roots. No job was too small or too big when we started, and we returned to that philosophy. We took on remodels and different kinds of work. Right now we're fortunate to be able to focus on custom homes," Harris said.

The company also does commercial work, but usually only one or two projects a year. This year it did one large industrial building, a 25,000-sq-ft project with a commercial crane and a 5,000-sq-ft office area. Another recent commercial project was a 45,000-sq-ft basketball facility.

The future looks bright for Rob Ryan Construction. Harris would like to develop more housing additions. "I'm always learning. Our team is always getting better. Every day is exciting."

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