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Stiles Builders the Right
Size to Serve Clients

Stiles Builders | Houston, Texas



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By Kathy Bowen Stolz | Photography by Kathleen O. Ryan



Sometimes a one-man shop can be just the right size. It is for Lester Stiles, owner of Stiles Builders, LLC, of Houston. And it is for his clients, too.

As Stiles sizes up the custom home competition, he finds that being a small builder gives him an advantage. His reduced overhead, skilled subcontractors and creative designers allow him to provide the same quality as larger builders but at a lower cost.

Besides, his clients know that he's always going to be the one answering the phone. "Everything runs through me.

I'm the guy you're talking to. Building any new home has its challenges, but I strive to make the process an easy, enjoyable one."

That's not to say that he doesn't anticipate growing. In fact, he hopes to hire a part-time office assistant soon to handle paperwork to allow him to spend more time in the field with his clients as he contracts to build more homes.

He knows that his service to his clients sets him apart and having some help will allow him to focus on his strengths. "Basically, this is a service industry. I enjoy serving, and I feel like I do well at that," Lester said.

He notes that he is in constant communication with his clients, meeting with them on the job site or in his office at least once a week. He prides himself on returning phone calls and e-mails within 24 hours. Communication is an ongoing process through both the planning and construction processes, he said. "I have an open relationship with the clients. Through each phase of



construction I am there to help make the process simple. I am personally involved in the construction, making sure that my clients' needs and expectations are met. I address issues and concerns as they come up."

Building is in his blood. Stiles was named after his grandfather, Lester William Prokop, a successful Houston builder who was president of the Greater Houston Builders Association in 1953 and later was inducted into

the National Home Builders Association Hall of Fame in Washington, D.C., in 1983.

"I never thought about doing anything else." After graduating from the University of St. Thomas in Houston with a degree in business administration, Lester looked for a job in the homebuilding industry. "I had grown up in that environment, surrounded by the building business.



“I cut my teeth on production building with D.R. Horton, a major national homebuilder. It was a sink-or-swim situation, real hands-on learning. After my internal training I was handed a handful of homes my first week as a superintendent. I quickly learned how to deal with customers. Eventually I became a project manager of subdivisions, but I found I was more of an organizer than a builder in that job. I wanted to get away from the cookie-cutter mentality of production building. I wanted to be able to offer the client more options. I wanted to learn more and to work with better materials.

“I was able to leverage my production building experience into becoming a construction supervisor for Black Diamond, a custom builder, where I worked before the economic downturn. After six years of working for others, I turned to self-employment.”

The expression “no job is too big or too small” certainly fit when he started Stiles Builders, LLC, in 2009. With new construction in decline, Stiles turned to high-end remodeling and renovations. “It was a challenging time, but I was able to grow the business during the economic downturn by being efficient and lean. Even though it wasn’t the greatest time, I made it through.”

According to Lester, he works with some of the area’s most skilled construction labor and finest architects and

designers. He proudly noted that he is loyal to his subs and vendors and has used the same ones since he started his company. “My skilled craftsmen are the reason we produce a great product and a reason for my success.”

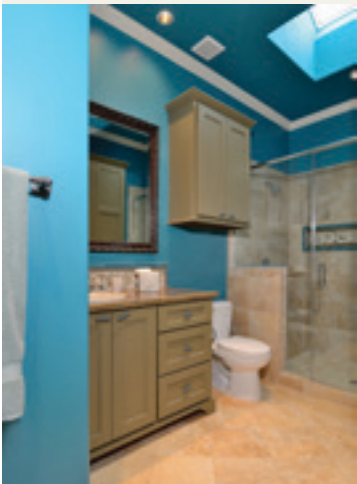
Stiles said he has never really advertised his new company, that his first round of clients was friends and family. Then the second round of clients was referrals

from friends and family. “Now I’m getting people I don’t know. I guess you could call me an up-and-comer.” He added that Stiles Builders’ reputation is built on trust and unrivaled service.

Stiles Builders is evolving. Any growth in the company will be balanced against his concern about losing the personal relationship he has with each client. He limits the number of projects to three or four big ones each year so he can maintain the highest quality on each job, whether it’s a bathroom remodel, a full renovation or a new custom home.

In 2014 he will realize a goal by building a spec home in Houston’s Memorial section that will incorporate some of the original concepts that he has developed from his work with various architects and designers.





When called upon, he still does some remodeling. “The trend now is open spaces. Consequently, I’ve done a lot of tearing out in my renovation projects.”

While much of his work has been in the older sections of Houston (Memorial, the Heights, River Oaks and

Richmond), one of Stiles’ recent project took him beyond the city limits. He built a ranch house, providing country living for city folks who wanted a weekend retreat for their family.

This project demanded much more than a typical build.





He had to obtain agriculture exemptions, drill water wells, create roads and trails, dig septic tanks and supply electrical power. He said he enjoyed the challenges; he will be repeating the process on another country build soon.

“There’s a lot of reward in seeing effort and hard work become something tangible. It’s a pretty neat feeling.”

But ever focused on serving, Lester added, “One of the greatest rewards is doing something to help others and provide a quality project that meets a satisfied client’s needs.”

You may contact Stiles Builders, LLC, at 974 Campbell Road, Suite 107, Houston, TX 77024 or 832-369-2739 or www.stilesbuilders.com.

