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Q&A with builder Tim Macksey

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Tim Macksey's career as a builder grew naturally out of his passion for transforming raw land and materials into inspiring homes and landscapes. He came to Sarasota as a teenager with his father, a builder. "I was always intrigued with land development and building process," says the owner of Old World Master Builders (4505 Wilkinson Road, Sarasota; 926-7676). "Never really wanted to do anything else."



Tim Macksey is a builder in Sarasota.

Q: What is your specialty in the market?

A: Jewel boxing. A jewel-box home or jewel-box remodel has its emphasis on livability. Size is not as important as how the house feels and functions. The architectural details add beauty and character. Common areas are warm and inviting; retreat areas are relaxing and calm. Human needs take priority over grandeur and size. These homes or remodels (often 2,000 to 3,000 square feet) are less expensive and cost less in maintenance due to the size. Design and detailing create a true jewel-box house.

Q: What's your idea of an ideal home?

A: It has to be completely designed so that the clients feel "at home." It should be so comfortable that the homeowners would never think of selling.

Q: Where do you live and what is your house like?

A: It's a new house finished in 2007. As soon as you come into our driveway you leave the busy road behind you — it's green, it's cool, there's shade and around every bend is a surprise of color or shape until you get to the house. We duplicated the same house plan we had for the previous 13 years at our other home because that plan is so homey and cozy for us. The plan only needed a little rearranging from when our kids were at home to our life now.

Q: What has been your most challenging construction project to date?

A: A project we did in The Oaks in Osprey. The owner was in Toronto so we photographed our work each day and the owner would approve, expand or change things based on what she saw from the pictures. It was all done by phone and pictures. The detailing was concise and the quality of materials top notch. The challenging part was to make the new work exactly match the work done five years earlier — cabinetry, granite, flooring, moldings, etc. Per square foot that project was probably the most expensive we've done to date due to complexity and materials.

Q: How important is landscaping and when should the landscape plan come into the process of building or remodeling?

A: The right landscaping makes a home virtually unforgettable. Your landscaping

should be so "you" that the moment you pull into your driveway the feeling of "being home" should envelope you. Landscaping is paramount and should be part of the planning from the very beginning.

Q: What about a lighting scheme?

A: Lighting should accent all of the beautiful work that has been done and should all be controlled by dimmers with the light source hidden from view. Good lighting can make or break the feeling we designers and builders are after. Our electricians are craftsmen like a great carpenter or cabinetmaker. Lighting has to feel just right.

Q: If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

A: Frankly, I love my work and creating jewel-box homes for clients. I get satisfaction from fashioning spaces that are so in-sync with a client's lifestyle and desires that happiness is virtually guaranteed.

Q: What's the hardest part about remodeling from the client's standpoint?

A: Trusting the contractor and his people (subs) to really care about the ultimate product and the protection of personal things from damage during the construction process.

Q: What three things can homeowners do to make the process easier and less disruptive?

A: Plan in advance, look in-depth at how you live and make all of the selections before the project commences. If it is an extensive remodel, move out so that the workmen can work efficiently and not aggravate you. New construction or remodeling is a process and many times a change becomes obvious as the space comes into view. It is important for the client to understand that changes are normal; it is the nature of what we do.

Q: Have you ever fired a client?

A: Once in a while the expectations or understanding by a client of the process and time frame required to deliver the quality the client wants is so unreasonable that I don't want the job because I'm sure that I could make that client happy. I never actually had to fire a client, I just didn't proceed to construction phase.

Q: How much over budget do homeowners typically go when doing a renovation project?

A: For our clients about seven to 10 percent for unforeseen things.

Q: What is the best advice you've received from a person in the business?

A: Work as a team with the clients. Let them see every invoice of your wholesale cost and the added percentage for management. Open book policy.

Q: What percentage of the homes you do are second homes?

A: 50/50. And our work on homes versus condominiums is about 50/50 too.

Q: What's the smallest renovation or new construction you've done?

A: A kitchen remodel in an existing 1,800-square-foot home.

Q: What are your favorite materials?

A: Stone, granite, marble, wood, aluminum and stainless steel.

Q: Where do you get your inspiration?

A: Experience from having done many complex and demanding projects over the years. I get into the flow of each project and my process of discovery is through talking to suppliers, looking at how people live and interviewing them all of the time about their ideal space. My inspiration is client-driven. I also enlist the help of an interior designer for confirmation or additional ideas.

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Q: What is the signature of Old World Master Builders?

A: Form, function, attention to detail, better materials for a better finish that stands the test of time. Jewel box construction.

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